

Household waste recycling centre DIY charges

To: ALL APSE main contacts (England)

Introduction

From the 31 December 2023 the government announced that households no longer have to pay to get rid of DIY waste at council recycling centres. The belief is that this will boost recycling and make it easier for people to dispose of their waste in a responsible manner.

All councils in England will now have to treat DIY waste the same as other household waste when it meets certain conditions, for example not exceeding 2 x 50L rubble bags.

Benefits of change

The changes are the latest in a string of Government reforms to make it simpler and easier to recycle. That includes a consultation launched last week to make it easier to recycle household electrical items and [simpler household collection rules announced in October](#).

The change has the potential to save households hundreds of pounds, with charges that were up to £10 an item, such as a piece of plasterboard, now scrapped. Defra said the change would affect around one-third of local authorities.

Recycling Minister Robbie Moore has said *“Removing charges for DIY waste at council recycling centres will help New Year home improvement*

projects become a reality and ensure that those disposing of waste responsibly aren't being penalised for doing so”.

The removal of the fees is part of the wider Government aim to tackle waste crime and fly-tipping, which is estimated to cost the economy £924m per year in England. Among other measures, last year [the Government announced grants totalling £775,000 to help councils roll out a range of projects to crack down on fly-tipping](#), with an additional £1m for grants being made available this year.

The Government has also [consulted on reforming the waste carrier, broker, dealer regime and on introducing mandatory digital waste tracking](#) and is developing a fly-tipping toolkit with the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group to help spread best practice on tackling the issue among local authorities. The toolkit is being extended to raise awareness of the waste duty of care among householders and businesses.

Elsewhere, the Government has increased the maximum fines for fly-tipping, littering and graffiti, while concurrently ringfencing the proceeds from those related fixed penalty notices so that fines can be reinvested back into enforcement and local clean-up activities.

Local authority feed back

Some Councils, suggest that the loss of revenue could mean waste disposal authorities lose up to £1m a year. The loss of such income may lead to the closure of some household waste and recycling centres if that revenue is not replaced with other income sources.

For example, as reported in [MRW](#) following the introduction of the ban, Dorset County Council estimated that the costs to transport and dispose of DIY waste that is not being charged for will be around £500,000 a year.

“This new legislation simply transfers the cost of disposing of DIY waste from those who produce it to all council taxpayers, leaving less money for already stretched council services. They have said that the new rules will also make it easier for "rogue traders" to illegally drop off commercial

waste at recycling centres.

Whilst local authorities will of course need to comply with the new legislation, many are skeptical about whether it will truly assist in the fight against fly-tipping, or indeed overall waste reduction, and supporting increased recycling.

APSE COMMENT

While APSE welcomes and supports the objectives, behind this announcement the evidence to suggest that scrapping the DIY waste charges would result in a decrease in fly-tipping is at best scant. However, and perhaps more worryingly, the loss of income to potentially a third of local authorities, who currently deploy charging mechanisms, is a worry to the continued provision of waste services. APSE will continue to work with our member local councils on various ways that the challenges mentioned above can be addressed and mitigated.

The subject of fly-tipping will also form the opening plenary session at the [APSE Street Cleansing Seminar](#) which will be held in **Telford on Thursday 8 February 2024**. During the seminar the topic of **‘Tackling waste crime: The Environment Agency taskforce’** will be discussed including an exploration of tackling the criminal waste industry and how waste crime can be avoided, as well as working with local authorities to stop rogue operators and organised criminals, alongside the use of effective enforcement with Emma Viner, Enforcement & Investigations Manager and Kev Knight, Senior Environmental Crime Officer from the **Environment Agency**.

In addition, APSE will be discussing the development of the **‘Fly-tipping Toolkit: How to Present Robust Cases to the Courts’**. This toolkit includes an exploration of ways to prevent or reduce fly-tipping, fostering effective partnership working and supporting and promoting best practice. The best practice session will be addressed by Joe Minns, Team Leader, Local Environmental Quality, at the National Fly-tipping Prevention Group, DEFRA.

[APSE Performance Networks](#) benchmarking services will also be exploring the impact of the scrapping of the charges for disposing of DIY waste at recycling centres and the impacts on fly tipping levels.

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