
WASTE SERVICES – GARDEN WASTE MOTION

Report by Service Director Neighbourhood Services

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

2 April 2015

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the actions which have been taken, as requested at the Council meeting on 30 October 2014, to mitigate some of the issues caused by the withdrawal of the garden waste collection service.

1.2 Further to the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste service the following alternative arrangements are available to householders for the disposal of garden waste:

- Home Composting
- Community Recycling Centres
- Private garden waste collection companies
- Grey lidded general waste bin.

1.3 In response to the Garden Waste Motion – Appendix 1, the following actions are proposed:

- (a) Letter to be issued to all Rural Community Council's outlining the support that is available from the Council.
- (b) It has been determined that 'Resilient Communities' do not present the best opportunity to support those residents (i.e. elderly and vulnerable) that have been effected by the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste service.

Further to this decision various alternatives have been considered, however to date none have been found to provide an acceptable solution.

- (c) Specific webpage on the Council's website to be introduced to raise awareness of private waste contractors providing garden waste collections services across the Borders.
- (d) Various additional arrangements to be put in place to improve the uptake of home composting. This will be over and above the arrangements already in place. To date 3,500 compost bins have been issued following the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste collection service.
- (e) The delivery of a comprehensive communication plan.

Information and support will be identified and provided through appropriate engagement with equalities stakeholder groups. This will help ensure all steps are taken to minimise any disadvantage faced by people who have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. These groups will include:

- The Borders Access Panels
- Elder Voice
- Borders Disability Support Service

1.4 Community Recycling Centres play a critical role in providing alternative options for the disposal of garden waste following the withdrawal of the kerbside collection service.

1.5 Various projects and reviews are being, or are planned to be, delivered to improve the Councils network of Community Recycling Centres including:

- the development of a new facility in Kelso
- the upgrade of Hawick and Galashiels CRC's; and
- the review of trade waste access and opening hours

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Council:-**

- (a) note the actions being taken to deliver improvements linked to the Garden Waste Motion.**
- (b) note the progress being made to upgrade and improve the Councils network of Community Recycling Centres.**

3 GARDEN WASTE MOTION

3.1 On 30 October 2014 the Council re-affirmed its decision, taken on 12 December 2013, to withdraw the kerbside garden waste collection service. However, it was acknowledged that further improvements could be made and agreed the Garden Waste Motion – Appendix 1.

3.2 Garden Waste Disposal Options

3.2.1 Further to the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste service the following alternative arrangements are available to householders for the disposal of garden waste:

- **Home Composting** – Free home composter available, upon request, to all households that received a garden waste collection. Around 3,500 home compost bins have been issued to householders since the removal of the Garden Waste Service.
- **Community Recycling Centres** - Six facilities are available across the Borders which accept garden waste free of charge. This is soon to be expanded to seven with the introduction of Kelso Community Recycling Centre in Spring 2015 which amounts to a capital investment of approximately £860,000.
- **Private garden waste collection companies** – a number of new companies have set up across the Borders offering a chargeable kerbside garden waste collection service to the public.
- **Grey lidded general waste bin** – As a last resort householders can deposit garden waste in their grey lidded general waste bin. However, any waste deposited in the general waste bin will be landfilled and is therefore not promoted by the Council.

3.3 Garden Waste Motion Item (a) – Support to Smaller Communities

3.3.1 We will actively support smaller communities in accessing advice and support in relation to home composting. This will be delivered by our home composting partners, Ask Organic and our Waste & Recycling Team, who will provide guidance and support covering all recycling activity.

This will be achieved through the following activities:

- Talks
- Presentations
- Events
- Roadshows
- Drop in Sessions
- 'How to' videos

3.3.2 It is proposed that the Council write to Rural Community Councils outlining the support that is available to them.

3.4 **Garden Waste Motion Item (b) – Utilise ‘Resilient Communities’ to support the elderly and vulnerable**

3.4.1 Detailed discussions have taken place with the Council’s ‘Resilient Communities’ Team.

3.4.2 Various options have been considered including the potential of working with localities that:

- have an established ‘Resilient Community’
- previously received the kerbside garden waste collection service i.e. ‘Urban’ areas.
- have elderly and vulnerable residents that have experienced problems as a result of the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste service.

3.4.3 Further discussions around this matter have established that there are very few ‘Resilient Communities’ that:

- are established in “urban” areas that previously received the garden waste service.
- would be in a position to provide garden waste support to the elderly and vulnerable.

3.4.4 In addition, it is considered that the provision of garden waste support may detract from the original aim of the ‘Resilient Communities’ Initiative, which was to develop and introduce emergency response plans. This may also cause unnecessary future confusion for those communities and the Resilient group members.

3.4.5 It has therefore been determined that ‘Resilient Communities’ do not present the best opportunity to support those residents (i.e. elderly and vulnerable) that have been effected by the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste service.

3.4.6 Further to this decision various alternatives have been considered, however to date none have been found to provide an acceptable solution.

3.4.7 The Waste Services Team will continue to investigate options which have the potential to assist those in urban areas that have been most effected by the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste collection service.

3.4.8 Information and support will be identified and provided through appropriate engagement with equalities stakeholder groups. This will help ensure all steps are taken to minimise any disadvantage faced by people who have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. These groups will include:

- The Borders Access Panels
- Elder Voice
- Borders Disability Support Service

3.5 **Garden Waste Motion item (c) – Facilitate the work of private waste collectors**

3.5.1 Waste Services has engaged positively with private waste contractors since the removal of its kerbside garden waste collection service. This has included providing advice in relation to:

- Regulatory and legislative requirements
- Disposal options and costs
- Access to Council facilities and services

3.5.2 In addition the Council's economic development function is available to support businesses through 'Business Gateway'.

3.5.3 A number of private waste contractors have set up across the Borders providing a kerbside garden waste collection service. There is a specific process which private businesses must follow and actions required by businesses in terms of legislation compliance, such as registration with SEPA and ensuring the appropriate licences are in place.

3.5.4 In order to facilitate the work of private waste collectors, a dedicated webpage is being developed for the Council's website to assist the public in accessing garden waste services.

The webpage will provide the following information:

- Contact details including; address, telephone numbers, link to webpage and or email.
- The area covered by each waste collector.

3.5.5 In addition to information about the private waste collectors the webpage will detail:

- Householder responsibilities in relation to waste management and the employment of commercial waste contractors.
- A Council disclaimer in relation to using private waste contractors from the Council's list.
- Details of how private waste collector can get their contact details added to the Council's webpage if they are not already listed.

3.5.6 In developing the webpage each private waste collector has been contacted to confirm contact details are accurate and that they have a waste carriers licence.

However, the Council cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided by the garden waste collectors or that they are managing all waste they collect in accordance with the regulations. It is for this reason that a disclaimer has been included – see section 5.2.

3.5.7 In total five private waste companies have set up operations in the Borders and have the appropriate Waste Carriers Licence.

Full coverage of the Borders is provided by these companies although this is dependent on each individual company.

Further details will be available via the Council's dedicated webpage.

3.6 **Garden Waste Motion Item (d) – Improve Uptake of Home Composting**

- 3.6.1 Since the withdrawal of the kerbside garden waste service around 3,500 home compost bins have been issued to householders as part of the Council's alternative arrangements.
- 3.6.2 In partnership with Ask Organic, SBC actively promote home composting to householders across the Borders. Appendix 2 highlights some of the services and activities undertaken by Ask Organic and provides figures showing how well the public use them.
- 3.6.3 Promotion of home composting will continue as usual this year however, to further support householders, the undernoted has been arranged and/or is currently being considered:
- Spring SB Connect article promoting home composting and advertising the undernoted beginners workshops.
 - Six beginners home composting workshops at Woodside Walled Garden Composting Display Area – Saturday 4 & Sunday 12 April, 10am, 12 noon and 2pm.
 - Attendance at the Duns and Peebles Agricultural Shows.
 - Bus sideliner advertising during March.
 - Video showing the basics of home composting to be developed and placed on Ask Organic and SBC websites.
 - Further consideration to be given to additional roadshows or drop in events throughout the year.
 - Promotion of home composting in schools with information flyers to be handed out but for taking home to parents.

3.7 **Garden Waste Motion item (e) – Communication Plan**

- 3.7.1 There already exists a comprehensive PR and Communications plan for the delivery of the Councils Waste Services. This is a working document and covers all recycling and waste activity for the year and covers the use of a wide range of PR & Communications media. Additional PR and Communications activity required relating to the garden waste motion has been incorporated into this plan. It will be regularly reviewed and updated as required. Further detail of activity can be found below.
- 3.7.2 Various forms of media are used to engage with householders and raise awareness of the alternative garden waste arrangements including:
- Council website including a link to ASK Organics composting web site
 - Promotion of the activities of our home composting partners, Ask Organic (see Appendix 2 for further detail)
 - Radio adverts
 - Press adverts
 - Bus advertising
 - Refuse Collection Vehicle Decals
 - Talks and presentations to Community Groups, Schools, WRI's, etc.

- Events attended – Borders Agricultural show, Potato day
- Composting Workshops

4 SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENTS TO COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTRES

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 Community Recycling Centres play a critical role in providing alternative options for the disposal of garden waste following the withdrawal of the kerbside collection service.
- 4.1.2 The following section outlines the projects and reviews being, or planned to be, delivered to improve the Council's network of Community Recycling Centres.

4.2 Community Recycling Centre Upgrades

- 4.2.1 Following the removal of the kerbside garden waste service at the end of April 2014, additional garden waste was deposited by householders at the Council's Community Recycling Centres.
- 4.2.2 As a result garden waste skips filled more frequently and consequently the sites were required to close more often whilst skips were emptied. In some instances this led to queuing and customer frustration resulting in complaints to Officers and Members.
- 4.2.3 Action was taken to actively prioritise development of short and longer term responses to improve service delivery at the Community Recycling Centres.
- 4.2.4 The following section outlines the upgrades already undertaken and those that are planned.

4.3 General Improvements – All Sites

- 4.3.1 Where possible, additional skips for garden waste have been installed to increase capacity and reduce the need to shut the sites.
- 4.3.2 Skip uplift and emptying arrangements have been altered to minimise disruption and site closure during operational hours.
- 4.3.3 New procedures have been implemented where possible to improve efficiency and reduce site closures.
- 4.3.4 Additional capacity is being provided at Galashiels and Hawick Community Recycling Centres at weekends.

4.4 Eshiels Community Recycling Centre

- 4.4.1 A two phased approach has been taken to the upgrade of Eshiels Community Recycling Centre involving the replacement of 'walk in' skips with concrete bays.
- 4.4.2 The aim of the upgrade work has been to:
- increase capacity
 - reduce the need to shut the site
 - improve site operations and efficiency; and
 - improve health and safety.

4.4.3 Construction of **Phase 1** took place week commencing 14 July 2014 and the concrete bays were opened for public use on Saturday, 19 July.

4.4.4 **Phase 2** improvement works were undertaken during March 2015, which required the facility to be closed for a two week period from Monday 9th March.

4.4.5 We have listened to the feedback from site users in relation to the phase 1 works. As a result the designs for the second two bays have been adjusted so that:

- The bay closest to the parking area is to be dedicated to garden waste to minimise the distance site users have to walk.
- The garden waste bay will not have a wall to lift waste over.
- The height of the wall on the second bay will be reduced.

4.5 **Hawick Community Recycling Centre**

4.5.1 The Council has recently approved £525,000 of capital funding for the upgrade of Hawick & Galashiels Community Recycling Centres in 2015/16.

- Hawick CRC - £306,000
- Galashiels CRC - £219,000

4.5.2 The aim is to increase the size of both sites by extending into the adjoining land. This will enable the site layout, skip capacity and pedestrian/traffic management to be improved.

4.5.3 During the period November to December 2014 draft designs were presented to staff, Councillors, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Planners and Building Control as part of a consultation process.

4.5.4 The current designs take account of public and member feedback which we have received, which has identified a preference for 'walk in' skips rather than designs which include steps, gantries and walls.

4.5.5 The final designs are subject to discussions with the Councils Wellbeing and Safety Department in particular in relation to the continued use of 'walk in' skips.

4.6 **New Kelso Community Recycling Centre**

4.6.1 Work on the new CRC is progressing well with all the permissions required for works to commence being approved, including the Waste Management Licence and the Roads Order required for the removal of a bus lay-by at the exit to the site. Construction works commenced on 17 November 2014.

4.6.2 In relation to the building works, the historical weaving equipment has been moved out of the building and internal stripping works completed. All asbestos material has now been removed and the new internal block work walls have been constructed. Attention is now being concentrated on fitting out the new building with the facilities required.

4.6.3 It is anticipated that the site will be operational in May 2015.

4.7 **Community Recycling Centre Provision Review**

4.7.1 The aim of the review is to ensure that the Council's Community Recycling Centres are 'fit for purpose' and financially sustainable in the long term:

The review is split into two parts:

1. Community Recycling Centre Trade Waste Access
2. Community Recycling Centre Hours of Operation

4.7.2 Works have been continuing in terms of an options review and maintaining regular communications and getting feedback from staff, Trade Unions and HR. In addition to the above, a list of additional works that have been undertaken is listed in Appendix 3.

4.7.3 Update meetings have taken place with Councillors to explain the project complexities, progress being made and plans going forward. These proved to be extremely useful and gave Councillors an opportunity to provide valuable feedback to officers. From this it was agreed that more extensive consideration, as noted below, was required before a final report is brought to Council:

- More extensive business consultation works
- More detailed other Local Authority research regarding option pros, cons and lessons learnt, especially rural authorities
- More detailed costings work for introduction of options and the preferred option
- More detailed work to be carried out on proposals for likely trade waste permit charges
- The impacts of the preferred option and charges to then be considered in more detail; mitigating actions to be identified and costed with a view to reducing any negative impacts.

4.7.4 Councillors' feedback on the review of CRC opening hours/days and operations was also considered by senior management and it was agreed that this project should be progressed at a later date and in conjunction with the wider Waste Services Working Patterns Review.

4.7.5 CRC operations are supported greatly by waste services operations and staff and therefore problems, which could be avoided, would likely arise if the CRC operating hours review was progressed in isolation. Undertaking the review jointly with waste services shift pattern review ensures consistency and stability for the general public in the meantime.

4.7.6 Works continue with a view to bringing a final report to Council in May or June. Regular updates will also continue to be given to Trade Unions, staff, HR and other key stakeholders as appropriate.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

(a) To support the actions associated with the response to the Garden Waste Motion it is estimated that there will be a £12,000 revenue cost associated with providing additional:

- Talks
- Presentations
- Attendance at shows
- Press
- Posters
- Advertising
- 'How To' videos
- Communications

These costs will be covered by the Waste Services Revenue Budget.

(b) We will consider any further financial implications associated with Garden Waste Motion Item (b) and come back with proposals if required.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

In relation to the dedicated Council webpage, which will give details of private waste collectors currently offering a service within the Borders, Legal Services have confirmed that the Council can publish a list of garden waste companies under Section 20 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 (the power to advance well-being).

However there are a number of significant risks:

- It is possible that we will in effect be promoting certain businesses and not others. This may open us up to criticism and the suggestion that we are interfering in trade and potentially influencing customer behaviour.
- It is possible the Council may be seen as recommending businesses which for example are:
 - Operating illegally
 - Money laundering
 - Treating its employees unfairly
 - Providing poor customer service.

The risks outlined above could result in reputational damage for the Council. It is important to recognise that any disclaimer attached to the Council webpage would not fully mitigate these risks.

5.3 Equalities

(a) The Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) undertaken for the Integrated Waste Management Strategy and the removal of the kerbside garden waste collection service are being reviewed and updated to take into account any effects the recommendations included in this report may have. The EIAs are "working documents" and will continue to be regularly reviewed and updated in light of progress being made.

- (b) It is proposed that an outcome of the EIA review will be to develop an “Accessible Waste Disposal” Strategy.
- (c) Feedback received and suggestions from the general public, Councillors, Community Councils, etc will also be gathered and used to update the EIA.
- (d) Information and support will also be identified and provided through appropriate engagement with equalities stakeholder groups. This will help ensure all steps are taken to minimise any disadvantage faced by people who have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. These groups will include:
 - The Borders Access Panels
 - Elder Voice
 - Borders Disability Support Service

5.4 **Acting Sustainably**

An assessment of the removal of the garden waste service was undertaken for the Integrated Waste Management Strategy. There has been no change since this was undertaken.

5.5 **Carbon Management**

An assessment of the removal of the garden waste service was undertaken for the Integrated Waste Management Strategy. There has been no change since this was undertaken.

5.6 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes are required to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation.

6 **CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR, the Depute Chief Executive Place, the Corporate Transformation and Services Director, Corporate Communications and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Service Director Neighbourhood Services Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
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**Background Papers: Integrated Waste Management Strategy
Previous Minute Reference: Council, 12th December 2013**

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Waste Services can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Waste Services on 03001001800.

Appendix 1 – Green Waste Collection Service Petition – Item Minute 30th October 2014

13. There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting of the Petitions Committee held on 23 October 2014 which had considered a petition requesting the reinstatement of the garden waste collection service. Copies were also circulated of the Petitions submission form, the report to Council on 12 December 2013 on the delivery of an Integrated Waste Strategy, a briefing note by the Service Director Neighbourhood Services and an extract from the Council Minute of 12 December 2013. It was noted that the Petitions Committee had referred the making of the final decision to Council as they had taken the original decision to remove the service. The Leader commented on the constructive dialogue with Mr Farquhar, the Principal Petitioner, at the Petitions Committee meeting and the fact that if the service was reinstated it would have to be done on a universal basis at a cost of £1.5m and result in cuts in other services.. Councillor Parker, seconded by Council Bell moved approval of the following Motion:-

“Scottish Borders Council recognises that consultation with the Borders public on the withdrawal of the green waste service could have been more carefully and effectively implemented and we regret any inconvenience and disturbance this may have caused. In view of the financial implications of re-introducing a service at this time, Council reaffirms the decision taken on 12 December 2013. However, Council acknowledges that further improvements can be made and asks the Chief Executive to prepare a report which will:-

- (a) Identify specific support to meet the recycling needs of smaller communities;**
- (b) Explore the opportunities through "resilient communities" as to how support and assistance can be given to the elderly and vulnerable to access green waste recycling opportunities at CRCs;**
- (c) Identify any further action which needs to be taken to facilitate the work of private waste collectors;**
- (d) Specify actions needed to improve the uptake of home and community composting; and**
- (e) Develop a communication plan to ensure that our proposed actions are clearly communicated to the Borders public.**

Members welcomed the proposed Motion which, although not fulfilling the petitioners' wishes, did mitigate some of the issues caused by the withdrawal of the service.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Motion as detailed above.

Appendix 2 – Home Composting Activity

Ask Organic, in partnership with SBC, provide the undernoted services supporting home composting activity for householders across the Borders:

- run a composting display area at Woodside Walled Garden, Nr Jedburgh
- man the composting display area one day a week between April and November
- attend the Border Union Show with SBC's Waste and Recycling team
- operate and maintain a website and telephone helpline
- undertake workshops and attend other events as requested.

The undernoted table shows the number of visits to the Woodside Walled Garden, the Border Union Show and website hits.

Year	Visitor Numbers (Border Union Show + other workshops)	Visitors Numbers (Woodside Walled Garden)	Website hits
2010/11*	588	3399	17317
2011/12	437	3600	18392
2012/13	511	4430	23038
2013/14	252	2464	19476
2014/15*	155	1831	32815

2010/11* 7 workshops also held that year.

2010/11* Last year SBC staff attended Peebles, Duns and The Holm Agricultural Shows
From 2011 on, only Border Union Show attended.

2014/15* Figures to end January 2015 only.

Appendix 3 – CRC Access Policy Review - List of additional works that have been undertaken

- CRC vehicle survey undertaken over a 2 week period at each site
- 5 week public consultation exercise undertaken
- Regular communications with CRC staff; face-to-face during site visits to get staff ideas, suggestions, provide update on progress and get feedback
- Staff consultations in the form of a survey
- 6 week business consultation exercise - on-line survey and open day
- Vehicle counter data analysis work
- Other Local Authority research
- Councillors Project Update meetings held in November & December 2014.