

## **Written Update on Household Recycling Centres**

Current government and industry advice, and that of our own public health colleagues, is that the 2m social distancing arrangements need to remain in place wherever possible although this obviously remains under regular review. The requirement to continue to achieve social distancing means that every other unloading bay needs to remain closed, which has resulted in a reduction of onsite capacity of over 60% on average (this is different site by site as their individual configuration mean some are able to accommodate more bays than others).

I regularly participate in calls with other local authorities across the SW region, and remain in weekly email contact with other local authority colleagues across the UK, primarily in relation to HRC operations. The vast majority of councils continue to have access restrictions in place, and in order to achieve the necessary social distancing on sites. All have similarly reduced capacity at their HRCs, and many (though not all) are operating a HRC booking system.

Throughout the period of the pandemic, officers have sought to work with our contractors to provide the best level of access possible for Wiltshire residents, whilst ensuring that the sites could continue to operate safely. Without the booking system it was clear that the demand on sites led to significant queuing on the highway, resulting in significant additional cost incurred through the necessary provision of trained traffic marshals. These also needed to be augmented by council staff that volunteered to assist on the highway, some whilst unable to undertake their normal duties due to Covid-19.

The booking system has allowed the sites to remain open (and also allowed us to reopen the Stanton St Quinton site for the first time since being closed on 24 March, due to concerns of traffic queues adjacent to j17 of the M4). However, they have removed the queuing from the highway, and this benefits other neighbouring businesses that may be struggling to continue to operate after reopening.

Since the booking system was put in place in June, we have taken the opportunities to extend the number of unloading bays where possible, and are also assessing whether the current visit durations could be reduced to accommodate more visits. Having now also allowed vans and trailers back into the sites, we are now also assessing whether the bays allocated for this use are appropriate in number or could be reduced, which would also allow more car slots.

Therefore, my view is that the booking system will remain in place for now although we shall continue to look at the potential for extending the number of slots available for booking. The need to continue to limit the numbers of people on the sites at any one time would mean that abandoning the booking system would result in a return to exceptional queues on the highway, with the various additional hazards and confrontations that this would cause.

We are also receiving many favourable comments from those that have accessed the sites using the booking system, with many requesting a form of booking system be considered for permanent implementation. However, I do appreciate the frustration of those that have encountered difficulty in obtaining a slot.

Martin Litherland – Head of Waste Management