

## Recycle More Update

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<b>Forward Plan Reference:</b>	<i>26.01.2021</i>
<b>Summary:</b>	On 26 October the first phase of Recycle More was rolled out to around 52,000 homes in Mendip as planned. This paper updates on the successful roll-out, lessons learnt and updates the approach to future roll-out phases, noting that risks remain (especially due to Covid-19).
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>That the Somerset Waste Board:</b></p> <p><b>1)notes the successful progress made in implementing Recycle More,</b></p> <p><b>2) notes the update on planning for future roll-out phases (and the ongoing risk due to Covid-19)</b></p> <p><b>3) agrees to defer the roll-out to Somerset’s schools given the impact of Covid-19</b></p>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	Recycle More is the most significant element of our current Business Plan given the environmental and financial benefits it delivers to all partners. Clearly the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic adds to the risks of the roll-out programme. When the Board agreed a revised Recycle More roll-out timetable on 31 July 2020 the paper set out that a final timetable for the schools roll-out would be brought back to the Board before the end of the financial year.
<b>Links to Priorities and Impact on Annual Business Plan:</b>	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.
<b>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</b>	Recycle More was forecast to breakeven during the early part of quarter two of 2022/23 and deliver savings to all partners of over £2m per annum. As previously agreed, no savings as a result of the new contract will be taken from the Somerset Waste Partnership until all roll out costs have been fully funded and breakeven point is reached. The anticipated savings figures have been shared with s151 Officers for inclusion in each partners MTFP process. The finance paper provides an update on the anticipated breakeven point and level of savings, which we will continue to regularly review as roll out continues.
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	An impact assessment on Recycle More is maintained and updated as the project progresses.
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	As previously reported to the Board, Covid-19 is a risk to the successful roll-out of Recycle More. The elevated levels of infection seen in Somerset mean that we are at higher risk of staff absences, and the lockdown means we risk seeing elevated levels of tonnages like we did in the last lockdown – making it harder for our crews to complete their rounds.

## 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. Tetra Paks)
- 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, foil and wearable clothes and shoes.

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, rubbish collections will take place 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. Roll-out timetable

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. 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 be able to 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 unprecedented and uncertain impact that Covid-19 was having on waste services. The revised roll-out schedule for Recycle More agreed by the Board in July 2020 is as follows:

When	Where	Households
8 March 2021	Mendip (communal properties)	3,270
28 June 2021	South Somerset (all)	76,653
27 Sept 2021 (fallback 25 Oct 2021)	Somerset West & Taunton (old Taunton Deane)	55,207
28 Feb 2022 (fallback 28 March 2022)	Sedgemoor & Somerset West & Taunton (old West Somerset)	72,312

## 1.3. Delay to Schools roll-out

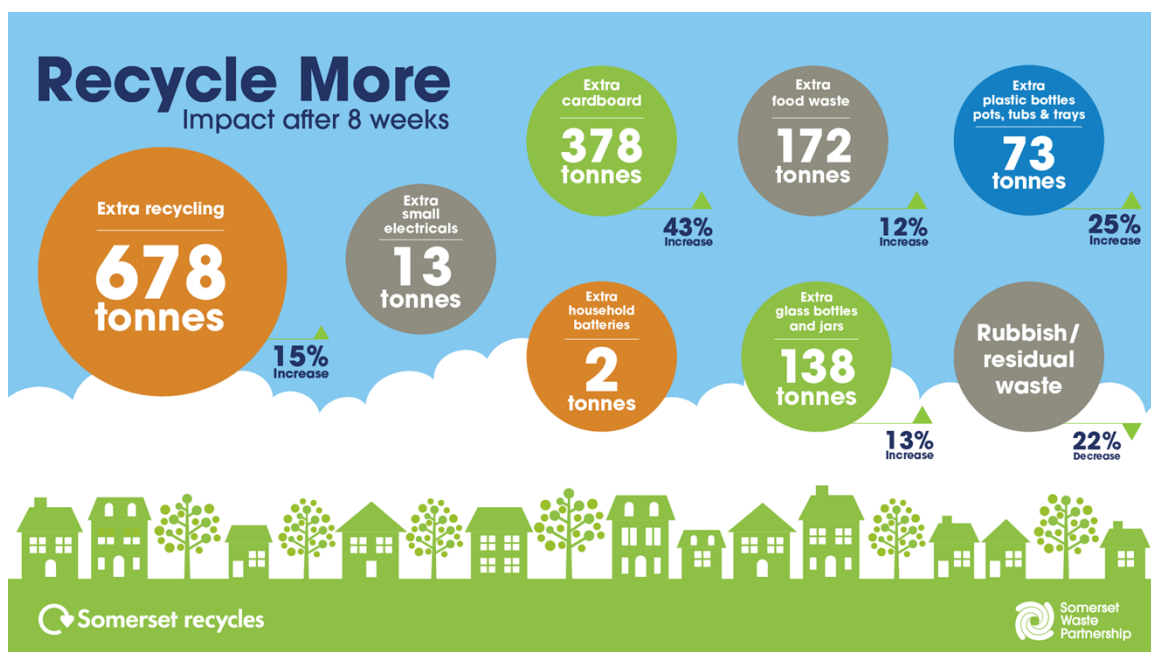
- Given that we are now back in a national lockdown and the significant impact this is having on Somerset's schools, SWP propose to defer the roll-out of Recycle More to schools that was planned for 28 June 2021 (Mendip and South Somerset) and Sedgemoor and Somerset West & Taunton in either Sept 2021 or February 2022.
- The reason for delay is that SWP need to considerable site visits and engagement with schools ahead of roll-out, and it is not practical to undertake

that given the pressures schools are currently under. Additionally, it is highly likely that when we planned to roll-out Recycle More to schools they will be fully focussed on supporting Somerset's children, and hence not capable of focussing attention on putting in place arrangements to collect additional recyclables and place them in different bins so that we can improve how they are treated. Suez, SCC and Support Services for Education have been consulted on this recommendation and are in agreement.

- This delay does not mean that SWP will not continue to work with schools to support them to improve their recycling, as well as support them dealing with the Lateral Flow Testing waste. Given the pressures of coping with Covid and rolling out Recycle More to households, it is likely that the roll-out to schools will be delayed until 2022 (likely after phase 4). Once the recovery of schools from Covid-19 is clearer a revised timetable will be brought to the Board.

#### **1.4. Phase 1 roll-out: Update on impact**

- The successful communications and engagement activity undertaken to support Mendip through the Recycle More roll-out was set out in the December Board paper. Total transaction volumes arising from the transition in Mendip reduced significantly from nearly 8,000 transactions during October to just under 2,500 during December. Whilst the significant numbers of additional staff deployed for the 8 weeks post roll-out are now no longer required, SWP has retained 3 Recycle More Officers to provide support. Planned focussed activity to remove unauthorised additional waste bins have, however, been suspended as they require face to face engagement which is not appropriate at the current time.
- Updated tonnage figures for the first 8 weeks of Recycle more are set out below. This eight week period runs to Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December, as we wanted to avoid data which include the post-Christmas period, as it wouldn't provide an accurate picture on the impact of Recycle More alone. It shows the positive story shared with the board at the December meeting continuing.



At the completion of all for phases, a county-wide customer survey of Recycle More will be carried out by Suez, with support from SWP.

In the meantime, we are working with Suez to deliver a short customer survey in March. This will seek feedback that can help us plan for the forthcoming phases, while getting a feel for how residents have found the new service and the change. Details are still be finalised, but this is likely to take the form of an online survey, promoted in various ways, including content in the Your Somerset newspaper, newsletters and publicity through the media and our social media platforms. This will be backed up a hard copy of the survey being sent to a representative sample of Mendip residents.

Before, during and after roll-out we received ad hoc feedback and comments councillors (parish, district and county) and they will be encouraged to complete the survey and encourage others to do so.

### 1.5. Approach to communals roll-out

As agreed by the Board in July 2020, communal properties in Mendip were not included within phase 1, but we plan to extend the range of materials they can recycle expanded on 8 March 2021 (adding plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays and ensuring all can recycle cardboard, on top of paper, glass and metal existing recycling). For phases 2-4 we intend to roll-out communal services at the same time as kerbside changes. Clearly this may need to be reviewed dependent upon the Covid-19 pressures on waste services nearer the time.

Most communal properties can currently only recycle glass, paper and metal. A minority currently have cardboard recycling, some homes with communal properties access the kerbside service to recycle plastic or food. What we can provide at a communal location is also dictated by space constraints, and in a small

minority of locations these space constraints or a history of severe contamination means that there is currently no recycling. This complexity makes the service more inefficient than it can be, makes it much harder to deliver good customer service, and can result in poorer quality recycling (as it becomes very hard to effectively communicate when there are so many bespoke arrangements).

Recycle More will ensure that all communal properties where there is space will be able to recycle glass, paper, metal cans, cardboard and plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays. Where properties use the existing kerbside food waste service this will be retained. We planning to roll out a communal food waste service during 2022

As set out in the December Board report, in rolling out Recycle More we will take this opportunity to simplify the range of services accessed by communal properties (reducing the risk of confusion) so that all communal properties are either:

- 1) Communal rubbish and communal recycling only (and wherever it is possible for any household in the communal location to have a weekly kerbside food waste collection then we will encourage this)
- 2) Communal rubbish and kerbside recycling only (inc food)
- 3) Communal rubbish only (for the very small number of properties where circumstances prevent us from enabling recycling)
- 4) Full kerbside service (individual bins for rubbish and kerbside recycling)

Wherever possible communal recycling bins have been removed and we have assigned these properties a kerbside recycling service as this provides an improved quality of recyclable material.

Some existing communal recycling properties have received kerbside boxes previously, where is not practicable to provide the kerbside service to all residences in a complex, these kerbside boxes will be removed, and comparable material streams will be added through the communal recycling service expansion.

<b>Overview of communal roll-out in Mendip</b>		
<b>Recycle More service provision</b>	<b>Number of Locations</b>	<b>Number of Properties</b>
1. Communal rubbish and communal recycling	92	1740
2. Communal rubbish and Kerbside recycling	99	1100
3. Communal rubbish only	4	80
4. Kerbside rubbish and recycling	15	350

As set out in the business plan and noted in the December board paper, we intend to then review food waste recycling at communal properties in 2022 to seek to ensure that all households can recycle food. Whilst days of refuse collection may change for some communal properties, the frequency of rubbish collection will not

change as a result of Recycle More.

### **3.1. Approach to phase 2 and 3 roll-outs**

- Two-stage direct mailing was a key tactic for providing information to the public in phase 1, and we will continue in phases 2 and 3 with 'Warm-up' and 'Pre-launch' leaflets distributed at six weeks and then three weeks before launch. Key lessons learnt from phase 1 include tweaking the approach to encourage even more people to keep hold of the 'pre-launch' leaflet, to further emphasise the plastics that can now be recycled, and to allow a longer lead time to account for any distribution disruption with Royal Mail.
- The use of video and more graphical content on social media (particularly Facebook) will continue to be a key part of the campaign. Facebook Q&As will be held, and more talking Cafes are planned.
- Predictions of increased customer contact have been shared with SSDC and SWAT and we will work closely with them to ensure that customer contact teams are trained and supported, but that together we do everything we can to encourage online engagement rather than phonecalls given the other pressures on these teams.
- Monthly project board meetings are arranged with both SSDC and SWAT to ensure that we manage these two projects robustly. Specific and detailed project plans have been shared with partners.
- SWP's website has had a dedicated page on Recycle More for many months, and content has been regularly updated and added to. It has been used to host information and guidance, video and animation content and an FAQ. Successful social media engagement (which saw a six-fold increase in Facebook engagements prior to the Mendip service) will be built on and expanded, with additional public Q&A sessions and Talking Café events.
- Communication materials have been reviewed and will be refined for the next phases.
- Tailored SWP content for Your Somerset will be produced to ensure relevant content is shared at the right time with residents in different Districts, noting that a single edition of Your Somerset covers the SWAT area (which will be rolled out across two phases).
- Whilst the broad plan for member engagement (at parish, District and County Council level) will remain as worked successfully in Mendip (virtual briefings, Q&A, briefing packs, test-drive of bright blue bag, parish meetings) we will refine the detailed plan in consultation with SSDC and SWAT.
- In addition to the interactive virtual Schools Against Waste sessions we are working with Carymoor to develop a version of the sessions suitable for home schooling.
- Display materials, some with take away information, will be used in line with whatever Covid-19 restrictions are in place at the time. Recycling sites will host promotional banners.
- We will seek to link members in phase 2 and 3 with members in phase 1

(Mendip) so that they can hear first-hand the member experience.

- Blue bag delivery arrangements will be changed so that they will go out on the day you present rubbish and recycling in the 2 weeks before the service change. This will enable us to better monitor the accuracy of distribution and hence address any issues more quickly. Greater involvement of Suez staff (i.e. reduced reliance on agency staff) and other monitoring arrangements are also expected to improve the distribution process.

#### **4. Options Considered and reasons for rejecting them**

- 4.1.** The alternative option considered was to continue with the schools roll-out programme as planned. This was rejected because it risked us undertaking abortive work (at a time when all SWP and contractor staff are under considerable pressure), because it risked us rolling out a service which didn't realise our goals (because schools are very understandably distracted) and hence missing the opportunity of behaviour change that comes with a service change, and fundamentally because we want to avoid putting further pressure on schools at this extremely difficult time for them.

#### **5. Consultations undertaken**

- 5.1.** Bi-weekly meetings of the Strategic Management Group (senior officers from each partner) have kept officers up to date with progress in mobilising Recycle More. Project kick-off meetings have been held with SSDC and SWAT officers.

#### **6. Implications**

- 6.1.** 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). Lessons learned are being gathered throughout the implementation, to inform future phases of the roll-out.

#### **6.2. 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). The additional risks related to Covid-19 and the impact this has had on waste services were reported to the board in July and are reflected in our risk register. Covid-19, especially given the new national lockdown and the more virulent variant, is placing SWP, Suez and our partners under extreme 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. The cumulative risks (from Brexit related impacts to building materials/supply chain, Covid absence amongst contractors, and delays in securing planning permission) related to the Taunton depot build programme are being closely monitored.

## **7. Background papers**

- 7.1.** All previous board papers on Recycle More are available on the SWP or SCC websites. A report on Recycle More is taken to each board meeting.