

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	CP/04/24

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 6 March 2024

Report Title: Update on Recycling Improvement Fund Project

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with updated information on the implementation and future phases of the Waste and Recycling service change project.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the progress that has been made in advance of the phased introduction of Recycling Improvement Funded (RIF) collection service changes.
- ii. **Note** the timeline for essential infrastructure projects that will support service change in Caithness, Skye and Lochaber.
- iii. **Note** the detail of the comprehensive communications plan to support the service change.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource:

a. The Highland Council secured significant capital investment finance from the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF). The £6.55m award will support a range of improvements to the Council's waste and recycling performance.

b. The expansion of food waste collections will have a revenue implication, however the service changes are essential to achieving a sustainable collection service model. An overall forecasted positive position will be achieved through a reduction in costs associated with residual waste treatment and through improving the quality and quantity of recycling that we collect.

3.2 Legal:

a. The Circular Economy Bill as tabled by the Scottish Government makes provision for the Government to apply new statutory obligations on local authorities from the Waste Routemap. The RIF service changes represent a comprehensive package of measures which once implemented will comply with anticipated future statutory obligations and the relevant aims set out within the Circular Economy Bill.

- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island):
The delivery of waste management services is undertaken in accord with Scottish Government legislation and takes community factors appropriately into account. A key aim of the Recycling Improvement Fund project is to extend recycling opportunities to all including rural areas.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever:
Reducing the amount of residual waste we collect and send for treatment and by increasing the quantity and quality of the recycling we collect will have a positive impact on the environment by reducing carbon emissions associated with waste.
- 3.5 Risk:
Within the Recycling Improvement Fund activity to deliver the collection services changes there are a number of risks to be managed given the extent and complexity of the processes. Delivering infrastructure projects within the required timescale are of particular importance for supporting service change, these are:
- Fort William Waste Transfer Station
 - Portree Waste Transfer Station
 - Improvement work to Seater Waste Transfer Station
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):
The safety of staff undertaking waste management duties is a statutory obligation for local authorities. The effective management of waste is essential to the health and safety of all householders and other service users.
- 3.7 Gaelic:
There are no Gaelic implications at present. Where changes to services are developed, information will be produced to include Gaelic language in keeping with Council policy.

4. Project Update

- 4.1 The Recycling Improvement Project Board continues to provide formal governance and checks against the RIF project objectives. The Board meets on a monthly frequency.
- 4.2 Key operational decisions are being taken through Waste Management Service's RIF working group which continues to meet weekly.
- 4.3 The two key funded Service Change Supervisor posts commenced in December 2023, the post holders are undertaking essential supervision connected to bins, food caddies and their distribution. The Council's appointed bin distribution contractor is Jett distribution and the bin supplier is Contenur UK Ltd.
- 4.4 A third quarterly report has been submitted to the funder (Zero Waste Scotland), along with the second quarterly finance claim, which has been approved for payment.
- 4.5 The bin distribution plans for Easter Ross (via Jett Distribution) and Wester Ross (via THC) have been finalised and preparations have been made to recruit the funded staff to cover the rollout. The first area on the phased service change program is Ross and Cromarty (Table 1). Easter Ross bin delivery rollout will commence on Tuesday 2 April, and the Wester Ross rollout will begin on Monday 8 April.
- 4.6 The additional food waste vehicles provided through the RIF funding have been delivered, the new food waste collection routes for Ross and Cromarty and Nairn are

complete and the existing Inverness collection routes have been reviewed and optimised.

4.7 A trial with a small group of existing business waste customers has been undertaken to help inform how we can continue to provide a recycling service that fully meets our customers' business needs. Customer feedback from the trial has been positive.

4.8 Table 1

Area	Month the new bins will start being distributed	Food waste collection service expansion
Ross & Cromarty (including Dornoch)	Apr-24	Approximately 14,500 properties will be provided a food waste collection service. This includes: Alness, Avoch, Conon Bridge, Culbokie, Dingwall, Evanton, Fortrose, Invergordon, Kildary, Maryburgh, Milton, Munloch, Muir of Ord, Rosemarkie and Strathpeffer
Nairn	May-24	Approximately 5,500 properties within Nairn and Auldearn will be provided with a food waste collection service
Inverness	May-24	A further 3,000 properties in Inverness-shire will be provided with a food waste collection service which will expand the service within the area to a total of 37,000 properties. New areas include Ardersier, Beauly, Croy, Bunchrew, Drumnadrochit, Kirkhill and Torngrain.
Badenoch & Strathspey	Aug-24	
Caithness	Sep-24	
Sutherland	Oct-24 / Nov-24	
Skye & Lochalsh *Linked to the timescale for building a new waste transfer station	Mar-25	
Lochaber *Linked to the timescale for building a new waste transfer station	Apr-25	Approximately 6,000 properties will be provided with a food waste collection service. This includes Fort William, Caol and Corpach

5. Infrastructure

- 5.1 The Council will develop further the Seater and Portree Waste Transfer Stations as part of the £6.55m Recycling Improvement Fund award to modernise our waste collection services. The improvements to the Waste Transfer Station infrastructure are essential to support the waste and recycling service changes.
- 5.2 Seater and Portree construction projects are being led by THC's Design & Construction Team.
- 5.3 Planning permission for the alteration to the frontage of the existing Waste Transfer Station building on Seater, Wick was granted on 22 December 2023.
- 5.4 A planning application will be submitted in March 2024 for an additional new building within the existing waste transfer station site in Portree.
- 5.5 Key activities connected to technical design in advance of contract award and construction are currently being undertaken for both projects. The completion of the works is scheduled to be complete at Seater by August 2024 and at Portree by February 2025.

6. Fort William Waste Transfer Station

- 6.1
 - a. Highland Council's Waste Service is seeking to construct a waste transfer station on ground adjacent to the existing Household Waste recycling Centre at Ben Nevis Industrial Estate. Planning permission for the development was approved by the South Planning Applications Committee on 12th December 2023.
 - b. Whilst the transfer station would not be funded through the Recycling Improvement Fund award (it will be funded through the Council's capital programme), the rollout of new collection services in Lochaber (scheduled for Spring 2025) is dependent upon a suitable transfer station being in place to receive the separate deliveries of general waste and recyclable materials.
- 6.2 Broad agreement on the components of the Heads of Terms have been reached with the site owner's property representative, and previous notifications indicate that matters are nearing a conclusion and the Council looks forward to receiving a firm offer as soon as possible. Signed Heads of Terms are required before progressing to the detail of a long-term ground lease.
- 6.3 Any material delays will place considerable pressure on the timescale for successfully delivering the waste transfer station in readiness for Spring 2025 and therefore The Highland Council is escalating the matter to seek a remedy.

7. Communications

- 7.1 A comprehensive communications and engagement plan will be delivered to enable householders and businesses to understand and get the most from the new waste and recycling collection service.
- 7.2 The communication and engagement plan will be aligned to the phased service change schedule. A broad range of communication channels and methods are being utilised to maximise the potential to engage with the target audience; this includes the use of

information booklets, posters and bin stickers along with multi-media content such as digital assets for social media, advertising on local media websites and using QR codes.

- 7.3 All households will receive a service introduction letter 4 weeks prior to the new bin being delivered, the letter will detail the service changes and when the changes are happening.
- 7.4 A comprehensive guide will be delivered with the new bin, the guide will detail information on how to use the new service, other recycling services, tips on waste reduction and reuse.
- 7.5 The guide, advertising and bins sticker have all been professionally designed through the market tested Recycling for Scotland communication toolkit. Groups of Council staff outwith the service were also used to ensure the messaging was concise and easy to understand.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Date: 13 February 2024

Author: Alan McKinnie, Strategic Lead (Waste Strategy & Operations)