

Bulky waste options and plan for Cumbria: Update June 2016

In November 2015, Resource Futures was contracted by Cumbria County Council (CCC) to research re-use and recycling options for kerbside bulky waste collections (BWC) and the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) network in Cumbria. CCC is leading this project on behalf of the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership comprising of Allerdale Borough Council, Barrow Borough Council, Carlisle City Council, Copeland Borough Council, Eden District Council, and South Lakeland District Council. The purpose of the research was to investigate options available to divert bulky waste from landfill, focussing on those activities at the top of the waste hierarchy (in particular reuse), that are also likely to generate social benefits. The project will contribute to waste prevention targets which are currently in draft form for the County.

In March 2016, Resource Futures reported to CCC and included advice and recommendations for the County regarding HWRC bulky waste, communications and over-arching waste prevention initiatives; for each of the Districts (excluding Barrow) to increase re-use and recycling; consideration of how to divert bulky items to the Ways to Welfare scheme and consideration of third sector organisations (TSOs) and how they can help contribute to the waste prevention targets.

After submitting the report in April 2016, Resource Futures held a series of meetings with officers at CCC and within the Districts to discuss their recommendations and identify next steps. This update summarises the progress made since submitting the report, and the outcome of discussions with each authority, including next steps for the districts to take.

1. Cumbria County Council

1.1 Waste prevention targets

The report revealed that the waste prevention targets are challenging at present. CCC have agreed to reconsider the targets in light of the information presented.

1.2 Communications

Communications activity was split into online, social media, third sector engagement, community engagement and district communications.

The CCC website required some updating, all of which has been completed. Similarly, changes have been made to the Recycle4Cumbria website. Social media activity is ongoing. Details of known TSOs active has been updated on the CCC website and the Waste Prevention Officers (WPOs) are beginning to contact TSOs to discuss what items they accept and from where. Community engagement was already well established as the WPOs have good connections with groups already. Also, the Resourceful Communities project has helped with awareness of projects under way with groups and the WPOs have identified new events to participate in. Copeland asked for support to attend the Egremont market. The WPOs have met to discuss call centre scripts and now initial meetings with Districts have taken place, the WPOs are scheduling communications specific meetings with each District.

1.3 Welfare

The CCC Waste Department has met with the Welfare Department to discuss the arrangements with Impact Furniture Solutions (IFS) to supply goods to those in need. Conversations have also taken place with the Procurement Team as it transpires there is no Service Level Agreement (SLA) or contract between CCC and IFS. The Waste Department are supporting Welfare to implement an SLA and consider working with other TSOs in the area.

1.4 HWRCs

CCC are keen to introduce re-use at HWRCs in the county, however the relationship with Shanks is complex and therefore it may take some time to implement. Once communications activity and relationships with TSOs have been established, CCC will consider the next steps at the HWRCs.

2. Waste Collection Authorities

2.1 Allerdale (ABC)

Bob Henderson and Steff Fleming from ABC were present at a meeting on 6 June 2016 with Emma Clarke (Resource Futures) and Barbara Jones and Judith Bradshaw (CCC).

Currently, bulky collections are undertaken 4 days per week. The caged vehicle is used for bin deliveries etc on other days. The service is very good value but this results in high tonnage accepted. There can be long waiting times for residents, but IFS and BHF are present in the area and therefore there are TSO alternatives. The service will be managed within a larger waste collection contract until 2019.

The high tonnage collected could be a result of accepting up to six items per collection. It is recommended that ABC review the charge and number of items collected to either increase charge or reduce number of items to 3 (in line with common practice throughout the UK). It is also suggested that ABC review locations of collections/ postcode data to determine if there are collection hotspots, e.g. residents in one location such as an estate are more likely to use the service than elsewhere in the borough.

ABC has worked with Housing Associations in the past and the local HAs are pro-active with regard to clearing empty properties/ flytipping.

There are concerns by Allerdale regarding the amount of WEEE being recycled through Cumbria Waste. This is an issue for CCC to investigate.

Actions:

- JB and SF to develop website changes.
- JD to develop information on third sector in Allerdale with regard to the services they provide and coverage of collections.
- JD and SF meet to review call centre script used to encourage residents to recycle bulky.
- CCC (BJ?) to investigate WEEE recycling through CWM.
- ABC to review bulky waste collections data to identify the number of collections with different numbers of items and the locations of collections to identify opportunities to improve efficiency and waiting times for the majority of customers.
- ABC to read and discuss re-use guidance for HAs with local HA officers:
<http://www.wrap.org.uk/node/42217>

2.2 Barrow

Barrow BC did not engage in the project but due to their high bulky waste collection figures they are a key partner to help achieve the waste prevention targets. Current collections are very good value for residents at £10 for a timed collection into an RCV. There are significant opportunities to reduce, re-use and recycle that could be implemented. Initial engagement will be at a high level through Ian Stephenson from CCC. Recommendations for BBC included:

- Increase the charge from £10 to £15
- Change the timed service to a 'three items only' scheme with a defined list of acceptable items
- Continue to recycle bulky waste at the WTS
- Update the website

Actions:

- IS to meet with BBC.

2.3 Carlisle

Caroline Wightman, Jan Boniface and Colin Bowley from Carlisle City Council attended a meeting with Barbara Jones and Judith Bradshaw (CCC) and Emma Clarke (Resource Futures) on 20 June 2016. Officers were presented with the findings of the report and specific recommendations for Carlisle.

Since completing the report, the bulky waste collection charge in Carlisle has increased from £18 to £20 per collection, however it is unlikely there would be support for more significant increases (i.e. more than £1-2 per annum). Internal discussions are taking place regarding the need to purchase new vehicles, including the vehicle that undertakes the bulky waste collections. At present it is unlikely that bulky waste and WEEE would be collected within the same vehicle, and therefore Carlisle City Council need to determine whether there is a business case to support purchasing a vehicle that would enable greater segregation of material for recycling and reuse. Changes to kerbside dry recycling collections will take priority (and means the new vehicles are unlikely to be suitable for bulky waste), therefore now is a good time to review appropriate collection vehicles for bulky waste.

Carlisle City Council welcomes support from County regarding communications activity and will meet with JB to review the call centre script and website and discuss the TSOs that are active in the city.

In time, if there is a business case that supports an alternative collection method (e.g. partnering with a TSO or disposing of material at a different location), it would be considered but Carlisle remain to be convinced that changing the current practices are economically advantageous.

Actions:

- JB and CW to develop website changes and call centre script.
- CW to review data to understand the type of items regularly collected and location of collections.
- Conduct a business case review of bulky collections to determine whether an enclosed vehicle or amendment to the service would be viable.

2.4 Copeland

Janice Carrol and Joanne Fisher from Copeland were present at a meeting on 6 June 2016 with Emma Clarke (Resource Futures) and Barbara Jones and Katherine Smith (CCC).

Copeland has significant resident engagement issues regarding waste and recycling and changes are likely to be made to dry recycling services in the future. This, coupled with the fact that Copeland want to retain the service because it covers the cost of the vehicle and staff which are used for other services for which income is not received (e.g. bin deliveries), means changes to BWC will be small scale and focus on communications and reviewing data to identify efficiency improvements.

Demand is quite high and understanding why would be beneficial. Since January 2016, DIY waste has not been collected and this is expected to have a WP impact on BWCs. Again, interrogating data will identify if this is the case. Unfortunately, it is not possible to interrogate the call log data using the current system, but a new online booking system is expected to allow easier data analysis. A review of data and the number of collections may mean the service can be operated in fewer days, enabling the vehicle and crew to perform other duties.

The report recommended amnesty days however Copeland have tried this before and been inundated with waste and would therefore be wary of repeating this whilst relationships with residents are poor.

There are significant areas of social housing in Copeland and engaging with HAs would be beneficial but Copeland have found it difficult to identify appropriate HA officers.

Actions:

- KS and JF to develop website changes.
- KS and JF to discuss data analysis requirements
- KS and JB to work with Copeland officers on joint event at Egremont promoting home composting, recycling and WP.
- CCC to explore (through welfare) any HA contacts to improve recycling within HA properties.
- BJ seek agreement from Ian/Julian to place information regarding HWRC's on website.
- KS and JF to meet with contact centre manager to review script used to encourage residents to recycle bulky.

2.5 Eden

Stephen Hill, Jane Langston, Neil Buck, (Eden DC) met with Emma Clarke (Resource Futures), Barbara Jones, Judith Bradshaw (CCC) on 7 June 2016.

Eden collects a low tonnage of bulky waste (~40 tonnes) per annum. Collections are performed by Amey, who provide a good quality of service. WEEE is separately charged for; a legacy from previous contracts. Eden pay a set fee per collection of furniture and WEEE to Amey and therefore there would be no financial saving to them if WEEE was included in the bulky waste charge. This is therefore unlikely to be implemented mid-contract. Furniture is collected on Mondays and WEEE on Tuesdays, using the same vehicle which also performs other duties such as bin deliveries on other days. The district is split into north and south with all vehicles returning to Flusco and the bulky waste is directly tipped off at Flusco onto the tip face despite this not being suitable for these vehicles.

Collections of furniture and WEEE could be merged if all items were deposited at the transfer station to maximise recycling and/ or re-use (although separate charges for WEEE would remain). Ideally collections would be performed the same but Eden/ Amey would allow TSOs to cherry pick items for reuse. Eden is open minded about making contract changes if required, but would be concerned about quality of service if third sector were to deliver. Work with the WPOs and TSOs should enable the TSOs to demonstrate they can manage the service, if available within the new contract. Flusco was mentioned as the location for an HWRC re-use shop. BWC from Eden could provide feedstock for a shop if onsite here. May be possible at new contract term. Would consider working with third sector if re-use shop was established on Flusco.

Actions:

- JB to engage with local TSOs
- CCC (BJ) to discuss opportunities for delivery of bulky waste to the WTS with Shanks rather than directly to the landfill site.
- Eden to discuss changing disposal arrangements with Amey (following CCC/Shanks discussions).

2.6 South Lakes District Council

Staff from SLDC met with Emma Clarke and Caroline Lee-Smith (via phone) (Resource Futures) and Barbara Jones and Katherine Smith (CCC) on 23 May 2016.

SLDC has a good relationship with R2W, the TSO that performs the BWCs. Residents are very politically engaged and want to do the right thing. SLDC are keen to re-tender on a similar basis in April 2017.

Currently R2W are losing money on the contract but they are prepared to do so, assuming that key issues are dealt with within the next tendering exercise. They will need to move premises in September, R2W provide sheltered workshops (i.e. work placements for adults with learning difficulties) and the bulky waste items are required for them to perform their tasks.

Viability of the contract will be improved if CCC agree to treat R2W as a contractor and not a charity and therefore R2W would not be required to pay to dispose of the bulky waste collected on behalf of SLDC. CCC could consider paying for the current CWM skip and therefore disposal arrangements do not need to change, or allowing R2W to access Kendal Fell WTS or Kendal HWRC.

SLDC will need to begin a new tendering exercise in Autumn 2016. Resource Futures have offered to comment on the existing contract to identify areas it can be strengthened.

Actions:

- Nick P to circulate the current contract for CLS and EC to comment.
- BJ to discuss with CCC colleagues to resolve disposal issue quickly and treat R2W as a contractor.