

TO: JOINT WASTE DISPOSAL BOARD
2nd March 2023

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 indicate how they would like Officers to proceed in relation to the potential introduction of banks for the collection of small electrical appliances, as described at 5.15.

2.3 That Members indicate which of the reuse options, listed at 5.33, they would like Officers to explore further, with the intention of returning to a subsequent re3 Board meeting with proposals.

2.4 That Members review the proposed revisions to charges for non-household waste, shown at 5.37, and confirm if these should be implemented to deliver full cost recovery.

2.5 That Members instruct Officers to allocate compost under the relaunched community scheme, on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to appropriate allocation between the councils and the fulfilment of the agreed criteria.

2.6 That Members agree a date for a first agenda setting meeting as described at 5.50.

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 2022 – January 2023 are presented below, alongside a comparison with the full year of 2021/22.

	2021/22 April-March	2022/23 April-January	Decrease
BFC	56.2%	54.6%	1.6%
RBC	51.5%	49.5%	2.0%
WBC	54.2%	53.2%	1.0%

- 5.2 Graphs setting out the quarterly performance have been included in Appendix One.
- 5.3 In Bracknell and Reading the residual waste tonnages in Qtr3 (October-December) were similar to those received the same period last year. In Wokingham residual waste tonnages were still lower than seen last year, but as recycling tonnages were down by a similar percentage, an equivalent recycling rate was achieved.
- 5.4 In each council, compostable waste remains an area in which fewer tonnes are generally being collected. (In Wokingham, however, it should be noted that a suspension of the green waste service took place in October 2021 resulting in more garden waste tonnages being received in Qtr3 compared to the same period of 2022).
- 5.5 A full analysis for 2022/23, including a breakdown by material stream, will be presented to the Joint Waste Disposal Board at the next meeting, in June.

Waste Tracking

- 5.6 Since 2004, Local Authorities have had to report their waste data to Government via the Waste Data Flow System. This includes the tonnages of waste collected and details of how and where each tonne is treated. Amongst other things, this is used to facilitate benchmarking and to monitor progress towards targets.
- 5.7 In addition, operators holding Environmental Permits must complete quarterly waste returns (about the waste they have received) and consignee returns (covering any hazardous waste).
- 5.8 Later in 2023, or in 2024, these systems are due to be replaced by a digital waste tracking service.
- 5.9 The waste tracking service is designed to provide information about waste transfer, movements and activities in a single place, and to provide 'real-time' information. Officers understand that waste from kerbside collections will need to be recorded at the point at which it arrives at the receiving site and the site operator will have to record what subsequently happens to it.
- 5.10 Defra is building the system up gradually and it is understood that they will work on plans for local authority usage and provision of data in the first half of 2023. Officers will seek to be part of the discussions so that the implications for data entry and monitoring can be better understood.

WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) Banks

- 5.11 At the January meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Members instructed Officers to investigate the idea of using a network of recycling banks to collect small electrical appliances. Such banks would provide a convenient service for residents, which could encourage them to dispose of electrical items in the correct manner. This in turn could help to maximise the recycling rate and reduce the risk of fire at the re3 facilities.
- 5.12 Officers have spoken to three local authorities who currently use banks to collect these items. Of the three, only one advised of issues with fires in the banks. These fires were not caused by the electrical items themselves but instead were caused by vandalism. It was therefore recommended that any re3 banks should be situated in locations with high footfall and good lighting.

- 5.13 The local authorities were also able to advise that they had had no issues with theft from the banks and that the banks are well used. However, some fly-tipping (particularly of WEEE too large to go in the banks) does occur.
- 5.14 Officers have consequently sought an indication of the costs of providing and emptying the banks from the reprocessor who currently collects these items from the recycling centres. At the time of writing this report, it is understood that there would be a monthly fee per bank of around £18. This information has been used to inform an expression of interest in relation to the Material Focus WEEE fund. Costs for monitoring and communication (which could be used to help discourage fly-tipping, as well as to promote correct use of the banks) have also been factored in.
- 5.15 At the time of the JWDB meeting in March, Officers should know if re3 has been invited to submit a full application in relation to funding for this project. If this invitation has been received, it is recommended that Members instruct Officers to complete this and to provide a briefing on the outcome. If this has not been received, Officers would recommend starting with a trial of a smaller number of banks so that the benefits in the re3 area can be fully assessed.

Recycling of Flexible Plastic Packaging

- 5.16 At the January Meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Members asked Officers to investigate options for recycling flexible plastic packaging.
- 5.17 As Members may be aware, a small number of Councils are currently trialling collections of plastic films via the Flexible Plastic Fund 'FlexCollect' Project. This project follows the proposal in the Defra consultation on Consistency for these items to be collected by all local authorities no later than March 2027. It seeks to understand a range of factors including: the volume of flexible packaging arising from households, the impacts of collecting this material on other recyclables, the success of various communications and the costs and challenges of collecting, sorting and reprocessing this.
- 5.18 The Councils taking part in the project are required to supply a range of data to help inform best practice and, in return, benefit from funding and project management support.
- 5.19 The FlexCollect team are currently looking for more Councils to take part in the trial and Officers have expressed an interest on behalf of the re3 Partnership. A meeting has subsequently taken place so that the Delivery Manager for the project could visit the MRF (Material Recycling Facility) and a discussion could take place about the practicalities of sorting, storing and reprocessing the waste. Subject to the outcomes of testing in the MRF, the wishes of the re3 Board, and the desire of the FlexCollect team to pursue the project with re3, further discussions will take place with the waste collection teams to identify a potential trial location.
- 5.20 Officers will keep Members updated as the discussion progresses.

Booking System Translations

- 5.21 At the Joint Waste Disposal Board meeting of January 2023, Members agreed to retain the booking system at the Recycling Centres. A variety of ways to supplement the booking system were discussed at this time.
- 5.22 One way to help minimise the risk of digital exclusion is to provide translations into other languages. Officers have previously investigated different routes via which this

would be possible and have now requested that the system provider add Google Translate to the booking form. Officers understand that this will provide options for the webform (including introductory text, booking questions and confirmation page) to be translated into most other languages.

- 5.23 Officers will work with the system provider to ensure that the function is located prominently on the form. It is expected that this work will be completed by early March.

Links Between Booking Systems and Fly-tipping

- 5.24 In 2022, DEFRA funded a project to examine whether there was a link between a national increase in fly-tipping and the use of booking systems at recycling centres.
- 5.25 A company conducted surveys and interviews with local authorities; and re3 Officers contributed information about the experience of the partnership through these routes. Fly-tipping statistics were also examined in detail for six local authority areas and a literature review was conducted.
- 5.26 A report (*'HWRC booking systems and incidents of fly-tipping – research into possible links'*) was published in January 2023 setting out the findings and conclusions from the project.
- 5.27 The report noted that no academic literature was found which provided evidence of a link between fly-tipping and booking systems. The report authors suggested that a lot of media coverage had been generated focussing on feelings and instincts, rather than evidence. In addition, no local authorities who had a booking system (or who previously had a booking system and then removed it), felt that their booking system had influenced fly-tipping numbers.
- 5.28 The report concluded that “a link between fly-tipping and booking systems cannot be ruled out, but from a look at the data there is clearly no indication that such a link exists.”
- 5.29 Most booking systems at recycling centres were introduced in response to the Covid pandemic and the report surmises that the pandemic itself, and its impact on waste tonnages, may have affected the fly-tipping statistics.

HWRC (Household Waste Recycling Centre) Reuse Options

- 5.30 At the JWDB meeting of January 2023, Members received a report from Officers, and presentation from the re3 Contractor, about the current reuse activities undertaken at the re3 facilities and the potential for future expansion to divert items from the waste stream.
- 5.31 Members will recall that the report set out some of the benefits of reuse. These spanned a range of categories including environmental, social and financial.
- 5.32 Following the Contractor's presentation, Members were invited to consider whether there were ideas and opportunities that Officers, and the contractor, should explore further.
- 5.33 Some of the new options mentioned or discussed were as follows:
- Repair workshops
 - Upcycling

- 'Libraries' (Through which a range of items could be borrowed).
- Permanent reuse shops (for instance at an offsite location)
- Online reuse shops

5.34 It is recommended that Members confirm which (if any) of the above options they would like Officers to investigate and subsequently report back on.

Review of HWRC Charges

5.35 As a result of increased costs, Officers have reviewed the prices being charged for disposal of non-household waste at the re3 recycling centres.

5.36 Current prices are designed to recover the cost of handling and disposing of non-household waste and are non-profit making. For construction and demolition waste disposed of by residents, the charges also ensure that the person benefitting from the works funds the cost, rather than this being covered by all taxpayers.

5.37 As Members have previously requested that prices be rounded, there are some materials for which an increase in costs is effectively already covered. However, there are a small number of materials where an increase would be unavoidable if costs are going to be fully covered in 2023/24. Officers therefore propose the following amendments to the pricing structure.

User	Material	Unit	Current Price	Proposed Price (where different)
Residents and Businesses	Plasterboard	25L	£1.50	
	Rubble	25L	£2.50	£3.00
	Soil	25L	£2.50	£3.00
	Asbestos	20kg	£8.00	
	Gas Canisters	Per item	£6.00	
Businesses	Bagged General Waste	25L	£1.50	
	Garden Waste	25L	£1.00	
	Wood	25L	£1.00	
	Paper, Cardboard, Tins, Cans, Plastic Bottles, Pots, Tubs and Trays	25L	£0	
	Glass Bottles and jars	25L	£0	
	Scrap Metal	25L	£0	
	Textiles	25L	£0	
	Bulky Residual Items	Per item	£7.00	£8.50
	Chairs, Armchairs, Stools, Cane sofas	Per item	£9.50	
	Sofas	Per item	£22.00	
	Recliners and Metal Framed Sofas	Per item	£46.00	
	Small Electrical Items	Per item	£1.00	
	Large Electrical Items (WEEE)	Per item	£4.50	£5.50
	Computers/TVs	Per item	£1.50	£2.00
	Fridge/Freezers	Per item	£5.00	£6.00
	Commercial Fridge/Freezers	Per item	£65.00	
	Ink Cartridges	Per item	£1.00	
	Engine Oil	5L	£1.00	

- 5.38 Members will recall that charges for non-household soil and rubble were previously set at £3 per 25L bag between October 2018 and April 2021.
- 5.39 Any agreed changes to the charges will be implemented from April 1st 2023. Changes to the prices would be updated on the re3 website, site signage and the booking webform.

Actions from the HWRC User Satisfaction Survey

- 5.40 The annual User Satisfaction Survey for the re3 Recycling Centres was conducted at the end of 2022 and the statistical results were presented to the meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board in January.
- 5.41 Members will recall that there was a high level of satisfaction at the re3 sites. At Smallmead the number of respondents rating their overall satisfaction levels as 4 or 5 out of 5 was 90% whilst at Longshot Lane, this figure was 89%.
- 5.42 In addition to the questions that generated numerical outputs, respondents were also asked if there was anything re3 could do to improve their next visit. Officers have analysed the feedback to identify some areas for further consideration and liaised with the contractor to propose some suitable actions. These are set out in Appendix Two, alongside some indicative timescales.
- 5.43 Officers will monitor implementation to ensure that high levels of satisfaction are maintained at the site. Officers also plan to include a summary of this table on the re3 website, so that residents can see how the Partnership is responding to their feedback.

Community Compost Scheme

- 5.44 At the January meeting of the Joint Waste Disposal Board, Members agreed to relaunch the community compost scheme with the bags of re3Grow left over from the 2022 project. Through the scheme, local community groups will again be able to apply to receive free bags of compost to help promote environmental principles, community activity and local improvement works.
- 5.45 During the first phase of the project, it was agreed that compost would be available for a set number of months, and a given number of bags would be available in each of these months for Councillors to allocate. When the project relaunches, Officers recommend that the compost be allocated on a first come-first serve basis, subject to the applicants meeting the advertised criteria, and there being a fair split between the authorities. This should help to minimise administration and speed up the approval process for users.
- 5.46 Community groups who were awarded compost in 2022, but who had not received it at the start of 2023, were approached in February to confirm if they still required the bags. Following this, Officers are able confirm that the number of bags available for allocation under the relaunched scheme are as follows:

Bracknell Forest: 1365

Reading: 1108

Wokingham: 494

- 5.47 If Members approve the recommendation at 5.45 above, Officers will keep Members informed as to the groups approved and the number of bags remaining.

Agenda Setting

- 5.48 As previously reported to the re3 Board, an audit of the re3 arrangements was completed in 2022.
- 5.49 Members will recall that one of the audit recommendations was for a section on risk management to be presented at meetings of the Joint Waste Disposal Board. Alongside this, it was proposed that the Chair of the Board should set an agenda and action plans for the quarterly meetings. This should enable the Board to look further ahead and mitigate against potential risks.
- 5.50 Officers consider that an Agenda Setting meeting, chaired by the Chairperson, may assist in forward planning. Members are therefore invited to agree a date for the first meeting.

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.

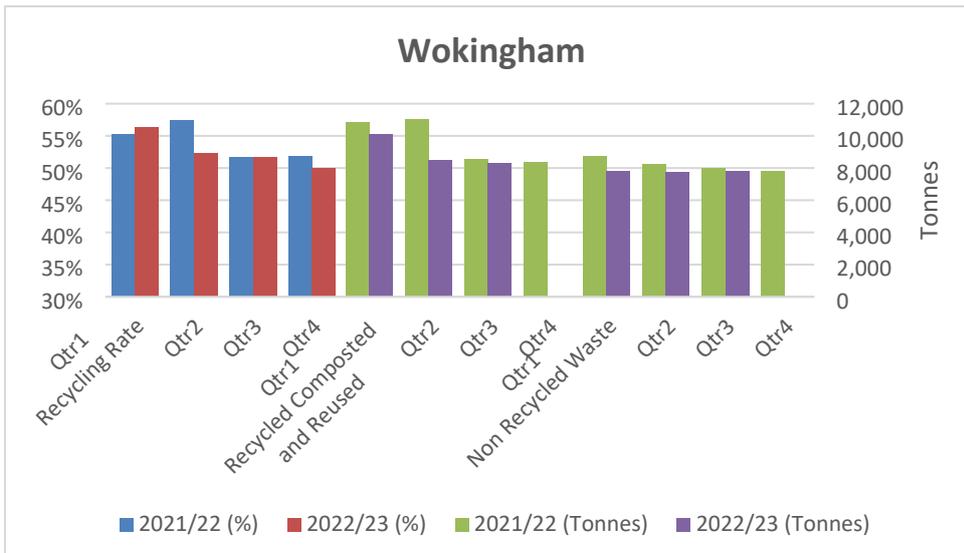
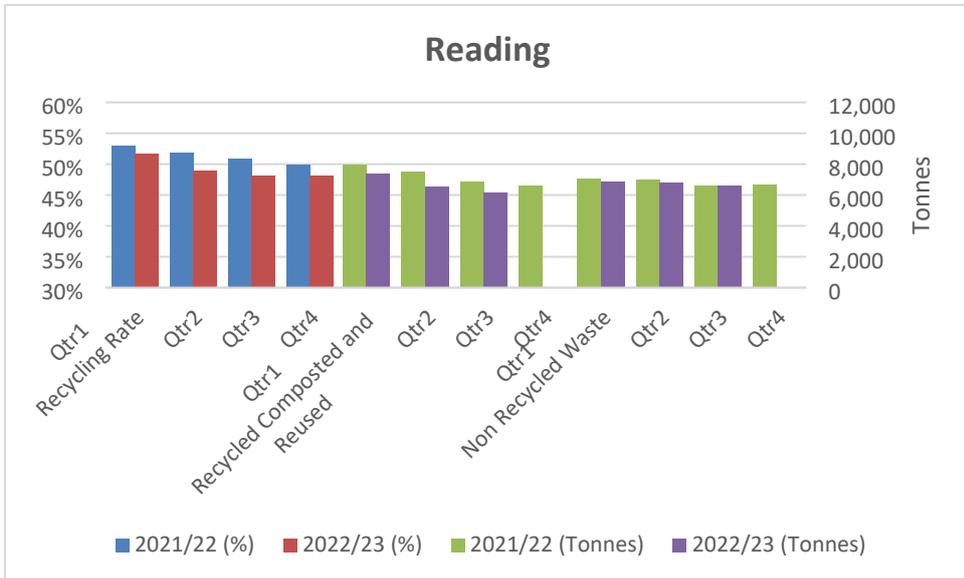
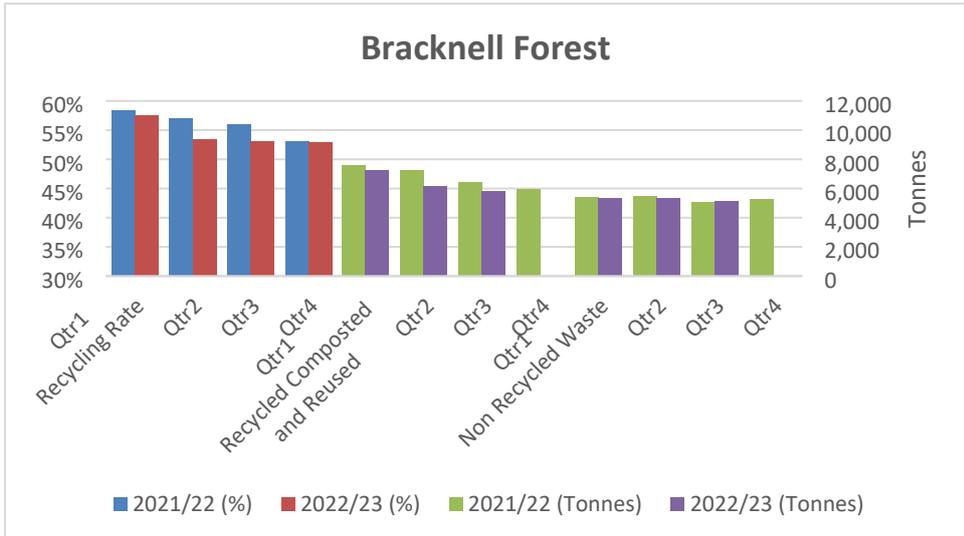
Background Papers

JWDB Reports - January 2023

Contacts for further information

Sarah Innes, re3 Monitoring and Performance Officer
0118 937 3459
sarah.innes@reading.gov.uk

Oliver Burt, re3 Project Director
0118 937 3990
oliver.burt@reading.gov.uk



Please note that the Qtr4 recycling rate for 2022/23 only currently reflects performance for January.

Appendix Two – Actions from the HWRC User Satisfaction Survey

Topic	User Feedback	Re3 Action/Response	Due Date
Bookings and Access	Remove the need for proof of address and introduce a car registration system	Proof of address is checked to ensure that re3 taxpayers are not funding the disposal of waste from other areas. This task is carried out by meet and greet staff who also fulfil a range of other functions (including taking payments, identifying non-authorised trade waste and checking bookings). We will talk to other councils who use digital services in place of these meet and greet functions to consider the potential advantages and disadvantages.	Autumn 2023
	Allow more access at short notice	1) We will reduce the booking policy from 1hr in advance to 30 mins in advance. 2) We constantly keep the number of bookings under review and will assess whether additional slots can be added.	Spring 2023
	Enable later cancellation of unwanted appointments	We will reduce the cancellation period from 3hrs to 1hr.	Complete
	Review missing bookings on the iPads	Our check-in system is in the process of being upgraded and it is anticipated that this will resolve the occasional problems with staff being unable to find a booking on the system	Spring 2023
	Make the booking form easier to find online	We will review options to make the link easier to find on the re3 website.	Spring 2023
Parking and Direction	Increase visibility of parking spaces in top half of the Longshot Lane site to reduce queuing	Officers will liaise with the Contractor to investigate potential options.	TBC
	Review signage for smaller items (e.g. batteries, paint)	Officers are currently liaising with the Contractor in relation to a full review of site signage.	TBC
	Prevent vehicles from parking on Island Road	Officers will discuss options with the highways team at Reading Borough Council.	Spring 2023
	Provide more direction for visitors when parking in the Smallmead HWRC	The Contractor will cover this point in a toolbox talk to staff. Staff will be encouraged to provide direction to vehicles who cause obstructions to others.	TBC

	Produce an online map of the site	We will update the map on site and look to add a virtual tour and map of the site online. This should help residents to plan their visit in advance.	Spring 2023
Other	Provide more assistance in unloading vehicles and ensure staff are welcoming	<p>1). The Contractor will cover this point in a toolbox talk to the staff.</p> <p>2) The Contractor will look to give staff the opportunity to undertake qualifications in customer care</p> <p>3) Officers will implement a 'mystery shopper' scheme to help ensure that agreed policies are being implemented consistently.</p> <p>4) Quarterly sessions with the meet and greet teams will take place so feedback can be given and received.</p>	TBC
	Remove or lower the barriers for garden waste at Longshot Lane	The barriers are in place to help keep walkways clear of waste and trip hazards and to enable maximum use of the recycling area. The barriers are set at 1.1m high which is the minimum legal requirement. This is the same height as the wall at the top of the facility over which general waste is deposited. We recognise that the yellow barriers are narrower than the concrete walls on site and will work with the contractor to investigate ways in which the design of the barriers could be improved. In the meantime, residents are encouraged to ask staff for assistance if this is needed.	TBC
	Review signage at the reuse areas to make it clearer which items are acceptable	Changes to the reuse signage have been agreed with the Contractor and the new signs will be printed and displayed on site.	TBC
	Recycle and reuse more items at the site – particularly plastic films.	Officers will review options for collections of plastic films at the recycling centres alongside participation in the FlexCollect project.	Summer 2023