

TO: JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
7th March 2024

PROGRESS REPORT
Report of the re3 Project Director

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to brief the re3 Joint Waste Disposal Board on progress in the delivery of the re3 Joint Waste PFI Contract.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

2.2 That Members request a report on vehicle access policies at the Recycling Centres be presented at the September meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None for this report.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

4.1 The purpose of this report is to brief Members in relation to progress in delivery of the re3 Joint Waste PFI Contract.

5 PROGRESS IN RELATION TO WASTE MANAGEMENT

re3 and Council Performance Statistics

5.1 The provisional recycling rates for April-January 2023/24 are presented below, alongside a comparison with the full year statistics for 2022/23.

	April 2022 – March 2023	April 2023 – January 2024	Change
BFC	54.5%	56.3%	1.8%
RBC	49.5%	50.4%	0.9%
WBC	52.9%	55.9%	3.0%

5.2 Members will recall that higher green waste tonnages in the summer had a positive impact on the recycling rates.

5.3 It is possible that each of the re3 Councils could end the year with recycling rates above 50% and a full analysis for 2023/24, including a breakdown by material stream, will be presented to the Joint Waste Disposal Board at the next meeting, in June.

Chargeable Wastes at the HWRC

5.4 As Members will recall, the Controlled Waste Regulations were amended on the 31st of December 2023, so that some 'DIY waste' is now to be treated as a household waste, and must be accepted without charge at the Recycling Centres.

- 5.5 Whereas previously, the cost of handling and disposing of construction and demolition waste would have been met by the residents who were benefitting from the home improvement works, the change in legislation means that the costs must now be covered by council tax-payers in general.
- 5.6 At the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board in January 2023, Members asked Officers to monitor deposits of rubble, soil, plasterboard and asbestos at the re3 facilities and identify changes in tonnage.
- 5.7 As Members will be aware, waste at the recycling centres can only be accounted for when it is weighed out of the site. As waste is not necessarily weighed out of the recycling centre in the same month as it is brought in, it is currently too soon to determine the scale of the tonnage impacts from the change in legislation. However other early indicators are available.
- 5.8 The table in Appendix One indicates that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of residents telling us that they are bringing rubble, soil, plasterboard and asbestos to the site, since some deposits become free. It is possible that some residents have delayed disposal of their DIY waste until the change in legislation came in; and that levels of deposits will subsequently start to go down. However it may also be the case that residents will seek to deposit more construction and demolition waste at the recycling centres, for free, rather than paying a trader to dispose of it. Although the legislation specifies that waste produced at a residential property by a trader is a non-household waste, in practice it can be difficult for recycling centre staff to ascertain the true origins of the waste. If residents are seeking to dispose of waste in this way, additional deposits of rubble, soil, plasterboard and asbestos could continue to be seen.
- 5.9 Members will recall that larger or more frequent deposits of construction and demolition waste are not to be treated as household waste under the revised legislation, and that charges can still be imposed in these instances. However, despite the increase in deposits, Members will note that the table in Appendix Two shows that the income (used to cover the cost of handling and disposing of construction and demolition waste) has reduced significantly. This indicates that many residents are able to utilise their free allowance for their waste. In some cases, staff have observed that residents choose not to dispose of their DIY waste until they have a full 100L, so as to make maximum use of their four free deposits.
- 5.10 It will be possible to understand the situation more fully when additional tonnage data is available. Officers will therefore continue to monitor the data and will provide an update at the next meeting.

Flexible Plastics Recycling - Learning

- 5.11 Members will recall that the first phase of the re3 project with FlexCollect commenced in trial areas of Reading Borough Council (RBC) on the 18th of September.
- 5.12 At the Joint Waste Disposal Board meeting in March, Officers presented some of the learning that had so far been obtained. Since that meeting, Officers have received an analysis from RECOUP (part of the FlexCollect consortium) on the types of materials being collected in the RBC area. A summary of the findings (from the 73 bags analysed) is shown below.
- On average each bag weighed 276g. These ranged from 29g to 801g.

- By weight, 73% of the waste collected was plastics bags and wrapping, or the collection bag itself. 10% was plastic pots, tubs and trays, and 17% was other non-target material.
 - On average, each bag contained 54 items.
 - By number of items, 87% of the waste collected was plastics bags and wrapping, or the collection bag itself. 3% was plastic pots, tubs and trays, and 10% was other non-target material.
 - 81% of the plastic film was made up of PP or PE (including the collection bag itself). The remaining plastic was made up of a range of other polymers.
 - 27% of collected materials were clear, with no ink coverage.
- 5.13 Flexcollect have also recently published their interim project report. This report does not cover the findings from the RBC project, as this is still at a fairly early stage. However some interesting data is included from other projects. The summary page from the report is included in Appendix three and the full report can be found on the FlexCollect website.
- 5.14 Members will note that the bags collected from RBC are a bit lighter and more contaminated than the average of other authorities. Members will recall that the FlexCollect project seeks to gather representative data and that RBC was invited to select an urban area for the trial, which included a number of flats. Officers can also confirm that the RBC participation rate is calculated as 24%. However, this is not a direct comparison with the figure of 60% in the appendix, due to different calculation methods being used for different collection systems.
- 5.15 The report indicates that a high proportion of residents are happy with their flexible plastic service. Officers can advise that data on user satisfaction has not yet been sought from RBC households, but that a survey has been drafted. Residents will be invited to participate in this survey, when they receive their 'nudge' leaflet at the end of February. Officers will share the outcomes of that survey with Members, once complete.
- 5.16 The Flexcollect report notes that reprocessing trials have so far been limited by the amount of waste collected, but that more data will become available as projects commence and expand. A first collection is due shortly from re3.

Flexible Plastics Recycling – Funding

- 5.17 Members will recall that the Flexible Plastics Recycling trial is fully funded and will run until March 2025.
- 5.18 In light of some ongoing uncertainty over the level of EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) payments which will apply after March 2025, some participating Councils are nervous about introducing or expanding collections which may need to be withdrawn at the end of the trial. DEFRA and the Flexible Plastics Fund have therefore been considering ways in which services could continue to be supported at the end of the project.
- 5.19 DEFRA remain committed to the FlexCollect projects as the results will be used to calculate EPR payments.
- 5.20 At the time of writing this report, Officers understand that the members of the Flexible Plastics Fund are considering options to 'top up' EPR payments so that funds to participating Councils cover the full cost of providing the services. This would be for a limited period of time (potentially until October 2025) as mandatory collections are due to commence in 2027.

- 5.21 Officers should be able to share the outcome of the discussions prior to the March meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board and RBC Members and Officers will then be able to consider the expansion options for their authority. Expected lead time for the RBC expansion should be 12 weeks from the time a decision is made (due to bag delivery timescales).
- 5.22 In the meantime, Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) have decided to go ahead with their launch as planned, and service will therefore commence for more than 10,000 BFC properties from the 18th of March. Communications are clear that the service is a trial, and that it may be withdrawn at the end of the funded period.
- 5.23 Members will recall that the FlexCollect project was originally expected to take place in each of the re3 Councils, but that FlexCollect was ultimately not able to pursue the project in Wokingham due to budget pressures. Officers asked FlexCollect to provide some information on the cost of Wokingham's participation. The response advises that it is hard to quantify a cost because an approach to collections was not agreed, and therefore not costed. Members will recall that Wokingham wished to explore alternative collection methods to the blue bags being used in other authorities. Whilst data is available for Bracknell and Reading which could be used to inform a calculation for Wokingham, (based on use of the same collection model), Officers would note that it has not so far been necessary to agree how to split the costs between the authorities, given that the trial is funded.

re3 Contractor Support Appraisal

- 5.24 The re3 Project Team undertakes a Contractor Support Appraisal in recognition that the re3 waste disposal PFI contract was negotiated a number of years ago. It enables the Councils to reflect on the extent to which the Contractor has been supportive of the requirements of the re3 Partnership and is designed to allow feedback and praise to be given in a number of specific areas.
- 5.25 The re3 Team wished to expand the Contractor Support Appraisal for 2023 to encompass the views of more council colleagues (and their contractors). Colleagues (including Assistant Directors, Waste Collection Supervisors and Customer Service Managers) were therefore asked to consider which Contractor teams they have experience of working with and to provide ratings and feedback under a number of different topics.
- 5.26 Alongside the re3 Team, nine colleagues provided feedback. This feedback was aggregated and a summary was produced for the Joint Waste Disposal Board. This can be seen in Appendix Four.
- 5.27 Members will observe that the scores (out of five) range from between 3.3 and 4.2. Scores of three represented satisfactory performance, whilst scores of four represented good performance. Whilst the Contractor has continued to be supportive of the Councils, there are some areas where improvement could be made.
- 5.28 The overall results and more detailed feedback will be discussed with the Contractor. Following these discussions, Officers will provide Members with an update on any improvement proposals put forward.
- 5.29 As part of the Contractor Support Appraisal, Officers are also seeking feedback from the waste collection operatives in regards to their use of the re3 transfer station and MRF (Material Recovery Facility). The survey will close on the 1st of March and Officers will present the results during the meeting on the 7th.

Christmas Glass Bank Collections

- 5.30 The re3 Partnership usually experiences higher tonnages of glass over Christmas and New Year compared to other times of the year. As a result of this additional glass, and delays to collections, (caused by bank holidays), extra preparations take place in the run up to Christmas. This includes the scheduling of additional lifts and checks at sites where overflows are thought most likely to occur.
- 5.31 As part of the pre-Christmas planning, reviews also take place early in the new year to identify any learning that can be applied for the next festive season.
- 5.32 As part of the 2023 review with the Contractor, Officers can confirm that overflows occurred at 17 out of 137 sites. Whilst this was a relatively small number of sites, some of the overflows were quite large. In 2023 the bank holidays fell directly after a weekend, and this may have been a factor in the scale of the overflows. In 2024, the bank holidays will fall mid-week, which should allow for more time to undertake checks.
- 5.33 In 2023 a number of the large overflows were only identified when the Contractor visited the sites to undertake the scheduled collections. The Councils will therefore seek to encourage residents to report full banks and overflows ahead of next Christmas, so that these can be addressed at an early stage.
- 5.34 Many of the 2023 overflows occurred at sites where overflows had not occurred previously and more than half also occurred in the first week of January. As a result, the Partnership will seek to undertake more additional lifts and checks in the week between Christmas 2024 and New Year.
- 5.35 Officers from re3 and the collection teams will meet with the Contractor in the autumn for more detailed planning for this year. This will include consideration of sites where it may be appropriate to add some temporary extra banks over the Christmas period.

Large WEEE Reuse

- 5.36 The re3 Partnership works with a local company which focuses on reuse. This company currently receives textiles, bric a brac, bicycles, books, DVDs and some small electrical appliances from the re3 Recycling Centres for reuse.
- 5.37 Alongside these items, there is an opportunity for re3 to send large electrical appliances (including fridges and TVs) for reuse.
- 5.38 Officers are in the process of liaising with the Contractor to seek additional information. A further briefing will be provided to Members at the meeting in June.

Vehicle Access at the Recycling Centres

- 5.39 The re3 Waste Acceptance Policy sets out the types of vehicles that can be used to deliver waste to the Recycling Centres. At present, box vans and trailers of greater than 10m are not permitted access. Trailers are also not permitted on site when towed by any vehicle other than a car. It was assessed that some larger vehicles and vehicle combinations can pose a safety risk to others because of their size.
- 5.40 The re3 Waste Acceptance Policy also sets out the types of vehicles the types of vehicles that require a commercial vehicle permit to access the recycling centres. Permits are designed to deter traders from seeking to deposit waste for free at the tax-payers expense, by enabling the Partnership to monitor number of visits where

deemed necessary and make contact with the user where business activity is suspected.

- 5.41 The vehicle access policy was last amended in 2016. Since then, the re3 partnership has introduced a recycling centre booking system, commenced a scheme for small local businesses to dispose of their waste and noted that vehicle usage is changing. (For instance, we are seeing greater use of camper vans within the recycling centres.)
- 5.42 To ensure that our access policies are up-to-date, effective and consistent across our range of services, it is recommended that Members instruct Officers to undertake a review. This should sit alongside a review of the trade waste scheme (which has now met the original capacity limit) and be conducted with the re3 Contractor, and with data from our booking system.
- 5.43 Subject to agreement from Members, Officers will aim to bring a recommendation to the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board in September 2024, for Member review and approval.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY

Head of Legal Services

- 6.1 None for this report.

Corporate Finance Business Partner

- 6.2 None for this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 None.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 None

Climate Impact Assessment

- 6.5 None.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

Not applicable.

Method of Consultation

Not applicable.

Representations Received

Not applicable.

Background Papers

JWDB Reports – January 2024

Contacts for further information

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Appendix One – Number of Uncancelled Bookings with DIY waste

	Smallmead			Longshot Lane		
	DIY Bookings	Total Uncancelled Bookings	DIY Bookings as a Percentage of the Total	DIY Bookings	Total Uncancelled Bookings	DIY Bookings as a Percentage of the Total
October	740	24045	3.1%	597	25445	2.3%
November	563	19740	2.9%	493	21895	2.3%
December	504	21151	2.4%	414	23407	1.8%
January	1046	21602	4.8%	1103	24167	4.6%

The Controlled Waste Regulations were amended from the 31st December.

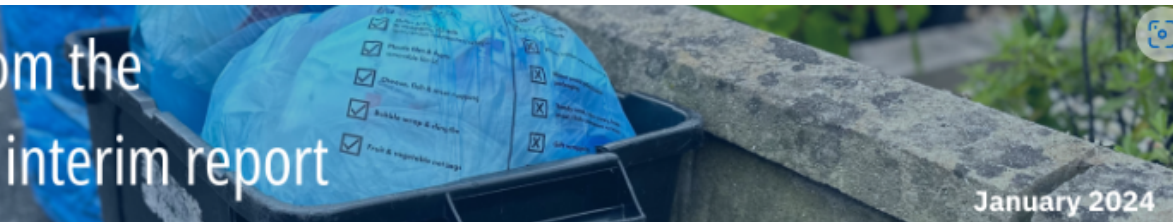
Appendix Two - Construction and Demolition Waste Income Change: January 2023 to January 2024.

	% Change
Rubble (Bags)	-97%
Rubble (Large Items)	-81%
Soil	-87%
Plasterboard	-72%
Asbestos	144%
Overall	-81%


Appendix Three – FlexCollect Project: One-Page Overview

Key findings from the FPF FlexCollect interim report

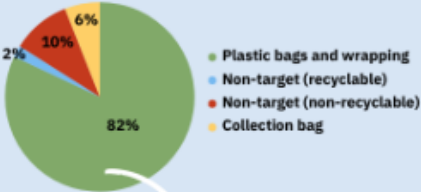
January 2024



The quality of collected flexible plastic is generally very good

 **90%** is recyclable.


Composition of collected materials




Material	Percentage
Plastic bags and wrapping	82%
Non-target (recyclable)	10%
Non-target (non-recyclable)	6%
Collection bag	2%


Collections have been added successfully into existing services

Collection vehicles have enough capacity for the collected materials




The service is popular with householders

 **60%** of households participate regularly


 **Over 89%** are 'very satisfied' with the service across four pilots surveyed

Average weight of flexible plastic collected

 **291g** per collection bag


Coloured bags are effective

- Encourages participation and collection of quality material
- Helps separate collected flexible plastics from other recyclables



Flexible plastic polymer composition of the 82% target material collected

Polymer	Percentage
Polyethylene (e.g. vegetable bags)	45%
Polypropylene (e.g. snack wrappers)	24%
Metalised packaging (e.g. crisp packets)	11%
All other flexibles (Including multi-material laminates)	2%

 Read the interim report at flexibleplasticfund.org.uk

Appendix Four – Contractor Support Appraisal

	Average Score (out of 5)
Management	4.0
Finance	3.3
Operations	4.2
Admin	3.7
Transfer Station/MRF	4.2
Recycling Centre (HWRC)	3.8

