

Somerset Waste Board meeting
31 July 2020
Report for decision

Revised Recycle More Roll-Out Timetable

Lead Officer: Mickey Green, Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership

Author: Mickey Green, Managing Director, Somerset Waste Partnership

Contact Details: mickey.green@somersetwaste.gov.uk

<p>Forward Plan Reference:</p>	
<p>Summary:</p>	<p>On 9 April 2020 the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership took the decision to delay the roll-out of Recycle More programme due to the serious, unprecedented and uncertain impact that Covid-19 was having on waste services. The decision set out that SWP would work to develop a revised roll-out programme for approval by the Somerset Waste Board at its next meeting.</p> <p>This paper sets out a revised roll-out schedule. It involves 4 phases rather than the previous five phases which means that despite the delayed start the roll-out will finish at the same time, and hence the delay to the environmental and financial benefits are minimised. The first phase is planned to roll-out in Mendip in October 2020, all of South Somerset in July 2021, the eastern part of Somerset West & Taunton in September 2021, and Sedgemoor and the remainder of Somerset West & Taunton in February 2022. The final two phases may slip by a month, but this will depend upon the lessons learned from phase 1. Whilst the detailed plans for roll-out have been made to reflect the constraints of Covid-19, clearly the ongoing pandemic results in significant risks and issues, and hence further change to the timetable may be necessary.</p>
<p>Recommendations:</p>	<p>The Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel considers and comments on the following recommendation in this report.</p> <p>That the Somerset Waste Board agrees the revised roll-out timetable for the new Recycle More collection service and authorises the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership to vary the roll-out due to the significant uncertainty created by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>Reasons for</p>	

<p>recommendations:</p>	<p>Rolling out Recycle More delivers significant environmental and financial benefits, and clearly we want to realise these benefits as quickly as possible. Balanced against this, Covid-19 is placing waste services under considerable pressure and has disrupted the smooth mobilisation of our new collection contract with Suez (our new collections contractor). A review of all options by SWP and Suez has developed a revised roll-out timetable, and some changes to phases to better align with District Council boundaries to simplify communications whilst balancing operational costs and complexity.</p> <p>Whilst every effort has been made to mitigate the potential impact of Covid-19 on our planned roll-out timetable, clearly it is not cost-effective to mitigate for every possible scenario, and a roll-out of this scale during Covid-19 does pose risks. However, the uncertainty of when we will be fully free of Covid-19 and the considerable environmental and financial costs to delay means we need to proceed as quickly as is practically possible, whilst retaining some flexibility to respond to circumstances.</p>
<p>Links to Priorities and Impact on Annual Business Plan:</p>	<p>Section 1.1 of the SWB Approved Business Plan 2020-25 concerns the implementation of Recycle More. All partners have declared climate emergencies/similar, and the environmental benefit from Recycle More is an important part of achieving these.</p>
<p>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</p>	<p>The overall savings from Recycle More are anticipated to be over £2 million per year. Prior to the delay to the roll-out timetable it was expected that savings would start to be seen in 2022/23 once roll out has been fully implemented and the costs of roll-out paid back. The Board and all partners have previously agreed that no savings as a result of the new contract will be taken from the Somerset Waste Partnership until all roll out costs (e.g. implementation costs) have been fully funded.</p> <p>All partners MHCLG returns reflect the costs that the Covid-19 caused delay to Recycle More has resulted in – for District partners this is the extra costs of delivering the current service (which is more expensive than the Recycle More collection services) and for the County this is the extra cost of having to dispose of more rubbish as the savings are not realised as early. Section 4 of this report sets out the revised financial model for Recycle More against which the savings realised will be tracked. Covid-19 aside the arrangement is unchanged whereby the County Council funds the costs of roll-out until the savings from Recycle More pay these back.</p>

	There are no specific legal implications from the revised roll-out timetable, and the only HR implications relate to business continuity planning – ensuring that key staff are identified and contingency plans in place, and ensure that sufficient agency cover should be available should there be an elevated level of front-line staff sickness due to Covid-19.
Equalities Implications:	An impact assessment on Recycle More is maintained and updated as the project progresses. The only change to the equalities impact assessment as a result of the delayed roll-out is to reflect the different approach to communications and engagement that is needed under Covid-19 (i.e. with a greater degree of digital engagement).
Risk Assessment:	The underlying risks to Recycle More (i.e. the risks of not achieving the stated objectives) remain broadly as they were and have been the subject of previous board papers (see background section). New and or significantly changed risks are set out in section 4 of this report. The roll-out of phase 1 in Mendip in October 2020 has particular risks given that Covid-19 is still with us, and because of the impact that Covid-19 on mobilisation has had, meaning that aspects of the service (e.g. garden waste) are not where we would like them to be.

1. Background

1.1. Background to Recycle More

On 29 March 2019 the Somerset Waste Board decided upon SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK as the preferred bidder for Somerset’s waste collection contract. SUEZ took over delivering services on 28 March 2020. SUEZ will roll out our new collection service model (Recycle More) in phases. This will enable the public to recycle even more through the kerbside sort system, adding in the following materials to the weekly collection:

- Plastic pots, tubs and trays (including black plastic)
- Food and beverage cartons (e.g. TetraPaks)
- Small electrical equipment (e.g. a kettle or toaster)
- Household batteries

This is in addition to what can already be recycled every week – food, paper, glass, cans, aerosols, plastic bottles, cardboard and foil. A verbal update will be provided to the board on the kerbside collection of textiles, which we have unfortunately had to suspend due to lack of off-takers due to Covid-19 – we are advising residents to take high quality textiles suitable for reuse to charity shops or our recycling centres in the interim.

A 60litre weighted reusable sack (a ‘bright blue bag’) will ensure residents have

space for all their extra recycling. With so much more recycled each week, the frequency of residual waste will be reduced to every three weeks. This change is crucial to us being able to respond to public demand to recycle more, to nudge those that aren't recycling fully at the moment, to support our aim to see waste treated as a resource. Communal properties (adding in plastic, pots, tubs and trays and ensuring all can recycle cardboard) and schools (adding in plastic, pots, tubs and trays) will also have increased options to recycle. Neither schools nor communal properties will see changes to their rubbish collection frequency, which will still be responsive to when bins are full.

We expect this to take our recycling rate to around 60% and reduce the amount of residual waste from around 480 kg/household to 418kg per household, with this residual waste being used to create Energy from Waste rather than going into landfill.

1.2. Delay to planned roll-out programme

Every time SWP has rolled out a major service change it has phased the changes as it is not practical or desirable to make a change to 250,000 households recycling and waste collection services at one time, not least because we need to phase work to depots (because whilst we overhaul our depots to deal with additional recyclables we still need to continue with the 'day job') and so we can support residents to change behaviours.

On 9 April 2020 the Managing Director of the Somerset Waste Partnership took the decision to delay the roll-out of Recycle More due to the serious, unprecedented and uncertain impact that Covid-19 was having on waste services. This decision paper highlighted that a paper would be brought to the next meeting of the Board to set out a revised roll-out timetable.

1.3. Revised roll-out timetable

The proposed revised roll-out schedule for Recycle More is as follows:

When	Where	Households
26 Oct 2020	Mendip (all)	51,768
28 June 2021	South Somerset (all)	76,653
27 Sept 2021 (fallback 25 Oct 2021)	Somerset West & Taunton (primarily old Taunton Deane)	55,207
28 Feb 2022 (fallback 28 March 2022)	Sedgemoor & Somerset West & Taunton (primarily old West Somerset)	72,312

Key changes from the previous roll-out timetable are that:

- Roll-out has been compressed into 4 phases (rather than 5) so it finishes at the same time as original plan

- The first two phases now cover all of Mendip and South Somerset (respectively) in order to simplify communications and engagement reflecting the challenges in communicating whilst Covid-19 is still a major factor. Previously South Somerset was split into two phases and a small number (c1,400) of Mendip households (those served from the Bridgwater depot) would not have been completed until phase 5.
- Communal properties in Mendip will not be included within phase 1. Whilst there are only 110 such properties in Mendip, each one is different and they require detailed and time-consuming planning ahead of a service change. Devoting Suez and SWP time to this work would place undue pressure on resources and hence risk the success of the overall roll-out. Mendip's communal properties will receive the new service ahead of or part of the June 2021 phase – an update will be provided to the board ahead of this.
- Schools will still roll out in two phases as planned but the first phase of the roll-out will not happen in September 2020 as previously planned. This is partly because we need to de-risk the roll-out given the added risks and issues caused by Covid-19, the resource pressures that planning and implementing this would cause (and hence the risk to the overall success of the programme given our challenges at the moment) and partly because we are concerned that schools will not be ready for this in September 2020 given the many challenges they will have in getting back to a new normal. It is anticipated that we will roll out Recycle More to schools in Mendip and South Somerset on 28 June 2021, and to schools in Sedgemoor and Somerset West & Taunton in either Sept 2021 or February 2022. A finalised timetable will be brought back to the board in this financial year.

A go/no go review will be undertaken by the Managing Director of SWP, in conjunction with SMG, in late August to ensure that we are ready for phase 1 of Recycle More – i.e. that the service is stable, that the route mapping is robust, that Covid-19 isn't having undue impacts, and that our plans for operational support and communications and engagement are still on track. Lessons learnt exercises will be undertaken after each phase of roll-out to inform the next phase. The precise timing of the final phase will be reviewed in late Summer 2021.

1.4. Communications and Engagement

Recycle More is first and foremost about behaviour change and the Somerset Waste Board (SWB) have repeatedly emphasised the need for a major communications and engagement programme ahead of the roll-out.

SWP will still deliver two critical communications through their door of every household ahead of the service change to Recycle More, though on a slightly revised timescale:

- a 'warm-up' leaflet 6 weeks before the service change (instead of 8 weeks as previously planned, so as to shorten the lead time on implementation)

- a more detailed guide 3 weeks before the service change (instead of 4 weeks) which will tell people what materials go in what recycling containers and any changes to their collection day.

Engaging with young people and their parents/carers through schools was always a key component of our planned campaign and will remain so – Carymoor Environment Trust is developing virtual Recycle More workshop and assembly options to offer as alternatives to physical visits. It is hoped that some degree face-to-face engagement may be possible, as well as planned 'schools gate mini-roadshows', though clearly this will be a decision for individual schools and all activity will need to reflect social distancing and other measures.

The campaign will have a greater reliance on digital engagement – a service change film will be produced, regular Facebook live sessions/Similar will be held so that residents can ask questions, Zoom/Similar meetings will be offered to clusters of parish councils and Similar stakeholders where face to face events are not possible. Leaflets, Your Somerset and reaching out to key stakeholders (e.g. parish councils, village agents, talking cafes, etc.) are crucial means of ensuring that all residents, including those not digitally able, are well informed of the changes. Downloadable collection-day calendars (iCal) will be available to residents which will enable people to have a collection day reminder on their phone/computer should they wish to. Whilst work is continuing on an App, this is unlikely to be ready ahead of phase 1 given the other pressures on resources – the key functionality that we wanted customers to have access to will be available through My Waste Services and the downloadable collection-day calendar. Face-to-face support will also remain crucial to support residents who are struggling with the changes, but clearly we will need to manage demand for this and do it in a safe way. SWP will seek to recruit a network of Recycle More Champions who can help promote the service locally.

Additional resources will be brought into SWP's customer service team and our operational team to help deal with increased customer contact, though the district Council's customer service team and our My Waste Services system will remain the key front door for residents. For example, it is expected that many residents will have a day change, but this is necessary to ensure that rounds are robust and efficient (and hence for service quality). Additional support will be targeted for those changing days (e.g. staff reviewing rounds on their 'old' collection day and engaging with residents to inform them of changes if they have missed messages, closely monitoring participation on 'new' collection days and targeting additional support). Enhanced processes are also being put in place to ensure that we support those residents who are concerned about whether they have enough space for their rubbish. SWP has already funded (approx. 11k) three cloth nappy groups to and these will be promoted. Those who need extra rubbish capacity (for example with a large family or medical needs) will get it, and we will make that process as seamless as possible. There will be requests for extra capacity that do not meet the criteria and it is important that households are encouraged to engage fully with the new service – freeing up space in rubbish bins.

1.5. Mobilisation issues

The challenges of mobilising a new collection contract cannot be understated – whilst the staff TUPE transferred we have a whole new fleet of vehicles, a step-change in technology and use of data, new systems and processes. The challenges of this process have been made even more difficult by having to do this through a global pandemic. Dealing with significant changes in technology, changes to safe systems of work to protect staff, key staff at SWP and Suez having to focus on our business continuity plans meaning management resources are spread more thinly, the pressures that come when services are restarted after a considerable period of time – all of these and other factors have made mobilisation incredibly challenging. The changes to the garden waste service that Suez implemented did not go as well as we expected, and we apologise for the impact this has had on customers. Suez and SWP have learnt the lessons from this and reflected this in our planning for Recycle More. However, clearly a roll-out on the scale of Recycle More is going to be made much more difficult by having to do it when the world is so far from normality.

2. Options Considered and reasons for rejecting them

2.1. SWP have considered and rejected a number of other scenarios (working with Suez and in consultation with SMG), including:

- **Delaying Recycle More roll-out until Covid-19 is behind us:** A longer delay would have very considerable cost impacts on all partners as well as delaying the environmental benefits. Whilst delaying until Covid-19 is no longer a risk would have made the roll-out operationally simpler and less risky (changes in waste tonnage are very difficult to predict at the moment with so many people at home), when this will be is uncertain and given the pressures on public finances and the declared climate emergency this is not a preferred option
- **Further delaying the start of the roll-out:** Whilst this would give more time to prepare, there is no guarantee that Covid-19 would still not be having an impact, and there are relatively few times of the year suitable for large-scale service changes. Delay would push back the financial and environmental benefits of Recycle More, and as it is not practical to fit three roll-out phases in one calendar year it would also push back the end of roll-out.
- **Rolling out more quickly than the proposed timescale:** It is not possible to start the roll-out earlier than October 2020 due to the disruption that the first wave of Covid-19 has caused to services and contract mobilisation, and because of the long lead time for each phase (both in terms of behind the scenes work e.g. mapping new routes and crucially the communications and engagement – the benefits derive from behaviour change not just service change). Doing more than two phases in any one calendar year would also be impractical and highly risky – operationally and in terms of

communications and engagement.

- **Fully finalising all aspects of the roll-out timetable now:** Whilst we have a clear ambition for the rollout timescale, this paper indicates key aspects of uncertainty (for example whether phase 3 and 4 slip by a month). This is necessary because the impacts of Covid-19 are so uncertain that we want to ensure that we manage expectations that adjustment to the timetable may be necessary.

3. Consultations undertaken

- 3.1.** This revised timetable has been developed in conjunction with our new collections contractor, Suez. The revised timetable has been discussed with the Strategic Management Group (senior officers from each partner), s151 officers and at an informal meeting of the Somerset Waste Board and the Joint Waste Scrutiny Panel on 14th July 2020. The importance of flexibility given the risks was emphasised by some members at the informal meeting and has been reflected in this paper.

4. Implications

- 4.1.** Recycle More is expected to deliver a significant environmental benefit – reducing the amount of rubbish generated and increasing recycling levels, both of new materials and the half of the average rubbish bin in Somerset that could already be recycled already. Recycle More also results in lower emissions as vehicles will travel less distance overall (with refuse collections moving from two-weekly to three-weekly whilst recycling collections remain weekly).
- 4.2.** Recycle More was anticipated to breakeven during quarter one of 2022/23 as reported to the board on 14 February 2020. As previously mentioned, there were still some revisions to do to the breakeven model due to final contractual arrangements around TUPE'd staff etc. Following this update to the breakeven model, this resulted in a slight movement in the breakeven point to early in quarter 2 2022/23. It is still expected that the annual saving from Recycle More will exceed £2m. The financial impact of the revised roll programme will not impact upon breakeven point as all 5 partners are funding their share of these Covid related costs which will include use of MHCLG Covid funding.

4.3. Risks

The underlying risks to Recycle More (i.e. the risks of not achieving the stated objectives) remain broadly as they were and have been the subject of previous board papers (see background section). New and or significantly changed risks are as below. Covid-19 is placing SWP, Suez and our partners under considerable pressure and the uncertainty inherent in Covid-19 means it is difficult to fully describe all the potential risks. A specific section of our Business Continuity Plan

is devoted to the specific risks to Recycle More.

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score
A second wave of Covid-19 in Somerset or a local outbreak affecting SWP's Evercreech depot disrupts or prevents roll-out: This has been mitigated by shortening the lead time between decision and roll-out (e.g. a 6 week and 3 week leaflet, rather than an 8 week and 4 week leaflet as planned) and development of a specific section of our (and Suez's) Business Continuity Plans specifically focussing on this.	3	4	12
Covid-19 is disrupting people's lives (working from home/furlough, more online shopping) and this is changing waste flows – the scale and duration of these changes is hard to predict, and this makes it more challenging to resource the service efficiently.	4	3	12
The service is not stable enough (noting that changes to the garden waste service have not gone as smoothly as we would expect) to give us confidence that we are ready to roll out Recycle More	3	4	12
Suez are unable to robustly plan for the changes due to a compressed timescale to rollout and the pressures of Covid-19, in particular to manage day changes and also to ensure any HR implications of route changes are effectively managed	3	4	12
Suez do not learn the lessons from the issues with the garden waste day change and SWP do not have sufficient confidence in their route-planning to sign off on the roll-out of Recycle More. This is made more challenging because we do not know if the substantial changes we have seen in tonnage associated with Covid-19 are going to continue, and hence it makes designing efficient routes extremely challenging.	3	4	12
The financial and environmental gains from Recycle More come from behaviour change (people throwing away less rubbish and recycling more) – and communicating with the public is more challenging under Covid-19. Details of the revised approach to comms and	4	3	12

engagement are set out in the paper.			
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5. Background papers

5.1. All previous board papers on Recycle More are available on the SWP or SCC websites.

- 29 March 2019 Board meeting agenda and papers
- 9 June 2020 Decision to delay Recycle More
- 23 April decision on phase 1 of revised Recycle More roll-out timetable