

Agenda Item 7



LINCOLNSHIRE WASTE PARTNERSHIP

18 November 2021

SUBJECT :	Twin Stream Project Update
REPORT BY:	DAVID STEELS, NORTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL
CONTACT:	David_steels@n-kesteven.gov.uk

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In April 2021 Boston Borough Council were the first LWP partner to roll out the project to improve the quality of kerbside presented mixed dry recycling (MDR) which included the provision and use by all households of an additional 240 litre wheelie bin for storage and presentation of clean and dry paper and card.

This report focusses on the progress of the second partner to deliver the project, North Kesteven District Council.

DISCUSSIONS

Governance

See Appendix 1 for the current and past arrangements that are in place. Members voted unanimously to introduce the new waste policies after discussions and decisions at Executive Board, Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel and Member briefings. The Chairman of Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel has included it on the workplan for the next planned meeting on 26 January 2022.

Now that the Environment Act 2021 has become law, in due course there will be decisions that need to be taken that should support embedding the actions being carried out currently.

Wheelie Bins

The new (purple-lidded) paper and card bins have been distributed to households and, like in the trial in North Kesteven two years ago, initial feedback was around the space needed

to accommodate the bin. These issues have now been largely ameliorated through advice, engagement and time.

See Appendix 2 for key dates and lessons learned and appendix 5 for details on collections.

Week commencing 11 October saw the first week of MDR 'tag-and-reject' where recycling bins were checked by crews, each supported by officers from LCC and NKDC to help with the resident engagement. Any bins with visible and substantial non-target materials (contaminants) were not taken, logged and a tag attached to the bin explaining why the bin was left. This approach has continued for both MDR and paper & card bins.

The risk of residual waste bins (black in NK) overflowing or side waste being presented did not materialise. This could suggest that bin sizes for the majority of our customers are sufficient. However, the recent policy change to make 240 litre bins standard (previously new residual bins supplied were 180 litre) will need to continue to be monitored for any potential changes to waste volumes.

Communications

All households in the district received a letter, leaflet and calendar explaining how the revised system would operate.

Subsequently, comments were received suggesting that residents need to understand what can go in each of the bins (rather than what can't). Videos, social media posts, press releases, emails to waste collection update subscribers, radio and TV concentrated on promoting the 'Right Thing, Right Bin' partnership which aimed to do just this.

There was a theme around 'soft plastics' and both a lack of understanding around what this means and also a conflict with some of the messages on packaging.

Some residents were not aware this was a Lincolnshire Waste Partnership initiative and therefore planned to be rolled out countywide, thinking that it's just North Kesteven being targeted. Appendix 3 shows that communications have been issued across Lincolnshire for some time

Partnership advice would therefore be to continue to share messages around the common recycling mix and to tackle contamination, if only to make later rollouts in other districts easier; the partnership has already supported a partnership-wide recycling collection mix and therefore no further local decisions should be necessary.

Videos, social media, website and press releases have tried to address concerns expressed by households over the past few weeks. A letter was sent to all 10,000 households with a rejected bin after the first 'Tag & Leave' MDR week. Home visits by LCC Engagement Officers commenced, starting with our most vulnerable households who receive an 'assisted pull' collection and will continue with those who request them. Feedback so far has been positive, with council compliments received because of it.

Some customers continue to press their point through various channels despite best efforts to inform. The initial promoted engagement route for conversations and actions is via our Customer Services colleagues as this ensures a manageable, trackable and consistent message.

Customer Services

See Appendix 4 for timelines and lessons learned. Colleagues have been subject to significant pressures and, at time, verbal abuse and this has had a toll on some.

Members and Corporate Management Team colleagues have met and engaged with teams which was very welcomed.

Collections, Training, Risks and Conclusions

Please see Appendices 6, 7 and 8 for summaries of training, risks and results of the above endeavours to date. Contamination levels are lower than those previously (previously the typical range was 30% - 35%) and therefore an improvement in the quality of recycle. Looking forward, the test will be to maintain / improve the outcomes achieved so far.

Appendix	Title
1	Governance (reflection and way forward)
2	Wheelie bins
3	Communications
4	Customer services
5	Collections
6	Training
7	Risks
8	Results to date

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership notes the report.

APPENDIX 1: Governance (reflection and forward view)

18 December 2018 Council resolved:

1. That the draft Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy shown at Appendix 1 be approved and adopted, subject to the Strategy in the same form being formally adopted by Lincolnshire County Council as Waste Disposal Authority and all the other waste collection authorities in Lincolnshire; and
2. That a Programme Delivery Manager be funded through the Environment Reserve, jointly with other Lincolnshire Waste Partnership members at a cost of £7,100 per annum for a period of 3 years to support the delivery of the strategy action plan.

The JMWMS action plan included:

Action	Expected Outcome/Update
To tackle contamination in our current recycling stream, between now and when the Mixed Dry Recycling contract is re-let in 2020, develop an effective, simple public communication campaign.	An assessment of the impact of the two stream collection methodology (separate paper/separate food) against the baseline and in 5 and 10 years could this be three stream i.e. Food, Paper / card and Cardboard and others (plastic bottles, glass containers etc).

3 December 2020 Executive Resolved

1. That the introduction of paper and card collections, pending the outcome of a consultation exercise and subsequent decisions on the draft waste collection and waste enforcement policy be supported in principle.
2. That separate paper and card collections in the trial areas continue, pending the outcome of a consultation exercise and subsequent decisions on the draft waste collection and waste enforcement policy.
3. That consultation on the draft policy framework shown at Appendix A be approved.

23rd June 2021: Waste Strategy update to Environment OSP

15th July: Council resolved:

1. That the proposal for the introduction of District-wide twin stream recycling collection and the expansion of the current separate kerbside paper and card collections to the remaining households within the North Kesteven District, be approved.
2. That the draft Waste Collection and Waste Enforcement Policy be approved.
3. That the Council's TEEP assessment for the above be noted.

28th July: Briefing session to all Members

31st August: Waste Policy change, website updated

26 January 2022: Waste Strategy update to Environment OSP.

Every Friday: Waste Strategy weekly project governance (Director of Resources, Head of EPP, Waste & Street Scene Manager, LCC Programme Manager).

Weekly: Twin Stream Project Rollout Group (Waste & Street Scene Manager, LCC Programme Manager, reps from Comms, Customer Services and others as needed)

Monthly ongoing: NKDC Waste Strategy Briefings (Leader, Executive Board Member (EPP), Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Head of EPP). Next scheduled for 25 November.

3-times per year: Lincolnshire Waste Partnership (Leader, Executive Board Member (EPP), Head of EPP). Next scheduled for 18 November

Monthly ongoing: Strategic Officers Waste Group (Lincolnshire Waste Partnership): (Head of EPP, Waste & Street Scene Manager). Next scheduled for 13 December

Ongoing: Corporate Management Team (project updates and relevant decisions)

APPENDIX 2: Wheelie Bins

From 26 July: 240 litre black with purple lid bins procured by LCC and arrived into various sites in NK from supplier (MGB)

2 – 27 August. District divided into 3 areas for the contacted distributor to deliver.

- Missed bins recorded and sent to distributor to revisit
- Customers who refused bins: Distributer advised NKDC and log maintained
- Opportunity taken to identify existing and new 'assisted pulls' for vulnerable residents.
- Some queries regarding water on lids; video response prepared and shared via social media
- Messages shared during this time, including when areas were complete
- Mostly 1100 litre bins repurposed and distributed to communal / shared and 'schedule 2' (schools, community halls etc) sites.

5 October: Requests for purple bins had slowed right down

Issues / Lessons Learnt

- Additional operational pressure for the team by having to deliver missed purple bins
- Reputational impact from customers not having bins
- Data sharing agreement must be put in place as part of the contract to mitigate against data loss.
- Control should be in place to ensure list of premises and maps are signed off once completed and returned to the office for checking
- The importance of assurance regarding health and safety and operational practices of delivery contractor

APPENDIX 3: Communications

1 June: Scripts prepared including for forms and the web. LCC support started.

Notable ongoing actions:

- Ongoing sharing of invitations to sign up to receive recycling and waste-specific emails
- New friendly URL redirect for www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/recycling. A new page explained the next steps and, initially, to expect post of a letter, leaflet and calendar.
- Promotion and dynamic expansion / revision of a Frequently Asked Questions page to mitigate customers emailing or picking the phone up to ask questions.

Notable project communications-related joint working:

- Lincolnshire Waste Residents Panel discussions / consultations
- Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC): video presentation given. LALC published all info on their website and in parish newsletters to all NK parish members. They also received and shared press release information.
- School video prepared. Assistance from Beupac Ltd (Mid UK – materials recycling facility operator) communication team helped
- Plastic-Free Sleaford group engagement: support through social media

Notable outside event attendance:

- 24 July: Heckington Show. Positive feedback, good position, good display. Customers came to the team. Common theme was soft plastics questions.
- 4 September: RAF Digby families day
- 4 September: Eastbanks Green, Sleaford
- 26 October: St Aiden's Park, North Hykeham

All NK households received:

- Letter
- Calendar
- Leaflet ('Right Thing, Right Bin')

Letter variations produced:

- NK residents' household pack
- Those currently on the trial
- Communal households
- New build households
- Paid for posts in different languages

Other key dates:

13 July: Information for Members produced and shared; leaflet and FAQs.

29 July: Social media campaign commenced

23 August: 14 new vehicle banners

31 August: Videos produced and shared, including:

- You now have your bin, how to use it, right thing right bin

- Waste journey
- Bin lids
- Bin sizes
- Soft plastics/crisp packets
- This is what the leaflet says, this is what we mean.

11 October: Facebook live Monday morning (first day of 'tag-and-reject')

From 18 October: Considerable press coverage. Local papers, radio, TV

Overall picture from the Communications Team:

- We continue to see vastly increased demand on social media channels. Three posts published at the start of green-lidded week, have over 300 comments. These are largely negative and necessitate individual responses as they raise a range of questions/concerns. We've at the same time seen high demand on direct messages, and some individuals commenting multiple times across all threads and posts.
- During the previous green-lidded collection of tag and take we saw the same level of high demand, with individual posts reaching between 100-200 comments and a large number of direct messages. This places demand alongside all else the comms team responds to and is required for across the Council, including both reactive and proactive work on green and purple-lidded (ie press queries, generating creative content, etc).
- As is the nature of the beast of social media – many queries/comments have required urgent responses in order to be of the most assistance and manage the ongoing conversations around the issue.

Communications examples:

- A number of comments on social media are asking us to reevaluate based on the response across social media and on the ground:
 - *Can we have a bigger grace period on green-lidded, especially following rollout of purple lidded? It's too much all at once.*
 - *Can you at least take the next collection of green-lidded, even if that means still tagging them?*
- The other queries we've had range in substance and subject, but have focused on these themes and in addition often link back to the above:
 - *I will now put all my waste in my black bin/burn it/fly-tip it.*
 - *I've tried my hardest and had green and/or purple rejected and now don't want to recycle.*
 - *This is putting people off from recycling and I'm concerned about the effect this has on the environment.*
 - *I'm angry as I don't believe this is what I pay Council Tax for.*
 - *What about those who are vulnerable/my elderly neighbour had their bin rejected?*
 - *Can you give more help, like stickers to send out to households to put on their bins?*
 - *Some misunderstanding on our role i.e 'why can't you keep sorting the waste rather than making household do it, this is what we pay council tax for'; 'Where does it all go anyway – is it being sent abroad?'*

APPENDIX 4: Customer Services

1st June

- LCC provide 2 assistants to support CS colleagues
- recycling@n-kesteven.gov.uk email address set up
- CS briefing meeting with Boston BC
- IT systems (Bartec & Achieve) prepared and deployed.

27th July:

- LCC team embedded and trained

August:

- On the whole customers agreeing to try the bins
- Not masses of people rejecting
- “What happens if” document available to colleagues

21st September:

- CSC staff have been under tremendous pressure and concern is highlighted to the wellbeing of the team.
- Reaction to the tagging was “how dare you” rather than thank you for the information
- Collate the tone/content of the calls we are getting.
- Formal comments being captured.

5th October

- Team preparations for the unpleasant customers
- Wellbeing a high priority

18th October:

- Call recording working and calls retrieved
- Letter has gone out to the 10,000 households whose bins were not collected due to them containing non-target materials (contaminants).
- Offer the opportunity of a visit
- Many wanting to speak to manager; they are directed to the Customer Feedback Policy and in particular if they wish to make a complaint and receive a written response from the Head of EPP.

Lessons Learnt

- Culmination of the last 18 months (including the impacts of Covid-19) has impacted the changes.
- CSC colleagues under pressure.
- Tolerance level of customers.

APPENDIX 5: Collections

Timetable of first collections under the new policy:

- W/c 6th September – residual bins
- W/c 13th September – MDR: ‘tag-and-take’ (bins with contamination were emptied and a tag applied explaining what the contaminants were).
- W/c 20th September – residual
- W/c 27th September – paper/card ‘tag-and-reject’. Household details recorded where bins are contaminated
- W/c 4th October – residual
- W/c 11th October – MDR: ‘tag-and-reject’. Household details recorded where bins are contaminated

Each recycling week, crews were supported by an additional officer (‘Engagement Officer’) jointly resourced by LCC and NKDC. They supported the crews by assisting them in checking that the contents of bins were target recyclables, tagging bins where not and providing a local lead on responses to any householder queries during the round collection.

w/c 16 August: Final sack collection (therefore not knowingly accepting thin plastic bin bags in the future).

13 September: It became clear early on that the 30,000 tags for ‘Tag & Reject’ ordered would not be enough. The supplier turned the order round and a further 25,000 arrived two days later.

13 September – week-long collection of MDR (green-lidded) and paper/card (purple-lidded) bins (in separate vehicles) in the trial area, aligning trial areas with collection weeks for the rest of the district. This caused additional operational pressures but all bins were presented which shows households read the communications sent.

w/c 4 October: Visits made to rejected purple bin households. Most visits were engaging and overall well received and positive. Customers not in we are leaving proactive contacts.

14 & 15 October: Cllrs Wright and Head (Leader and Executive Member) accompanied crews and provided engagement support assistance with ‘tag-and-reject’.

w/c 18 October: Visits by NKDC Officers to vulnerable households (list of households with assisted pull collections) and LCC Performance Improvement Officers visiting those requesting a home visit after receiving a letter subsequent to presenting a contaminated bin. After this week visits became reactive through customer services contact.

w/c 25 October: 2nd paper and card collection. LCC officers accompanying crews.

w/c 8 November: 2nd MDR ‘tag & leave’ week. LCC & NKDC officers accompanying crews.

Lessons Learnt

- Use of ASB to support the team in the event of vexatious or known complainants

- Ensure regular checks are made of the vehicle cameras to ensure all working in the event of requiring evidence
- Keep the support team member with the same crew where possible to build up confidence/trust
- Sch 2 and communal properties were a bigger task than we anticipated, hindsight is we should have started earlier
- Order enough tags for “Tag & Take” - 1 for each property
- Public criticism for using a plastic tag that can’t be recycled (they were weatherproof),
- Explain which bin to put the tag in when it has been read

APPENDIX 6: Training

Stage 1 (MDR clean-up / DEFRA consultation / P&C target material) - Awareness just after Council meeting on the 15th July

Stage 2 – (MDR clean-up/ P&C detail) - July (Customer Services), August (Crews)

Further training, 2 crews at a time, w/c 26th July just prior to bin delivery

w/c 2nd August – general information

w/c 16th August – their role

w/c 6th September – “Working with the public during change”

10th September – prior to tag and take commencing w/c 13th

24th September – prior to first collection of purple lid

8th October – prior to tag and leave commencing w/c 11/10

Wider briefings

- 28th July: Member briefing.
- 5 August: “Right Thing Right Bin – Live!” to all NKDC staff
- 23 August: Training on techniques to diffuse confrontation
- 24 September: Training for paper and card collection consistency (what we will and won’t take) in preparation for the first paper and card collections
- 11 October: Recycling consistency training
- 8th November: Refresher recycling consistency
- Daily feedback of progress

Lessons Learnt

- Briefings to include support team to develop bonding
- Confrontation training was well received
- Importance of feeding back progress

APPENDIX 7: Risks

Live risks

- Covid-19 – Outbreak of variant causing self-isolation amongst the team
- Confrontation – Risk that customers will be confrontational if bins are left
- Schedule 2 and communals - contamination still present
- Boston Borough amnesty – agreed to empty blue recycling bins that have been contaminated by continued offenders. Press release to BBC customers to put out blue and residual bin then all waste will go into the residual waste stream. Agreed risk to this project and to the partnership.
- Longevity of maintaining engagement when LCC team moves on

Mitigated / closed risks

- Bin supply – Bin manufacturer not able to deliver on order
- Post office – Potential delivery delay of letters
- Storage of bins at NK depot
- Purple bin delivery – Risk that not everyone will have received their bin
- CSC staffing – potential that we may have lost some CSA's at end of August. Need to factor in having to training new members of the team during rollout

APPENDIX 8: Results to date

Type	PAPER AND CARD		MDR	
Week commencing	27/9/21	25/10/21	11/10/21	8/11/21
Tag & Reject week	1	2	1	2
No. of households	53704	53704	53704	53704
Bin not out	1991	1772	1507	1474
Wrong bin presented	222	-	-	-
Total bins presented correctly	51491	51932	52197	52230
Presentation rate	95.9%	96.7%	97.2%	97.3%
Contaminated	756	413	10605	4509
% contaminated/rejected (of those presented)	1.4%	0.8%	20.3%	8.5%
% presented bins collected (acceptable)	98.6%	99.2%	79.7%	91.5%
Tonnage collected	419.17	326	325.74	384.23
WTS Sample station daily average target materials	98.6%	98%	84%	80%