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Frequently Asked Questions Aberdeenshire Waste Strategy 2019- 2023

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Development of New Waste Strategy

Q: Why does the Council need a new waste strategy?

A: Recycling is more cost effective than landfilling waste, it is beneficial for the environment and local communities. Recyclables have a value attached to them as a resource: the longer they stay in use, the better for the taxpayer, the environment and local communities.

We analysed the contents of 1,200 residents' landfill bins and landfill skips at four recycling centres in 2016/17 to discover what is still being put in them. More than half of the materials put into residents' landfill bins could have been recycled using services already available. And around 40% of material put into landfill skips at recycling centres could also have been recycled, see graph below:



This equates to around 40,000 tonnes of perfectly recyclable material being landfilled at a cost of £4.7 million a year. Money is being spent dealing with materials that could have been recycled and which could be much better spent on other essential services.



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The new waste strategy has been developed to try to ensure Aberdeenshire maximises the environmental, community and financial benefits from the waste it produces.

It will also help the Council comply with statutory obligations set out in the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012, which will ban landfilling of biodegradable waste by 2021. This means we can no longer send residual household waste to landfill after January 1, 2021 and have to find an alternative.

Q: What is the Council doing to reduce the amount of packaging manufacturers put on the market?

A: The Council has no regulatory tools to control the amount or recyclability of packaging put on the market by producers. However we do lobby local and central governments and support any extended producer responsibility initiatives, including the Scottish Government's [Deposit Return Scheme](#) for drinks packaging.

Q: What materials can be recycled in Aberdeenshire?

A: The following web page provides details of what can be recycled in Aberdeenshire <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/waste/household-rubbish/a-z-list-of-materials/>.

In terms of the current kerbside recycling service, the following can be put in the blue-lidded recycling bin:

- Plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays – doesn't matter what it says about recyclability on the packaging, we also take black plastic trays and tubs.
- Metal tins, cans, aerosols and foil (including foil trays).
- Paper, card and cardboard.
- Cartons (food and drink tetra-paks).

The following can be put in the food recycling caddy:

- Tea bags and coffee grounds.
- Out-of-date food including meat & fish.
- Plate scrapings and leftovers.
- Meal preparation waste (peelings, egg shells etc.).

Q: The new strategy is all about saving money, isn't it?

A: The new waste strategy aims to maximise reuse and recycling. Recycling is good for the environment because it reduces the need for natural resources and reduces carbon emissions, good for local communities by creating additional jobs and reducing pollution and is also a good use of tax-payers' money as sending materials for recycling is significantly cheaper than landfilling them. The new waste strategy aims to ensure Aberdeenshire maximises the environmental, community and financial benefits from the waste it produces.



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Q: How did the Council consult residents on the new strategy?

A: [The Big Recycling Challenge](#) survey and focus group were run in February 2018 to get feedback on some of the proposals. A public consultation on the resulting draft waste strategy was carried out in September 2018.

The consultation was advertised through local media, social media, posters at libraries, Council service points, recycling centres, and the Council's website. It was also advertised in a 'recycling reminder' postcard posted to all households in Aberdeenshire. In addition, officers contacted community councils, gave presentations at some community council meetings and events, and provided briefing sessions to councillors prior to the consultation starting.

Q: When will the changes be made and how will you let residents know?

A: The new strategy was approved in January 2019 and is for five years from 2019 to 2023. The implementation plan is currently being finalised. Most changes at recycling centres will take place in 2019, whilst changes to kerbside services will start in 2020.

The roll-out of the new kerbside service will be staged. Residents will be contacted by post before their kerbside service changes.

Any changes to services will be advertised in advance on the Council's website, social media and through local media. We will also advertise changes to recycling centre services at recycling centres and inform trade customers of changes to their services. To keep up to date about changes to services, follow us on Facebook [@AberdeenshireWaste](#).

New kerbside collection service changes

Q: Why is the Council changing the kerbside collection service again?

A: Aberdeenshire Council first introduced a kerbside recycling service to households in 2005-2006, and rolled out a more user-friendly kerbside recycling service to all households in 2013-2015. Whilst the new service significantly increased the use of the kerbside recycling service by households, the recycling levels have now plateaued.

Analysing the contents of residents' landfill bins in 2016/17, we found that well over half of the materials put into them could have been recycled using services already available to residents.

[Research across the UK](#) shows one of the most effective ways to encourage residents to use recycling services available to them is to reduce the quantity of non-recyclable waste collected from households.

We appreciate residents still require more information about how to use recycling services, specifically about which plastics can be recycled (in short, we can take all plastic bottles, pot, tubs and trays, and we can't take plastic bags, pouches or wrappers). However, the provision of information will not be enough, other changes are required to maximise reuse and recycling.



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Q: When will the new kerbside collection service start?

A: The new kerbside service will be rolled out in 2020-2021. For operational reasons, we will roll-out the new service in stages, depot by depot. As the roll-out progresses, we will contact residents in advance by post. To keep up to date about changes to services, follow us on Facebook @AberdeenshireWaste.

Q: How will the new kerbside collection service work?

A: We will move to a 3-weekly collection cycle. One bin and a food waste caddy will be emptied every week as follows:

- **Week 1:** Food waste caddy and non-recyclable waste bin.
- **Week 2:** Food waste caddy and blue recycling bin.
- **Week 3:** Food waste caddy and blue recycling bin.

Q: Why do you not provide the kerbside service favoured by residents as part of the public consultation?

The public consultation ran in September 2019 showed that 49% favoured Option A compared to 39% favouring Option B. Whilst more respondents indicated a preference for Option A (fortnightly/4-weekly cycle) rather than Option B (3-weekly cycle), the difference was much smaller than in [The Big Recycling Challenge](#) survey, which ran in February 2018. At that point residents were asked whether they preferred smaller non-recyclable waste bins (69% of respondents), less frequent non-recyclable waste collections (26%) or both (5%).

The results showed that whilst more people still would prefer keeping their fortnightly non-recyclable waste collection, many more can now understand the merits of the 3-weekly collection cycle proposed.

Whilst both kerbside options remain operationally deliverable the waste service recommended adopting the 3-weekly collection cycle on the following grounds:

1. It puts the right focus on recycling by providing more recycling capacity and more collections of recyclable materials (two out of three weeks) than non-recyclable waste.
2. In addition to UK and Scottish research, there is plenty of evidence that an average Aberdeenshire household would be able to manage with the amount of non-recyclable waste capacity the 3-weekly collection cycle provides if they used the recycling services available to them, including the food waste caddy. The waste analysis undertaken in 2016/17 showed that well over half of the material put into an average non-recyclable waste bin is actually recyclable using the existing recycling services. If households did so, they would generally manage with the new non-recyclable waste capacity provided.
3. In the Big Recycling Challenge survey carried out in February 2018, 50% of respondents said they already manage with the non-recyclable waste capacity the 3-weekly collection cycle provides, or even less. Impacts on larger households and others in need of more non-recyclable waste capacity, for example due to medical needs, will be mitigated by providing such households with an additional non-recyclable waste bin, as long as they can



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demonstrate they effectively use the recycling services, including the food waste caddy, and meet the criteria for additional non-recyclable waste bins (see Procedure 4 in [Waste Collection Operational Procedure](#)).

4. Whilst a 3-weekly non-recyclable waste collection might feel a bit daunting to residents to start with, as did the move from weekly to fortnightly collections in Aberdeenshire a few years ago, experience from other Scottish local authorities (such as Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Moray and North Lanarkshire) shows that it is workable and can lead to a significant increase in recycling rates.

Q: How can the Council justify reducing services – what do I pay my Council Tax for?

A: We will continue emptying bins weekly from every household – food waste caddies will be emptied once a week, together with one of the two other bins.

To maximise recycling, we will change how often the bins are emptied so that the combination of bins better match the composition of waste an average Aberdeenshire household produces - around 70% of the waste we produce is recyclable using the existing recycling services.

The Council's waste service budget is around £25 million per year – this is 4-5% of the Council's annual revenue budget. The waste service budget covers the collection of waste from every household once a week, the provision of a network of 15 recycling centres across Aberdeenshire, street sweeping and litter picking and bulking of the recycling and non-recyclable waste collected and hauling them on for reprocessing / disposal.

Whilst £25 million is a lot of money, when divided between Aberdeenshire's 120,000 households, this equates to around £4 per week per household. As around a quarter of the Council's funding comes from council tax and the rest from business rates and central government funding, around £5 of the monthly Council Tax bill is used for dealing with waste, recycling and keeping streets clean.

Q: Will I be able to recycle more materials on the kerbside?

A: The materials that can be recycled on the kerbside will remain the same, i.e.:

- Food waste
- Paper, card & cardboard
- Metal (tins, cans, aerosols & foil)
- Cartons (food & drink tetra-paks)
- Plastic (bottles, pots, tubs & trays).

The only difference is that we will empty the recycling bin more often, i.e. twice in every three weeks.

Q: Which households can apply for an additional non-recyclable waste bin?

A: Any household can request additional non-recyclable waste capacity; this will be either an extra bin or a larger bin. The criteria for additional non-recyclable waste bins is detailed in Procedure 4 of [Waste Collection Operational Procedure](#).



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Q: Is it unhygienic to collect non-recyclable waste only every 3 weeks?

A: Zero Waste Scotland has carried out [research](#) on the impact of reduced non-recyclable waste collections.

The report concludes that simple precautions such as collecting food waste separately and encouraging residents to bag non-recyclable waste means hygiene risks are similar to the current collection cycle.

Q: Which other Scottish councils have already reduced non-recyclable waste bin collections?

A: Over a third of Scottish local authorities have already reduced the amount of non-recyclable waste collected from households, either by reducing the size of the non-recyclable waste bin or collecting it less frequently, resulting in significant increases in recycling. See the table below.

#	Council	Fortnightly	Bin Size
1	Aberdeen City	Fortnightly	180L
2	Angus	Fortnightly	140L
3	Argyll & Bute	3 weekly	240L
4	Clackmannanshire	3 weekly	240L
5	East Ayrshire	3 weekly	240L
6	East Renfrewshire	3 weekly	240L
7	Falkirk	4 weekly	240L
8	Fife	4 weekly	240L
9	Moray	3 weekly	240L
10	North Ayrshire	Fortnightly	240L
11	North Lanarkshire	3 weekly	240L
12	Perth & Kinross	Fortnightly	140L
13	South Ayrshire	Fortnightly	180L
14	West Lothian	Fortnightly	140L

Q: Will reduced bin collections lead to fly-tipping? What are you going to do about that?

A: Based on the experiences of other Scottish local authorities which have introduced similar changes we do not expect significant increases in fly-tipping.

Q: How do you expect me to fit all my waste into my bin if it is only collected once every 3 weeks?

A: More than 50% of residents' landfill bins consist of material which could be recycled using existing services.



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Alongside our waste analysis, a survey carried out in Aberdeenshire in 2018 found that 50% of respondents said they use $\frac{3}{4}$ or less of their weekly non-recyclable waste capacity, with 28% of respondents managing with $\frac{1}{2}$ a bin or less.

Additional non-recyclable waste capacity will be available to households making full use of recycling services, including food waste recycling, and meeting criteria for additional non-recyclable waste bin capacity, see [Q: Which households can apply for an additional non-recyclable waste bin?](#).

Householders will also have the option of taking extra non-recyclable waste to one of the area's many recycling centres, see <http://bit.ly/RecyclingCentresPoints>.

Q: Do you have anything to prevent my food waste bin blowing away?

Yes we do. We provide hooks that can be used to attach your food waste caddy to any of your wheeled bins when you put it out for collection. Please collect one from a recycling centre or a service point.

Q: Do you have anything to prevent my recycling bin toppling over and spreading its contents around the neighbourhood?

Yes we do. In many areas, recycling bins already have a strap over the lid to keep them closed, in case bins topple over in the wind. Please collect one from a recycling centre or a service point.

'Glass and Grass'

Q: Why does the Council not collect garden waste on the kerbside?

A: Councils are not required to collect garden waste from the kerbside.

To provide a 'free-for-all' garden waste collection from the kerbside would involve running a separate fleet of garden waste collection vehicles and the provision of garden waste bins to households at a significant additional cost. Whilst such a collection would be popular amongst residents, there is no funding available for the introduction of a garden waste collection service.

Collecting garden waste on the kerbside could be done without significant additional cost by slotting garden waste into the existing collection cycle, by reducing the collection frequency of non-recyclable waste bins. However, when we asked residents' views on this ([The Big Recycling Challenge](#), February 2018), only 16% of respondents preferred this option.

Another option residents were asked to consider in [the Big Recycling Challenge](#) survey was an opt-in, chargeable kerbside collection which would allow those who wanted the collection to pay for it. This option was only favoured by 11% of respondents.

Home composting is the best environmental option for recycling garden waste. It does not require any vehicle transport and provides householders with free mulch and compost to help their garden grow. The Council will continue to provide advice on home composting and sell discounted home composting bins to residents. A standard 320 litre compost bin suitable for most households costs £20 and an extra-large 800 litre compost bin is £35. To order, see <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/waste/household-rubbish/buying-a-home-composter/>.



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The Council will also continue to support community composting initiatives residents may wish to run for their local communities. Providing unstaffed garden waste skips in villages is not an option as they end up being filled with all sorts of waste.

We will continue collecting garden waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres throughout the year. In addition, we will increase the number of seasonal village garden waste collection points from the current six to 12 to help residents recycle their garden waste during the summer months. Whilst many would like to have a garden waste point in their village, providing one in every Aberdeenshire village is simply not financially and operationally feasible.

The seasonal collection points will be provided on Saturdays (either morning or afternoon) from April to October in settlements where the service is already operating and in settlements with 1000 or more domestic properties (based on 9/9/2017 property count) and which are more than 2 miles (as the crow flies) from a Household Waste Recycling Centre or another seasonal collection point. This approach maximises the number of residents with access to a seasonal garden waste collection point in their village.

Based on the above, seasonal village garden waste collection points will be provided in the following locations:

- Aboyne
- Ballater
- Balmedie (new)
- Blackburn (new)
- Inverbervie
- Kemnay (new)
- Kintore (new)
- Mintlaw
- Newmachar (new)
- Newtonhill
- Oldmeldrum (new)
- St Cyrus

See <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/waste/household-rubbish/waste-we-do-not-collect/garden-waste/seasonal-garden-waste-recycling-points/> for locations and opening hours.

Q: Why does the Council not collect glass on the kerbside?

A: Based on the waste analysis, around 4% of the contents of landfill bins in Aberdeenshire is glass. This is similar to those local authorities which provide a kerbside glass collection service.

Aberdeenshire Council moved from a kerbside sort, where recyclables were sorted by hand by collection crews on the kerbside, to a more efficient collection system in 2013-2015. The current collection system collects all kerbside recyclables mixed together. The mixed recyclables are separated by sophisticated technology at a materials recycling facility (a segregation plant) and then sold to reprocessors as separate materials.



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Putting glass into the blue-lidded recycling bins with the rest of dry recyclables would almost double the reprocessing cost of kerbside recycling and make it more expensive than landfill disposal.

Glass cannot be collected on its own using the same fleet of recycling vehicles as glass is a very abrasive material; it would require an additional fleet of vehicles, adding to environmental impacts and cost.

Whilst glass kerbside collection would be popular, the relatively small amounts put into non-recyclable waste bins does not justify the additional cost of running a separate fleet of vehicles.

Colour-segregated glass will continue to be collected through the network of over 400 local glass recycling points and Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Residents can request a local glass recycling point to be installed in their neighbourhood.

Recycling Centres

Q: Why are you closing some recycling centres and how does that help residents to recycle more?

A: Closing some of the smallest centres is one aspect of the package of measures being put forward, to allow the network of recycling centres to be improved overall on a cost-neutral basis.

Three recycling centres will be closed (Gardenstown, Hatton and Whitehills) as they meet the following criteria:

1. Only have space for limited recycling facilities - some of these sites have no space for recycling facilities whatsoever and would not be able to accommodate extra recyclables.
2. Handle less than 300 tonnes of waste per year – for comparison most other recycling centres handle around 2,000-5,500 tonnes per year.
3. Are within 10 miles (as the crow flies) or 20 minutes car travel from another Household Waste Recycling Centre – there are another 15 well-equipped recycling centres across Aberdeenshire residents can use.

Not everybody has access to a car to take items to recycling centres but providing a recycling centre in each village is simply not financially feasible. We want to make sure residents across Aberdeenshire have equal access to well-equipped recycling centres that have the facilities to accept the same range of materials for recycling.

Q: Why can't recycling centres open later in the evening during the week?

A: Keeping recycling centres open every evening is not financially feasible.

The most convenient times identified in our surveys were weekday evenings after 6pm and weekends, however more than 90% of those who said weekday evenings would be convenient also found visiting recycling centres at the weekends convenient.



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Most recycling centres are open on Tuesday evenings during the summer, but this evening opening is not well used. However, most recycling centres will continue to be open on Tuesday evenings 4.30-7pm.

We will continue to monitor the use of recycling centres and may amend opening hours to better fit with customer and operational demand.

Q: Why can't the public pull useable items out of skips at recycling centres to promote reuse?

A: Once any waste or recycling is in the Council's skip, the Council has a Duty of Care to ensure it has been disposed of responsibly through licensed waste management companies. It is not safe to let anyone pull items out of skips and it is also against our licence conditions set by the regulator.

We have arrangements in place for reuse with several local organisations. They have specified the type of items they need for distribution to local communities and we stop these items being put into the general waste skip and put them aside. The organisations then collect the items on a regular basis.

This is a safe and lawful way to reuse items taken to recycling centres. We are looking to expand this approach and set up reuse facilities at most of the recycling centres.

Residents also have the option of taking reusable items to textile recycling banks, charity shops or selling them (or giving them away for free) through local papers or online forums, such as Gumtree, Freecycle and Ebay.

Q. Why will you no longer accept trade waste at recycling centres?

A: Only some of our recycling centres are licensed to accept trade waste. We are aware that others are being used by some businesses to dispose of or recycle their waste unlawfully.

The Council provides a trade waste collection service. Trade waste in future will not be accepted at recycling centres as these are a service for householders to use. Trade waste will be accepted at some waste transfer stations on certain days and times. Each transfer station has a weighbridge, so businesses will be accurately charged by weight for the waste they are disposing of and we will also be able to provide different rates for recycling.

We are currently finalising the details of how this will all work in practice and will advertise the new arrangements at recycling centres and on the Council's website, social media and local press.

Q: What are we meant to do with asbestos waste if it's no longer accepted at recycling centres?

A: No longer accepting asbestos is one aspect of the package of measures being put forward to allow the network of recycling centres to be improved overall on a cost-neutral basis.

There are two licensed commercial facilities in Aberdeenshire for asbestos disposal:

- Savoch Quarry, Longside, tel: 01346 531118
- Taylors Industrial, Balmedie, tel: 01358 743911



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Residents and tradesmen can also use specialist asbestos contractors operating in the area. You can find these companies by searching for "Asbestos Removal".

Q: What are we meant to do with tyres if they are no longer accepted at recycling centres?

A: When you need new tyres on your car, ask the garage where you have them fitted to dispose of your old tyres for you. They will normally do this for a small charge.

If you change your tyres at home, the company you buy your tyres from may be able to dispose of your tyres for a small charge. Always check first.

Recycling Points

Q: Why have mixed recycling bins at local recycling points been removed?

A: Kerbside recycling was made available to all households in Aberdeenshire in 2013-2015. As residents can recycle mixed recyclables on the kerbside, the use of mixed recycling bins at recycling points reduced significantly. Mixed recycling bins were removed as duplication of service and recycling facilities remained for glass and sometimes textiles.

Residents can request smaller neighbourhood glass recycling points to be installed in their neighbourhood, see http://bit.ly/Recycle_Points

Anybody needing extra recycling capacity at home can request an additional recycling bin, delivered free of charge.

Those residents who do not want an extra recycling bin at home can take it to any of the many recycling centres across the area: <http://bit.ly/RecyclingCentresPoints>.

Energy from Waste

Q: Why bother about recycling when you can just burn the waste and get energy out of it?

A: Recyclables have a value attached to them as a resource - the longer they stay in use, the better for the taxpayer, the environment and the local community.

The law in Scotland prevents anything else other than waste that cannot be recycled from going through an energy from waste plant.

There will be no additional removal of recyclables from waste taken to the energy from waste plant. Therefore, it is very important that residents continue segregating their waste effectively at home, recycling everything they can through the kerbside collection service and recycling centres.

Energy from waste is the last resort to extract energy out of waste that no longer has any other value left in it.

For more information, please see <http://www.nessenergy.co.uk/home/ness-faqs.aspx>