

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 MARCH 2022

FUTURE ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS AT HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES (HWRC)

Purpose:

To present updated position and future option for HWRC booking system and accessibility.

To consider and comment on the following issues:

For the reasons set out and contained within this report, the service seeks a decision on HWRC access and booking provision

The options for decision are as follows:

- Retain the IT based appointment system as is currently in place for the next twelve months.
- Retail the IT based appointment system for the next twelve months and pilot a hybrid approach of bookings
- Remove the IT based appointment system
- In 12 months introduce an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and resident registration access system at all four HWRCs.

Reasons:

The HWRC current booking system was implemented in May 2020 after reopening the service following a brief period of closure (7 weeks) due to Welsh Government public health guidelines. This report seeks to provide a future strategy of accessibility for the HWRC service in Carmarthenshire, ensuring an efficient and accessible service for Carmarthenshire residents and ensuring we are maximising our recycling performance in the delivery of this service in the long term.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: Yes – 7th March 2022

Cabinet Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required NO

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER: -

Cllr. Hazel Evans - Cabinet Member for Environment

Directorate:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 MARCH 2022

FUTURE ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS AT HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES (HWRC)

Introduction and background

In a phased approach in April 2019 and October 2019 the Council introduced new policy measures at our network of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) to manage increasing misuse of the sites due to cross border and commercial waste disposal.

Vehicle type access permissions and implementation of van permits combined with identification checks were introduced in April 2019, followed by our black bag sorting policy in October 2019. These measures significantly improved our recycling performance by reducing residual waste and also creating a better and more accessible service for our residents.

Waste and recycling services are critical public services which have evolved fundamentally to protect human health, to service our economy, and to reduce environmental impacts. Carmarthenshire has been one of a few Authorities able to maintain all Kerbside collection services as normal throughout the pandemic response, so the vast majority of material generated by households has been able to be recycled or disposed of.

However, during the initial phase of response to the Pandemic all four household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) (Trostre, Nantycaws, Wernddu and Whitland) were closed to the public in-line with Government guidance.

Following the amendment to the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 on Friday 8th May, which included “access recycling or waste disposal services” as a reasonable excuse to travel under legislation the Welsh Government established a coordinated reopening of HWRC’s commencing from the May 26th May 2020.

To facilitate the safe access and visitation, manage site demand and provide equitable access following the closure of the sites it was decided as part of our suite of service recovery actions to implement a site booking system. This was launched at all sites on 26th May 2020, to much success given the issues experienced in other areas across Wales.

The booking system has adapted throughout the last 20 months based on customer feedback, operational requirements and increasing capacity. With same day bookings implemented, live monitoring/management of bookings and increased individual daily access. The system development, upgrades and system support has been delivered by our internal IT department, in an effective way, especially given the challenges and ever-changing situation.

Current position and service impact

The HWRC booking system is delivered by the Firmstep IT system whereby residents have the ability to manage bookings online or by calling the Contact Centre. At present residents have access to a live booking system with the ability to make same day bookings and attend the site on two occasions on a single say. With the ability to cancel/amend bookings live, with slots being made available instantly once changes are made. This has significantly improved the accessibility of our sites since the booking system inception.

The online booking system remains the predominant form of booking and has had a significant benefit to our corporate “channel shift” objective. However, the contact centre does still receive around 8% of total bookings via calls, as this is a new requirement it does place additional demand upon this service.

The table below shows the data obtained via Firmstep from January 2021- December 2021 for the 236,643 original bookings made. A more detailed breakdown is available in the ‘HWRC – Snapshot of data’ document

	Number of bookings	% of overall bookings	Average number of bookings each day for contact centre per 5 day working week	Average number of bookings made online 365 days/ year (2021)
Bookings via self service	217,312	92%	N/A	596
Bookings via Contact Centre	19,331	8%	74	N/A

A three-week trial has recently been commenced to support and assess the demand HWRC calls are having on the Call Centre. Environmental Hub and recycling officer staff will be receiving all HWRC calls and undertake the logging of appointments that are received via the contact centre. This will mean we can determine numbers, peak times and duration of calls to understand key trends and identify future requirements and contact centre needs for dealing with these calls moving forward.

From a site operational perspective, the booking system has its advantages:

1. Ability to plan and undertake site maintenance and waste movements in quiet periods, limiting impact on the public.
2. Limit queuing at site and manage waste and customer queries more effectively.
3. The ability to identify any misuse by residents. Violent and aggressive behaviour has been reduced.
4. Ability to identify individuals displaying aggressive behaviour, undertaking illegal waste activities and policy infractions.
5. Identification of frequent visitors to assess the nature of their waste and reasons for frequency of visits.
6. Inform residents directly of un-planned site closures with alternative provisions easily communicated.

The introduction of the appointment system has enhanced the service capability to develop a reporting structure to identify trends in relation to site usage, material, tonnages received, number of individual appointments, site demand, location preferences, and any missed appointments or anomalies that may require further investigation. The means in which residents book their appointments is also recorded and the data can be used to provide an overall picture of the trends from the captured data to improve and manage the service based on demand. See separate HWRC – Snapshot of data capture document.

With the Circular Economy - Eto project, which was launched in February 2022, HWRCs will provide a key role in supporting the re-use and repair of items that would otherwise be disposed of. Easy access to the HWRC network will allow for increased material capture that can be re-used, repaired or repurposed for re-sale in our network of outlets so this needs to be considered in our future options.

A common complaint is the correlation of this booking system and fly-tipping incidents. Our Fly-tipping reports are obtained via public reporting or crew member logs on a digital system. The reporting tool has been developed and utilised significantly more over the last three years and as a result more fly tipping capture has been identified and recorded so that we can manage the issue more effectively based upon data evidence. From current data there is predicted to be a 17% increase in fly-tipping this year compared to last. However, it is difficult to attribute this increase in incidents as a direct correlation to the implementation of the booking system, as there could potentially be a number of causative factors.

Last year we engaged with the public in June/ July 2021 on a wider 'Future Waste Changes' survey and the HWRC appointment service. There was a relatively even split of responses from the 3,844 respondents that had used the HWRC booking system with 52% supporting the continued use of the booking system and 48% not supporting further use of the appointment system. Following these further improvements as identified above have been made to the booking system to improve accessibility but conversely, we are now also at a point in time where public health measures are lessening.

Recycling performance is a key driver for policy decisions within our suite of waste and recycling services, with statutory recycling targets set by Welsh Government with a 64% target this year rising to 70% in 2024/25. Since the implementation of the booking system the recycling performance impact can be seen below.

Year	Total HWRC Inputs (t)	Residual Inputs	Composting	Wood	Total Other Items	PI %	HWRC PI Contribution
2019/2020	26,044	5,654	4,949	3,981	11,459	64.54%	21.68%
2020/2021	15,112	3,077	2,344	2,832	6,860	66.25%	12.71%
2021/2022	15,567	3,358	2,410	2,687	7,113	61.59%	17.64%

The 2020/21 figures provide a significantly lower contribution to our overall recycling rate than in 19/20. This is due to the site being closed for a 7-week period at the start of year, also with restrictions on movement still in place and residents' concerns on the risk of COVID-19 still being prevalent at this time, this is to be expected. The 2021/2022 data presented is based upon performance up to end of December the contribution is now increasing, with restrictions further easing, there is the potential for this to return to normal levels by year end.

Future options

To move forward in a progressive manner, we need to take into consideration the current and future position regarding pandemic and assess how that impacts the recycling performance, operational delivery and resource demands of the HWRC and support services.

To enable us to retain the benefits of service usage and site demand data along with a need to make the site more accessible in the long term we are proposing to develop an Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system across our network of HWRCs. This exercise will need further development, policy development and consideration. However, the utilisation of such as system has been successful in other services across the council and also in other Councils HWRCs.

ANPR would enable access to residents via pre-registration of details on a one-off basis that will be recognised upon approach to a proposed site barrier. This would allow for residents to attend site when convenient to them and enhance our management of the 2019 policy change of identification checks and vehicle guidance checks that will be part of the initial registration process. This will allow the current manual check to be aborted and the resources currently in place at each site to be used more efficiently by funding the automation of the entry process. Furthermore, this approach would align with supporting a digital channel shift for our customers. Our current system of booking has already had a significant effect on the number of our residents that have registered for an on-line account.

The benefit of the ANPR system will mean we can retain an element of control in accessing the HWRC sites, restricting it to Carmarthenshire residents and domestic users, but enabling greater accessibility for residents without the need to book appointments. This proposal will also provide us with the ability to retain data capture capability to assess the future needs, requirements, and management of the HWRC network moving forward.

The development of this proposal will take 12 months and will be scheduled into the divisional IT development programme. A fully costed project plan will be developed to support this transition and work along side the Media and Marketing team to ensure a smooth transition to a county wide registration process for our facilities.

If the development of an ANPR system is accepted, for the interim period there are three options available to us:

1. Retain the booking system for a 12-month period while the ANPR system is developed and implemented. This option will also support our channel shift ambitions.
2. Retain the based appointment system for the next twelve months and pilot a hybrid approach of bookings
3. Remove the booking system allowing open access and implement the ANPR booking system in 12 months.

The hybrid approach would mean the partial retention of the IT based appointment system, with appointments required before 1pm each day at all HWRCs, no booking requirement after 1pm until close. This approach would allow for individuals to have more freedom when they attend the facilities on an ad-hoc basis when required with open access in the afternoon, balanced with the option for residents who wish to plan ahead still having the ability to do so.

This hybrid option obviously offers a blended approach which could suit most of the population. However, there are potential disbenefits operationally in this option. There is the potential risk that the requirements of the booking system being seen as burdensome by some, will result in the sites becoming increasingly busy in the afternoons, causing queuing and the site reaching over capacity during the afternoon period. Also, with the removal of bookings in the afternoon it means the site demand periods will become difficult to predict and site maintenance and staffing levels required by the operator will be difficult to plan and forecast.

Finally, with the hybrid approach it would mean we can no longer capture the data which the booking system delivers as a distinct benefit currently. If this approach would be adopted the hybrid approach would be rolled-out in June.

Options Summary:

For the reasons and rationale set out in the report, it is recommended that we work towards the development of an ANPR and registration system with implementation in March 2023.

This presents us with three options for interim HWRC service delivery:

1. Retain the booking system for a 12-month period while the ANPR system is developed and implemented. This option will also support our channel shift ambitions.
2. Retain the based appointment system for the next twelve months and pilot a hybrid approach of bookings
3. Remove the booking system allowing open access and implement the ANPR booking system in 12 months.

Recommendation and Decision

1. We work towards the development of a ANPR and registration system with implementation in March 2023, subject to further work on connectivity and costings.
2. Retain the current booking system for a 12-month period while the ANPR system is developed and implemented.

REPORT ATTACHED?

HWRC Appointments and Site Data

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed: **A. Williams**

Head of Waste and Environmental Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	NONE	YES	YES	NONE	NONE	YES

POLICY CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITIES

An ANPR policy and associated equality impact assessment will be required prior to the implementation of the proposed ANPR system at the network of HWRC sites.

FINANCE

The development of the ANPR system would require financial investment, this would be based upon an invest to save proposal.

ICT

The development of a registration system and associated ANPR hardware will need to be developed and implemented in the longer term. This will form part of the divisional IT development work programme.

The options for interim usage of the current will have an impact on the IT system maintenance requirements and associated resources.

PHYSICAL ASSETS

The development of the ANPR system will require physical upgrades to our HWRC network.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: **A. Williams**

Head of Waste and Environmental Services

1. Scrutiny Committee - 7th March 2022

2. Local Member(s) - Yes - we will continue to undertake a full engagement process to inform our decision-making process.

3. Community / Town Council - N/A

4. Relevant Partners - N/A

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Yes - we will continue to undertake a full engagement programme with CWM Environmental Ltd

**CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER
AWARE/CONSULTED**

**Yes –
cabinet member supports the position and
recommendations.**

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THERE ARE NONE