

ITEM 7**PAPER NO. WRWA 20-20****WESTERN RIVERSIDE WASTE AUTHORITY**

MEETING	29 th September 2020								
REPORT AUTHOR/DATE	General Manager (Contact Mark Broxup - Tel. 020 8871 2788) 21 st September 2020								
SUBJECT	Report by the General Manager on a proposal to commence a Household Waste and Recycling Centre Booking System trial.								
CONTENTS	<table> <tr> <td>Page 1</td> <td>Introduction</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pages 1 to 8</td> <td>Items reported on</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Page 8</td> <td>Recommendations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Page 9</td> <td>Appendix – HWRC usage 2019-20</td> </tr> </table>	Page 1	Introduction	Pages 1 to 8	Items reported on	Page 8	Recommendations	Page 9	Appendix – HWRC usage 2019-20
Page 1	Introduction								
Pages 1 to 8	Items reported on								
Page 8	Recommendations								
Page 9	Appendix – HWRC usage 2019-20								
STATUS	Open								
BACKGROUND PAPERS	None								

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INTRODUCTION

1. At the last Authority meeting (Paper No.WRWA 20-05), it was reported that some waste disposal authorities and unitary councils had introduced booking systems to manage site usage when reopening their HWRCs following the Covid-19 lockdown. Officers were tasked with investigating the feasibility of introducing a booking system for residents to use the Smugglers Way Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC).
2. Queuing at Smugglers Way is still an issue at peak times on weekends and bank holidays and can disrupt the traffic system around the Centre and impact on neighbouring residents and local businesses. It is not uncommon, during peak periods, to have queues waiting to enter the HWRC that tailback to the roundabout in Swandon Way. This was the case when the HWRC was reopened following lockdown in May 2020.
3. Contact was made with Kent Country Council, Hampshire County Council and West London Waste Authority to assess their experience of introducing booking systems. All three authorities introduced their booking systems as a direct result of their experience of reopening their HWRCs with reduced capacity due to social distancing measures. All three authorities experienced exceptional demand that resulted in long queues on the highway and disruption to the local community and all three have multiple HWRCs.
4. A summary of each authority's experiences and lessons learnt from their introduction of booking systems are as follows:

Kent County Council

5. Kent restricts the number of visits each household can make to two visits per calendar month and booking slots are available a month in advance. Bookings can be accessed to cancel or amend the date/time of the booking. Kent introduced its system across its 21 HWRCs and it has 32,000 booking slots per week which averages out at 1,500 per site, per week.
6. Kent residents who do not have internet access or an email address are asked to make a booking by telephone using a contact centre number. Kent says that the majority of users use the online booking system and there was an initial surge of calls. Any resident that turns up without a booking is turned away. Residents are asked to cancel bookings they are unable to use and Kent plans to monitor the number of no-shows in the longer term. Kent sends out a reminder email to the resident the day before the booking that provides a link to cancel the booking or

reschedule if necessary; this has been a valuable tool that has reduced the number of no-shows.

Hampshire County Council

7. Hampshire introduced its booking system across its 24 HWRCs on 15th June 2020; it restricts its residents to one visit per week, booking slots are made available up to seven days in advance and it requests that residents cancel their booking if they can no longer attend. Residents who turn up without a booking are turned away but, in the first week of introduction, Hampshire deployed leniency for residents without a booking and allowed them to tip their waste.
8. Hampshire averages 6,000 booking slots per day with the largest site taking 460 per day. Sixteen slots are kept in reserve that can only be booked internally and are allocated for exceptional circumstances. Due to social distancing measures Hampshire is not currently working to full capacity.
9. Hampshire says that the main advantage of the booking system is that it manages the flow of visitors to its sites which eliminates the traffic issues. Residents are reporting that they like the assurance of having an appointment and the ease of not having to queue for long periods. Sites generally find that visitors are more positive when they are on-site as they have had a better experience upon arriving. Nevertheless the initial introduction of the system generated a high level of customer contact and complaints, largely due to perceived unavailability of booking slots at the busier sites, but a significant volume of compliments were received for the experience that booking a space has created.
10. Hampshire's ratio of online bookings and telephone bookings is fourteen online bookings to one telephone booking and it has not needed to deploy additional staff to deal with the calls, even with the initial surge of calls. However, the daily download of bookings and sending this information out to all its sites has been a key task and it recommends that the frontline staff are issued with a tablet so the bookings can be sent electronically, with a paper copy back-up if necessary; this enables the HWRC staff to check that the residents have made a booking. Other administrative tasks include manual cancellations and the monitoring of the number of visits made by each household.
11. Hampshire was required to introduce the booking system quickly which created some challenges and it says that a longer lead-in time to facilitate a comprehensive communications plan with at least a month before the introduction of the booking system would have been ideal.

West London Waste Authority (WLWA)

12. WLWA decided to introduce the booking system on five of their seven sites due to the problems with traffic management and health and safety issues after it reopened its sites in May 2020.
13. When the booking system was initially launched on its first site there was a three-week waiting list, but this settled as social distancing measures were relaxed and more booking slots were made available.
14. To begin with residents who visited without a booking were turned away, but are now generally booked in on-site and are requested to book for future visits. WLWA report that there were a high number of complaints in the first weeks when the change was communicated, but the numbers fell when the system went live. WLWA reports that most residents are happy with the system. Telephone bookings are directed to the borough call centres and were high initially, but have settled to around ten calls per day per borough.
15. The introduction of the first booking system in Abbey Road in Brent was done very quickly and did not allow sufficient time to get communications out to residents. WLWA subsequently allowed a longer time to promote the change when it introduced the booking system at its other four sites.
16. The system also allows for tags to be placed on resident's bookings that have been abusive to staff so they can be blocked if necessary. WLWA hopes to use the data from the system to help improve services, e.g. looking at which areas householders are bringing in garden waste from that could support the introduction of a garden waste collection service or encourage the use of existing collection services.
17. WLWA does not operate a reminder system for residents and this does create a high number of no-shows.

THE AUTHORITY'S HWRC

18. The Authority's HWRC is considerably bigger than those operated by most other authorities. It receives on average around 1,250 cars a day and on Saturdays this figure can exceed 1,700 cars a day. In peak hours this results in queuing times of up to ten minutes, measured between the point at which a vehicle enters the site and the point at which it enters the building. However, as mentioned above (paragraph 2) vehicles often have to queue for an additional period of time

before they enter the HWRC and this causes frustration not just for the users of the site but also for other local residents and businesses.

Potential Benefits and Proposal for Trial

19. There are several potential benefits of operating a booking system, as follows:

- To control and manage the times the site is used and redistribute visits to reduce the peak usage that would lessen queues and reduce the impact on the local community.
- The booking system would require residents to give their address and postcode details to confirm that they are resident in the Authority area. This will enable better control over members of the public that live outside the Authority area who currently use the Centre. In 2019, a face to face HWRC satisfaction survey revealed that at least 6% are users who do not live in one of the constituent boroughs or Westminster and this figure may be higher as a further 3.2% refused to answer the question. Controlling non-residents' usage could reduce the number of visits and a reduction in material delivered to the HWRC. It is estimated that stopping the 6% of non-residents could reduce the number of visits to the HWRC by 27,300 per year.
- An estimate of the potential savings that could be made if users who do not live in the Authority area are prevented from using the HWRC is approximately £133,000 based on the budgeted tonnage and rates per tonne in 2020/21.
- All booking systems require residents to leave their email addresses to enable a booking confirmation to be sent to them. With the resident's permission, and through compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations, residents' emails could be stored and used to communicate messages about the HWRC and further encourage reuse and recycling at the facility.
- The need for the annual usage and site satisfaction survey would also be negated as an electronic survey with a possible prize draw participation incentive could be sent out to the residents who agree to have their emails stored by the Authority. Based on the cost of the survey carried out in 2019, this would generate a saving of £2,500.
- Residents could be asked to give a summary of the types of material on the booking that they intend to bring to the Centre which would help identify non-household waste usage, help control the amounts being brought in and may assist with identifying small builders that use the site illegally to dispose of

non-household waste. Currently, site users who use the HWRC frequently are monitored by the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras but with a booking system, usage could be monitored by addresses as well. This could also help to inform the operational requirements of the sites, i.e. the number of containers needed for different types of materials that vary seasonally.

- The booking system may encourage frequent users who dispose of small quantities of waste to attend less frequently and reduce the number of total visits.

20. It is anticipated that the system would broadly operate in a similar way to that for vans currently:

- a) Residents would book a time slot online to arrive within. They would be required to provide the following information:
 - (i) their car registration, make and model
 - (ii) confirmation that it complies with our permitted vehicle types;
 - (iii) their name and address details; and
 - (iv) confirmation that they are bringing their own household waste from their own place of residence
- b) Additionally residents would be asked to provide:
 - (i) information (from a list) on what waste types of material they broadly expected to bring; and
 - (ii) confirmation that they would be happy for the Authority to e-mail them information in future about waste related matters.
- c) This information would then be automatically checked to ensure that there were no problems with the vehicle or address (e.g. an address outside of the four boroughs and Westminster) and either an email confirming the booking would be sent or an email saying there was a problem and asking the resident to contact the Authority during working hours.
- d) The confirmation email would remind residents that they need to bring proof of ID and residency with them and that failure to do so might result in them being turned away from the HWRC (this would also be flagged very early on in the booking process).

- e) It is not intended that the ID and residency of every resident using the site will be checked, as that would be very time consuming and labour intensive. However, a random system of checking will be introduced so that some control can be exerted over any potential abuse of the system. The current controls around frequency of use and the potential for commercial waste producers to abuse the system would also still remain in place.
 - f) On arrival at the HWRC the ANPR system would automatically check that the vehicle was booked in for the current time slot (there would be some in built flexibility with this). Assuming it was, and that no ID and residency checks were being undertaken at that time, then residents would proceed to use the HWRC exactly as they do now.
 - g) If the vehicle is not registered, then the ANPR system will display that information to the driver via a sign and to the HWRC staff. On arrival at the building the vehicle will be directed to leave the Centre and the driver handed a leaflet explaining how to book (it is possible that there may still be vacancies available for the current time).
21. It is proposed to introduce a booking system for a trial period of six months on Monday, 1st February 2021, to allow a sufficient lead-in time to do a comprehensive communications plan about the planned change and to carry out a procurement exercise to identify the best supplier for the Authority's needs. This will allow the system to be reviewed at the June 2021 meeting of the Authority.
22. Preliminary enquiries indicate the cost of such a system will be approximately £18,000 per annum and it is estimated that a communications budget of £5,000 will be needed that could be met from the existing approved 2020/21 budget. The booking system platform suppliers for Kent and Hampshire offer six-month contract terms so the trial cost will be approximately £9,000.
23. It is estimated that at a net saving of £110,000 per annum could be made through the introduction of a booking system by stopping non-residents using the HWRC. It should also be remembered that, as other adjacent waste disposal authorities introduce their own booking systems, their residents might find unrestricted access to the Authority's facilities becoming an attractive option if they have forgotten to book or are unable to get a slot at their preferred time.
24. Cory are agreeable to the introduction of a booking system and they concur that the introduction will reduce the usage during peak times and introduce more controls to identify non-household waste abuse. They feel that, for an initial period, residents who have not booked could be directed to an assigned bay to

allow them to make a booking and then be allowed to tip. Following the initial 'lenient' period residents who have not booked will have to drive into the site, but will be directed off-site and will not be allowed to tip; given that the system ought to have minimised the queue this ought not to be too much of an extra inconvenience.

25. Given the experience of the authorities contacted it seems likely that there will be an initial surge of telephone contact and online enquiries and some administrative tasks that the WRWA team will need to undertake. The trial will determine if the additional work can be carried out with the current staffing levels but the feedback from the Authorities contacted is that no additional staff have been required in the short or long term. The Borough Technical Officers have agreed to investigate the possibility of the Borough call centres taking bookings. It could be feasible to only allow online bookings and residents without internet access could be advised to ask a family member or friend to assist them with the booking. The only personal information required is the car registration number and the resident's name and address, i.e. information that a relative or friend would know anyway but this will be investigated further.
26. The Appendix to this report details the weekly usage from 1st July 2019 to 30th August 2020 and highlights the highest weekly usage. The Centre has space to facilitate approximately 60 cars queuing on-site and there are 24 bays, which means if 85 booking slots were made available every 30 minutes and all the residents turned up at the same time (worst case scenario) then there would be no need for visitors to queue in Smugglers Way (given that in practice all the vehicles are unlikely to arrive at the same time consideration can be given to increasing this number during the trial). This will create 170 slots per hour and 8,820 slots per week. The hourly usage range over the last 12 months is at its lowest 10 and highest is 229. 8,820 slots per week would not cover the weeks with the highest usage, but will comfortably cover the majority of the current weekly usage and the aim of the booking system is to aid the redistribution of usage.
27. It could be argued that a weekend only booking system might be introduced (as the main queuing problems occur at weekends) and weekdays left as they are, but Officers feel that a dual system would be more confusing for the public.
28. The number of slots can be adjusted and the trial will determine the optimum number of weekly slots for operational purposes and to meet the needs of residents. Other usage control measures that might be introduced in the future might be to limit the number of visits that can be made by a single car in a given period.

29. Policies will need to be established for residents who make regular bookings and do not attend and the booking system purchased will need to facilitate a reminder alert to make it easy for residents to reschedule or cancel their bookings. Consideration will also need to be given to how to deal with residents who turn up early or late for their bookings (but it is anticipated that there will be some leeway for this built into the system) and possible restrictions on the number of bookings that can be made at any one time.
30. The biggest risk with the introduction of a booking system is with technical or internet connection failures and the feedback from the authorities contacted is that they have had minor difficulties in this respect. However contingency plans will need to be established for any failures and the specification for the procurement of the booking system will ask for detailed information as to how quickly technical failures will be rectified. However, at worst the system will simply default to the current uncontrolled access.

TREASURER'S COMMENT

31. It is expected that the introduction of the booking system will prevent non-residents from the constituent councils and Westminster from bringing waste to the HWRC and therefore could reduce annual CA site costs by approximately £133,000. This will be analysed during the trial period and any reduction (if the trial were to continue) will feed through into future year budgets via revised tonnage estimates. The total cost of the booking system trial will be met from within existing approved Authority budgets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

32. Members are asked to approve the commencement of:
- a) a procurement process to commission a booking system which meets the needs of the Authority;
 - b) a six-month trial on Monday 1st February 2021; and
 - c) to otherwise receive this report as information.

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Smugglers Way
Wandsworth
SW18 1JS

M. Broxup
GENERAL MANAGER

21st September 2020

HOUSEHOLD WASTE AND RECYCLING CENTRE WEEKLY USAGE 1 JULY 2019 TO 30 AUGUST 2020

Week Commencing		
01-Jul-19	8587	
08-Jul-19	8499	
15-Jul-19	8275	
22-Jul-19	7719	
29-Jul-19	8554	
05-Aug-19	8694	
19-Aug-19	8371	
26-Aug-19	9675	
02-Sep-19	8691	
09-Sep-19	8151	
16-Sep-19	7989	
23-Sep-19	6586	
30-Sep-19	No data available	
07-Oct-19	6185	
14-Oct-19	9528	
21-Oct-19	6413	
28-Oct-19	7144	
04-Nov-19	6490	
11-Nov-19	6475	
18-Nov-19	6030	
25-Nov-19	6187	
02-Dec-19	6297	
09-Dec-19	5813	
16-Dec-19	6912	
23-Dec-19	No data available	
30-Dec-19	8012	
06-Jan-20	7148	
13-Jan-20	6199	
20-Jan-20	6121	
27-Jan-20	5973	
03-Feb-20	6079	
10-Feb-20	5698	
17-Feb-20	6506	
24-Feb-20	6109	
02-Mar-20	6491	
09-Mar-20	No data available	
16-Mar-20	7268	
CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19		
11-May-20	3807	Reduced number of bays to aid social distancing
18-May-20	4713	Reduced number of bays to aid social distancing
25-May-20	6587	Reduced number of bays to aid social distancing
08-Jun-20	No data available	
15-Jun-20	8852	
22-Jun-20	9188	
29-Jun-20	8812	
06-Jul-20	8848	
13-Jul-20	8844	
27-Jul-20	8437	
03-Aug-20	8567	
10-Aug-20	8164	
17-Aug-20	8289	
24-Aug-20	8662	

Weeks with Highest Usage