

**TO: JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD**  
**7<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

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**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 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **That Members note the contents of this report.**
- 2.2 **That Members request an update on the rigid plastics recycling trial, as described at 5.18, to be presented at the next meeting.**

**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 Members will be aware that all three councils have now commenced a food waste collection. Food waste collections were rolled out to all houses in Reading Borough Council in February 2021 and the existing complement of, principally 240 litre, residual waste bins were replaced with smaller ones. In March 2021, Bracknell Forest commenced food waste collections across the borough and changed the collection frequency for residual waste from fortnightly to three-weekly. The reduction in residual waste capacity, alongside the new collections have had a positive impact in the recycling rate. In Wokingham Borough Council, new recycling bags were introduced at the start of 2021, and have also led to increased recycling rates.
- 5.2 The provisional recycling rates for April to July are presented below, with a comparison from 2020/21 shown in Appendix 1.

April – July 2021

BFC – 58.3%  
RBC – 52.9%  
WBC – 56.7%

- 5.3 A breakdown of the April recycling rate has been presented in Appendix 2. The growth in food waste, and its positive impact on recycling remains apparent. However an increase in garden waste has also had a small impact on the increase.
- 5.4 Bracknell Forest and Reading have seen increases in their kerbside recycling tonnages

following on from the recent changes. Decreases in residual waste capacity had the potential to lead to increases in MDR contamination, and Appendix 1 shows a slight decrease in the levels of target materials in Bracknell Forest. The same decrease has not been seen in Reading and Officers will continue to monitor this.

- 5.5 In Wokingham, the level of contamination remains below the level seen in 2020/21 as a result of the new recycling bags, which prevent paper and card from becoming saturated with rain water. Since the middle of March there has only been one date on which there were rejections of Wokingham MDR.
- 5.6 Officers will continue to provide regular updates on the recycling rate (which incorporates both the waste collected by the councils and that delivered to the two recycling centres).
- 5.7 The recycling rates for the re3 recycling centres are 67.84% for Longshot Lane and 72.10% at Smallmead. They are shown in Appendix 1, alongside a comparison from last year.

### **re3Grow**

- 5.8 Following a successful sale of re3grow compost in 2020/2021, the re3 Project Team is planning to increase the order to 10,000 bags of 40L compost for the next year. The compost is set to arrive early Spring 2021.
- 5.9 As requested during the last JWDB meeting, the Marketing and Communication Officer will strengthen messages about the composting process, focusing on the peat-free quality of re3grow compost. Communications will further explain, to residents, the cost structure, showcasing that the price per bag has been calculated to cover the costs of producing and supplying the compost only.

### **Rigid Plastics Recycling Trial**

- 5.10 At the Joint Waste Disposal Board Meeting in June 2021, Officers reported that a rigid plastics recycling trial would commence at both Recycling Centres in early July. The purpose of the trial was to enable the costs and benefits of the service to be assessed.
- 5.11 Although the trial is still ongoing, Officers can report that 33 tonnes of rigid plastics was sent for recycling in the first six weeks. There has also been positive feedback from the offtaker about low levels of contamination.
- 5.12 Communications activities, related to the rigid plastic trial, included issuing a local press release, securing an interview on BBC Radio Berkshire and publicising a range of promotional posts on the re3 and the council social media channels. In addition, the information about the trial was included in the re3 newsletter as well as separate newsletters sent out by the council's comms teams.
- 5.13 The database behind our re3cyclopedia app has been updated with advice relating specifically to the rigid plastic items we can collect. This allows residents to receive specific and correct advice, when searching for these items via the re3 website search and through the app.
- 5.14 To improve visibility of the new service, both sites have been equipped with relevant signage. It includes generic signs to help locate the correct recycling bays as well as supportive signage with images of accepted and forbidden items.
- 5.15 During the meeting in June, Members requested that a video of the recycling process

be made available to residents. A link to the offtaker's video has been posted on the re3 website and officers are currently considering options for an re3 version. This could show the full journey of the items deposited at the recycling centres.

- 5.16 Members also requested that the Partnership explore the purchase of products that could be used to purposefully demonstrate the circularity of the recycling process. Officers have liaised with the hard plastics reprocessor and confirmed that it will, through segregation of the re3 waste, be possible to obtain items that have been made, in part, from waste collected at the re3 recycling centres. At the time of writing the report, Officers are awaiting further details of these items, and hope to be able to provide this during the meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September.
- 5.17 The costs of recycling the rigid plastics are presented in Appendix Three. Members will note that the cost per tonne currently stands at £168. This compares to £147 per tonne to send the same waste to landfill.
- 5.18 Officers are liaising with the Contractor to optimise the haulage of the material and will present the conclusions of the trial during the next meeting in December.

### **Communications**

- 5.19 At the June 2021 re3 Board meeting, officers reported on the development of an online calculator for re3 residents.
- 5.20 The calculator illustrates the importance of collective and consistent action in helping to achieve necessary climate change adaptations. Small individual actions, if replicated across our three Boroughs consistently, can add-up to significant improvements.
- 5.21 The Calculator is now being advertised on the social media and newsletters and we would encourage Members and officers to share the link whenever appropriate.
- 5.22 re3 Officers and Contractor are preparing for the installation of England's first retrofittable AI-powered robotic waste picking system, at our Material Recycling Facility in Reading.
- 5.23 The recycle-picking robot, known as Recycleye Robotics is able to perform the physical tasks of identifying, picking and placing materials at a rate of 55 successful picks per minute. The intelligent picking system is powered by Recycleye Vision, an AI computer vision system, which detects all individual items on waste streams by material and object.
- 5.24 The robot is expected to be installed during September 2021 and is intended to improve the efficiency and operations of our sorting processes. A further briefing on its operational benefits will be provided as soon as the testing period is complete.
- 5.25 This achievement is possible thanks to our successful partnership with the Contractor, FCC Environment, and the Contractor's foresight in working with the intelligent waste management start-up, Recycleye.
- 5.26 The re3 Marketing and Communications Officer is working closely with the Contractor's Comms team to coordinate public relations activities. These will include: issuing press releases, photo-calls, seeking TV and national coverage and providing opportunities to showcase the robot to journalists and public.
- 5.27 At the end of September are two national weeks of action, Recycle Week, Great Big Green Week, and more locally the wider Reading Climate Change Festival. As ever,

re3 will be engaging in each event, providing opportunities for residents to learn about the councils and their partnership.

- 5.28 Following 2020, when tours to the re3 site could not be arranged due to social distancing, officers are hopeful that we will be able to welcome residents on tours once again. The tours of re3 have previously been most popular with residents who are keen to know what happens to their waste and recycling.
- 5.29 During the Recycle Week, officers will also schedule an online webinar directed at the re3 residents. The online webinars proved to be a successful tool to engage with a wide range of residents. This year's webinar will put a greater focus on the climate change, helping residents to further learn how recycling can help to reduce our carbon impact.
- 5.30 The Annual Environmental Report 2020/2021, a document summarising activities and achievements of the Partnership has been published on the re3 website. The report has been circulated with the Officers and press release has been issued to the local and trade media.

### **Bike Reuse**

- 5.31 Over the last few years, officers have been able to assist with a number of initiatives which have sought to make use of bicycles, delivered to the Recycling Centres when no longer of use to residents.
- 5.32 Primarily the bikes are provided to the Sue Ryder charity as well as Precycle on a regular basis.
- 5.33 In addition to the above collaborations and to give a new lease of life to bikes that have been left at its recycling centres by residents, re3 has made it possible for a local organisations to benefit from the bikes.
- 5.34 So far, these initiatives included a My Journey Wokingham, the Wokingham Borough Council's project that actively promote walking and cycling whilst working closely with local schools, communities and workplaces as well as Foundry College, Wokingham that has requested bikes for their outreach programme that includes a bike mechanics qualification directed at the vulnerable students.

## **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 Each of the re3 Councils has made commitments relating to climate change, and the UK Government declared a Climate Change emergency in 2019. As a result, a high-level assessment has been undertaken on the impact of recycling rigid plastics on carbon emissions.
- Energy Use - Plastics are made from oil, which is a fossil fuel. Recycling often takes a lot less energy than extracting raw materials.
  - Waste Generation – No known impacts
  - Transport – Greater levels of transport are involved in recycling hard plastics than in landfilling them. However, the full life cycle of the products may also be relevant. Oil production in other countries, particularly the United States is far greater than in the UK. If recycled plastics can be used locally, this may result in less transport overall.
- 6.6 It has also been assessed whether the decision will improve resilience to climate change impacts.
- Heatwaves – No known impacts
  - Drought – No known impacts
  - Flooding – No known impacts
  - High Winds/Storms – No known impacts
  - Disruption to Supply Chains – No known impacts
- 6.7 Whilst it hasn't been possible to quantify the benefits, the overall rating assigned to this trial is a 'low positive' one.
- 6.8 To help maximise the positive impacts, Officers are working with the Contractor to optimise the quantity of waste transported per load.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### 7.1 Principal Groups Consulted

Not applicable.

### 7.2 Method of Consultation

Not applicable.

### 7.3 Representations Received

Not applicable.

### Background Papers

October 2020 re3 Board

### Contacts for further information

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**APPENDIX 1 – WASTE STATISTICS**

**Bracknell Forest**

Category	Background	April-July 2021/22		April-Sept 2020/21	
		C1A Statutory Recycling Target	This target is the traditional 'recycling rate' target that should be comparable with other councils in the UK.	58.33%	
C1B Kerbside Recycling	Using the respective weekly council kerbside collections is an effective way to recycle. This indicator looks at this service alone.	39.80%		26.77%	
C1C Including Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA)	<i>Despite displacing 'virgin' materials, the recycling of IBA into building blocks is not yet counted as 'recycling' by the Government. Nonetheless, re3 recognises the value of this activity.</i>	7%		15%	
C1E Contamination	<i>Contamination is the term used to describe items which are not supposed to be present within recyclables. The level of contamination is, therefore, an indicator of the effectiveness of waste collection arrangements. It also has an impact on recycling because at high levels of contamination it can become harder to separate 'good' recyclables from the unwanted items.</i>	Target	82.43%	Target	84.99%
		Non Target Paper and Card	2.59%	Non Target Paper and Card	1.57%
		Other Non-Target and Non-Recyclable Material	14.98%	Other Non-Target and Non-Recyclable Material	13.44%

**Reading**

Category	Background	April-July 2021/22		April-Sept 2020/21	
		C2A Statutory Recycling Target	This target is the traditional 'recycling rate' target that should be comparable with other councils in the UK.	52.94%	
C2B Kerbside Recycling	Using the respective weekly council kerbside collections is an effective way to recycle. This indicator looks at this service alone.	36.74%		21.72%	
C2C Including Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA)	<i>Despite displacing 'virgin' materials, the recycling of IBA into building blocks is not yet counted as 'recycling' by the Government. Nonetheless, re3 recognises the value of this activity.</i>	10%		10%	
C1E Contamination	<i>Contamination is the term used to describe items which are not supposed to be present within recyclables. The level of contamination is, therefore, an indicator of the effectiveness of waste collection arrangements. It also has an impact on recycling because at high levels of contamination it can become harder to separate 'good' recyclables from the unwanted items.</i>	Target	80.67%	Target	80.39%
		Non Target Paper and Card	3.40%	Non Target Paper and Card	2.84%
		Other Non-Target and Non-Recyclable Material	15.93%	Other Non-Target and Non-Recyclable Material	16.77%

**Wokingham**

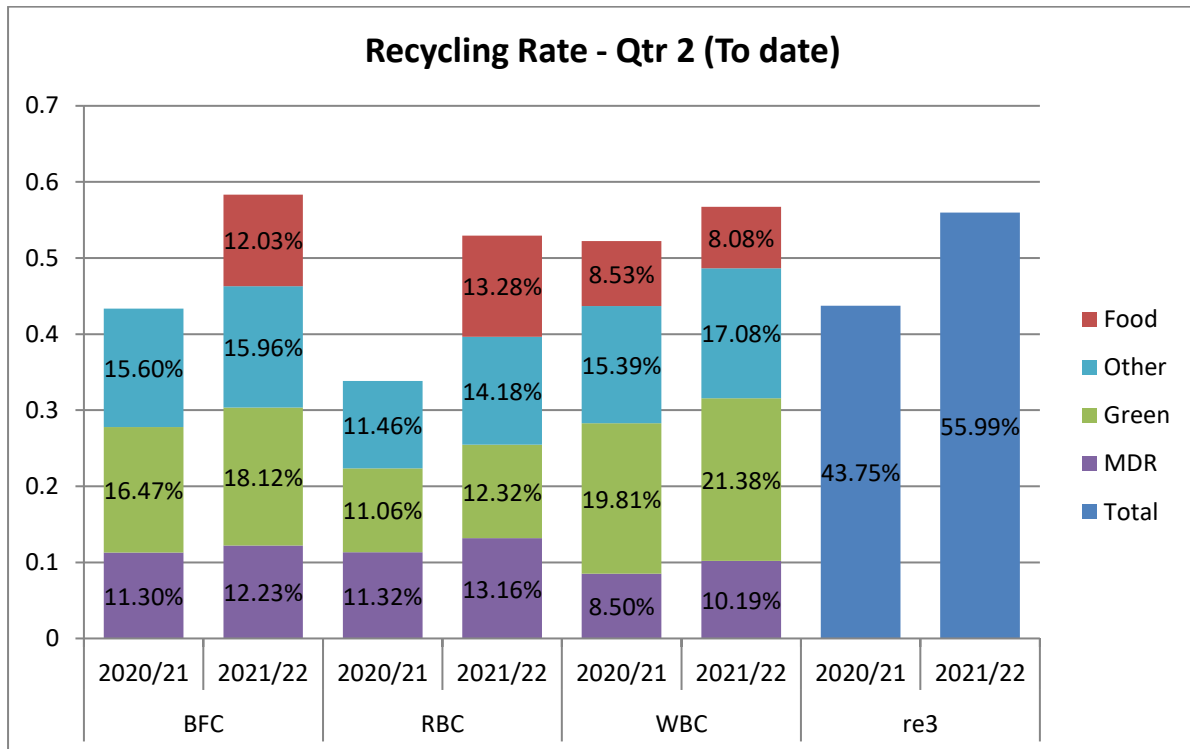
Category	Background	April-July 2021/22		April-Sept 2020/21	
<b>C3A</b> Statutory Recycling Target	This target is the traditional 'recycling rate' target that should be comparable with other councils in the UK.	56.74%		52.22%	
<b>C3B</b> Kerbside Recycling	Using the respective weekly council kerbside collections is an effective way to recycle. This indicator looks at this service alone.	37.46%		35.55%	
<b>C3C</b> Including Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA)	<i>Despite displacing 'virgin' materials, the recycling of IBA into building blocks is not yet counted as 'recycling' by the Government. Nonetheless, re3 recognises the value of this activity.</i>	8%		8%	
<b>C1E Contamination</b>	Contamination is the term used to describe items which are not supposed to be present within recyclables. The level of contamination is, therefore, an indicator of the effectiveness of waste collection arrangements. It also has an impact on recycling because at high levels of contamination it can become harder to separate 'good' recyclables from the unwanted items.	Target	86.32%	Target	80.24%
		Non Target Paper and Card	4.02%	Non Target Paper and Card	8.44%
		Other Non-Target and Non-Recyclable Material	9.66%	Other Non-Target and Non-Recyclable Material	11.32%

**Recycling Centres**

Category	April-July 2021/22		April-Sept 2020/21	
<b>D</b> Longshot Lane	67.84%		75.59%	
<b>D</b> Smallmead	72.10%		86.07%	



**APPENDIX 2 – BREAKDOWN OF RECYCLING RATE**



**APPENDIX 3 – RIGID PLASTICS RECYCLING COSTS (5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 – 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021)**

Description	Unit	Cost per Unit	No of Units	Total
Bin Hire at Longshot Lane	Per week	£50	6	£300
Transport - Longshot Lane to Smallmead	Per trip	£120	12	£1,440
Transport - Smallmead to Offtaker	Per trip	£360	6	£2,160
Gate Fee/Processing	Per tonne	£50	33	£1,651
Contamination Payment	Per tonne	£140	0	£0

**Estimated Total - For first 6 weeks**

**£5,551**

**Approximate cost per tonne**

**£168.11**