

# APSE Scottish Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar 2026

## Report Back Briefing (Waste and Recycling)

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland. For information only England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

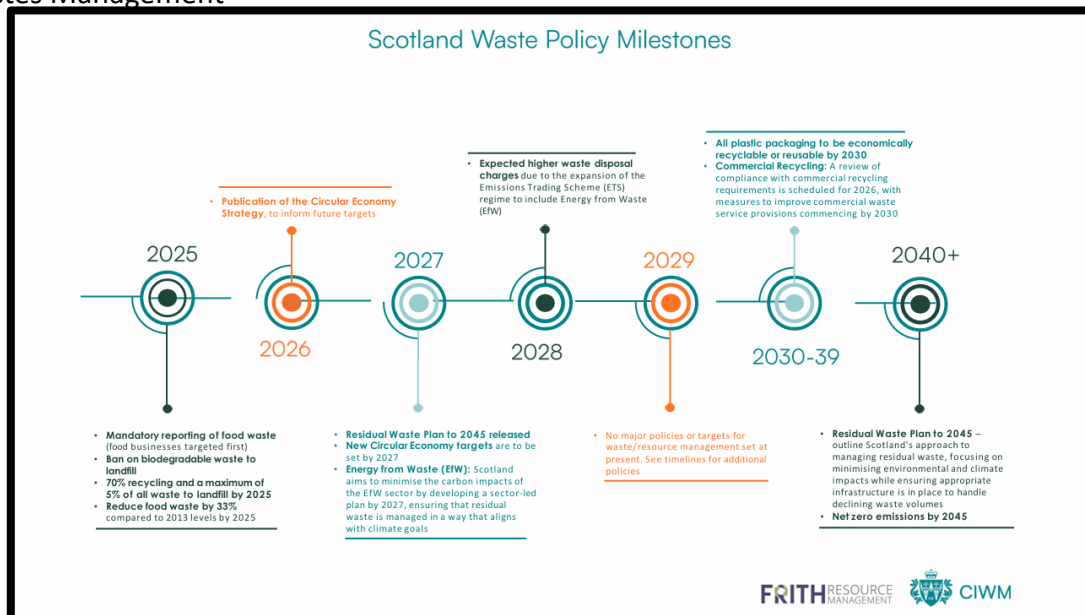
**Notice:**

On 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026, APSE held its annual Scottish Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar in Aviemore. This briefing provides a short summary of the seminar’s waste and recycling speakers and the topics covered at discussion forums. There are three separate briefings for the fleet, waste, and grounds sections. Links to all of the presentations can be found [here](#).

### 1. Presentations

[Waste and resources across the UK: Insights and reflections for Scotland](#)

Dan Cooke, Director of Policy, Communications and External Affairs, Chartered Institution of Wastes Management



CIWM’s Dan Cooke outlined the current UK waste policy landscape and its relationship to net zero and circular economy ambitions. The presentation highlighted the strategic and

regulatory frameworks shaping the sector and the implications of continuing policy change for local authorities.

Dan described the wider political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental context for reform, noting that many of the core building blocks for a circular economy roadmap are already in place. He pointed to the role of UK and devolved government strategies, environmental targets, legislation, regulation and enforcement bodies in shaping the direction of travel.

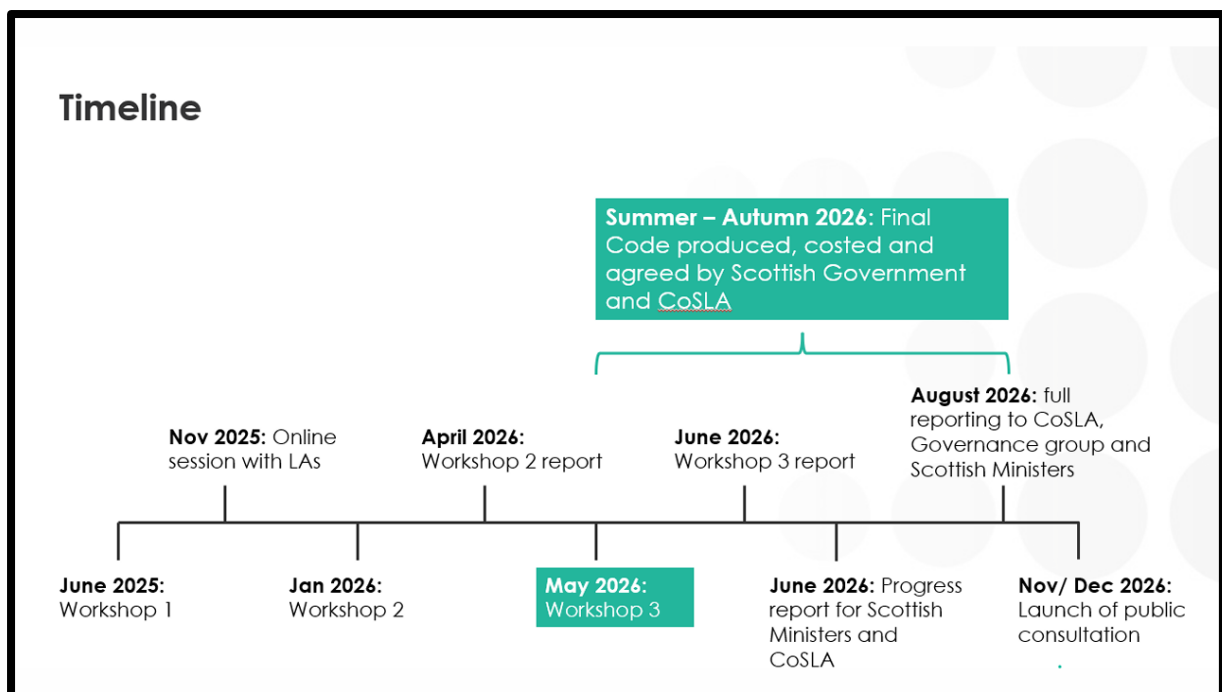
A key theme was the scale and pace of policy change across the UK and Ireland. Dan highlighted overlapping reforms intended to improve resource efficiency, support circular economy outcomes and contribute to net zero, with local authorities identified as central to delivery through their operational role and partnership working.

He identified three priority actions for the sector: increasing recycling rates, decarbonising the management of non-recyclable waste, and transitioning collection fleets and site plant to zero-emission vehicles and equipment. Risks to progress included policy delays, divergence across the devolved nations, wider economic pressures, battery fires and waste crime.

For local authority members, the overall message was that the sector now has a clear strategic direction, but delivery will be depend on sustained political commitment, effective regulation, investment and strong collaboration across public and private partners.

### **Shaping Scotland’s Recycling Future: Co-Design in Action**

Alex Quayle, Team Leader – Recycling, Scottish Government & Charlie Devine, Service Manager – Waste Partnership, Dundee City Council



**Alex Quayle and Charlie Devine outlined the Scottish Government’s co-design work on a new statutory Code of Practice for household recycling and reuse services.** The presentation set out the policy context, the emerging service model and the practical issues local authorities will need to consider as proposals develop.

The speakers noted that the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 gives ministers powers to modernise services and introduce a statutory Code intended to support more consistent, accessible and effective household recycling arrangements across Scotland. A central theme was partnership working, with co-design intended to improve consistency while still recognising local circumstances such as rurality, communal housing and affordability.

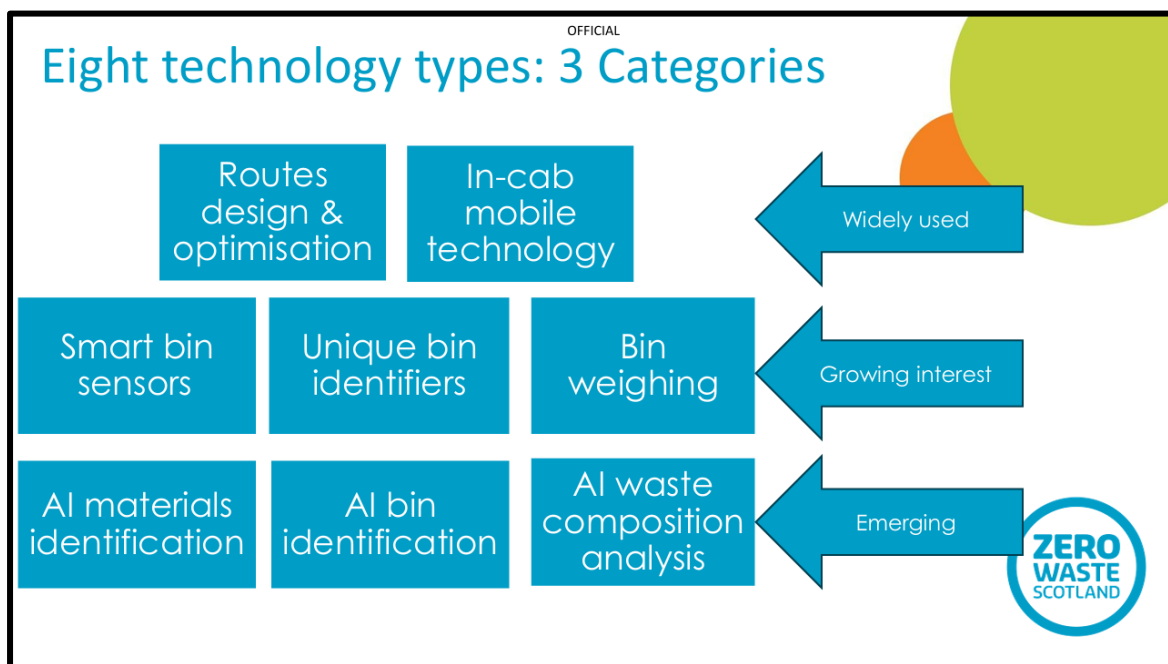
Indicative changes discussed included tighter controls on residual waste capacity, wider use of twin-stream dry recycling collections, expansion of separate food waste collections and continued flexibility on garden waste charging. Dundee City Council’s Charlie Devine emphasised that co-design gives councils an opportunity to influence future mandatory kerbside arrangements while balancing greater consistency with local service design, geography and housing mix.

The presentation also highlighted delivery challenges, including the evidence base, cost modelling, transition planning, service implications for remote and hard-to-access properties, and links with wider reforms such as Extended Producer Responsibility and the Deposit Return Scheme. Funding was identified as a critical issue, with both capital and revenue implications expected and further governance and costing work still to come.

For local authority members, the key message was that the Code of Practice could drive significant service change over the coming years, but that there remains an important opportunity to shape implementation and ensure future requirements are practical, affordable and responsive to local needs.

### **Digital technologies for high quality and high performing kerbside collections**

John Arthur, Recycling Consultant, Zero Waste Scotland



**John Arthur of Zero Waste Scotland outlined how digital technologies could support higher quality and more effective kerbside collections.** The presentation drew on a review of available evidence commissioned to help Scottish local authorities understand the technologies currently in use, those attracting growing interest, and newer systems that may support future service improvement. This work sits within the wider modernisation of recycling and waste services set out in Scotland's Circular Economy and Waste Route Map to 2030.

John explained that the review identified eight technology types, ranging from widely used tools such as route optimisation and in-cab systems through to technologies with growing interest, including smart sensors, unique bin identifiers and bin weighing, as well as emerging artificial intelligence applications. The overall message was that digital tools have the potential to improve service efficiency, reliability, data quality and understanding of participation and contamination, but that most also bring operational, financial and governance considerations that need careful assessment before wider rollout.

Across the technologies discussed, common issues included upfront and ongoing costs, software integration, data management and privacy, maintenance requirements, the need to adapt operational practices, and questions about evidence of effectiveness at scale. Some technologies appear better suited to particular circumstances, such as communal, commercial or remote collections, while several of the newer AI-based applications remain at an earlier stage of development.

Feedback gathered from Scottish local authorities suggested that where digital technologies are already in use, the main benefits reported are improved service reliability, operational efficiencies and health and safety gains. Interest was strongest in AI-assisted material identification and other tools that could help councils better understand contamination, participation and route performance, although the presentation made clear that evidence remains mixed and further testing may be needed.

In closing, John suggested there may be value in further shared learning between councils and Zero Waste Scotland, including a possible technical forum or pilot activities to test the practical benefits and limitations of selected technologies in Scottish operating conditions.

## **Cireco Park MRF: Demonstrating Processing Efficiency under Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**

David Goodenough, Corporate Operations & Projects Manager, Cireco Scotland



**David Goodenough of Cireco Scotland outlined how the Cireco Park Material Recovery Facility has been designed to support Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements.**

The presentation focused on the growing importance of processing efficiency, transparency and auditability within the new packaging regime, and on the role that advanced sorting and data systems could play in demonstrating these outcomes for local authorities, producers and regulators.

A central message was that traditional MRF sampling methods may not provide the level of evidence needed under EPR, particularly where there is a need to demonstrate and capture performance, identify material losses and support robust funding decisions. In contrast, the Cireco Park approach is intended to provide more continuous and defensible information on how packaging materials move through the facility and where improvements can be made.

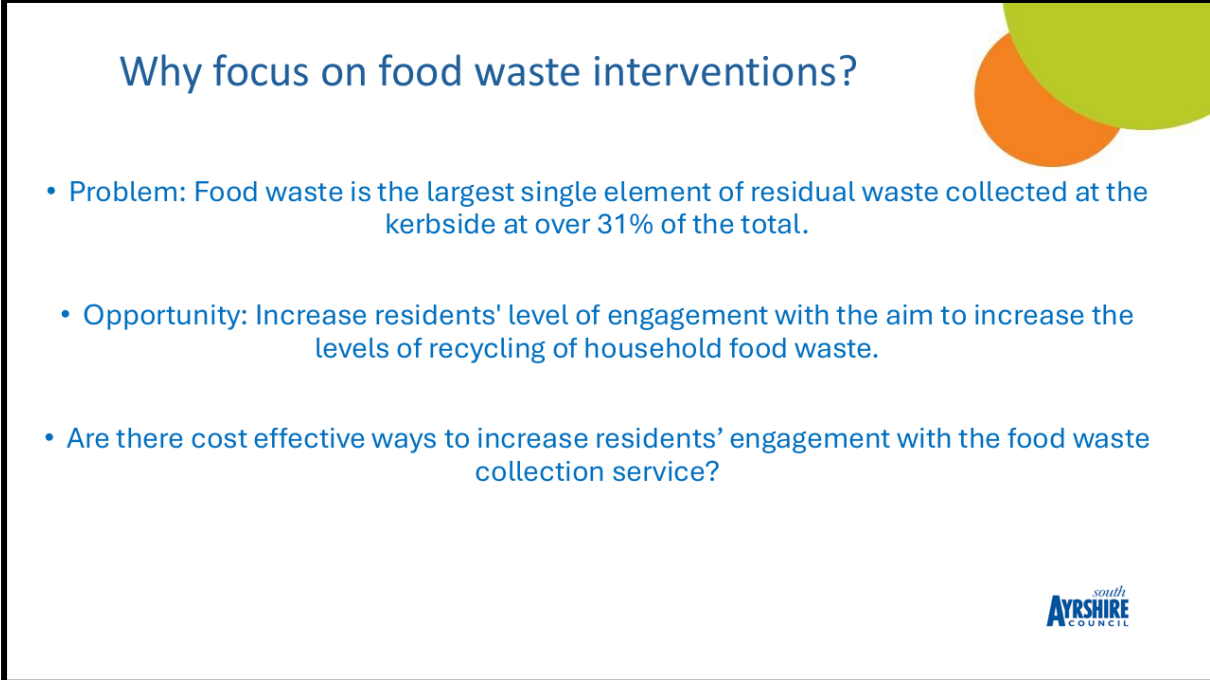
David described how the facility combines optical sorting and AI-enabled data capture to give near-continuous visibility of material flows and recovery performance. This is intended to strengthen confidence in reporting, improve auditability and allow operators to monitor performance in greater detail than is typically possible through periodic manual sampling alone.

The presentation also highlighted the wider value of this approach for service improvement. More granular operational data can help identify where recyclable material is being lost, support targeted process changes, and provide a stronger evidence base for future investment. In this sense, the facility was presented not only as an EPR-compliant solution, but also as a model for continuous improvement in recycling operations.

For local authority members, the presentation illustrated how future MRF design and contract arrangements may increasingly need to reflect EPR reporting expectations, processing efficiency metrics and the demand for more transparent performance data. It also pointed to the potential for digital systems to support both operational optimisation and stronger accountability across the recycling chain.


### **South Ayrshire's food waste recycling trial**

Iain Martin, Waste Management Strategy Team Leader, South Ayrshire Council



**Why focus on food waste interventions?**

- **Problem:** Food waste is the largest single element of residual waste collected at the kerbside at over 31% of the total.
- **Opportunity:** Increase residents' level of engagement with the aim to increase the levels of recycling of household food waste.
- **Are there cost effective ways to increase residents' engagement with the food waste collection service?**



**Iain Martin outlined South Ayrshire Council's work with Zero Waste Scotland to test low-cost interventions designed to increase household participation in food waste recycling.** The presentation focused on practical ways to improve capture of food waste, which remains a significant component of residual household waste, and on the lessons that may be relevant for wider local authority service improvement.

South Ayrshire has operated a separate food waste collection service for more than a decade, but participation had levelled off at around 30%. In response, the council worked with Zero Waste Scotland to trial three interventions in Ayr between 2022 and 2023: a communications campaign, free caddy liners and residual bin stickers. The aim was to identify cost-effective measures that could increase participation and divert more food waste from the residual stream.

The trial found that all three approaches increased food waste capture, with the strongest results coming from the bin sticker intervention. Published findings from Zero Waste Scotland indicate that stickers increased participation by 7.7% and food waste collected by 42%, while free caddy liners increased participation by 9% and yield by 14.4%, and communications increased participation by 4.7% and yield by 10.4%. The presentation suggested that simple

prompts and easy access to the right containers and liners can have a measurable impact on behaviour at relatively low cost.

The presentation also highlighted the importance of practical service design. South Ayrshire found that making it easier for residents to obtain or replace food caddies supported participation, while monitoring set-out rates and tonnages helped assess impact. Following the trial, the council secured Extended Producer Responsibility funding to roll out a wider programme across the authority, combining the most effective elements of the pilot and supporting delivery with additional staffing and phased communications.


For local authority members, the key message was that relatively low-cost interventions can improve participation in food waste services when they are backed by clear communications, simple access to food waste containers and ongoing performance monitoring. The South Ayrshire experience provides a practical example of how behaviour change activity can be tested, evaluated and then scaled up where results are positive.

### **pEPR Improvement Action Process (IAP) pilot: Lessons from Fife's waste services**

Sandy Anderson, Service Manager – Waste Operations & Janet Mackenzie, Strategy Officer, Fife Council

Place		
Fife COUNCIL		
Improvement actions (short list)		
IA no.	Action	Commence implementation
IA 0	Assessing existing collection methodologies.	Short-term (Year 1)
IA 1	Assess viability of increasing recycling capacity; through either provision of additional containers or increased frequency of collection, in line with national policy changes.	Short-term (Year 1-2)
IA 5	Review collection policies: excess or side waste policy, bulky waste policy, contamination policy, additional capacity policy.	Short-term (Year 1)
IA 9	Benchmark the performance of collecting glass via recycling points (bring banks) vs kerbside	Short-term (Year 1)
IA 18	Increased performance monitoring activity at Recycling Centres	Short-term (Year 1-2)
IA 22	Review management, governance and performance of Cireco (arm's length contractor) in relation to pEPR	Short-term (Year 1-2)

www.fife.gov.uk

Place 

IA no.	Action	Commence implementation
IA 4	Restrict residual waste; through reducing service to either 3- or 4-weekly collection.	Medium-term (Year 4-5)
IA 6	Implement collection policy changes: excess or side waste policy, bulky waste policy, contamination policy, additional capacity policy.	Medium-term (Year 2-3)
IA 11	Upgrade Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) technology and equipment to improve quality	Medium-term (Year 4-5)
IA 12	Provide new or refreshed collection crew training	Medium-term (Year 2-3)
IA 15	Implement a communications strategy & action plan	Medium-term (Year 3-4)

[www.fife.gov.uk](http://www.fife.gov.uk)

**Sandy Anderson and Janet Mackenzie outlined Fife Council’s involvement in the Improvement Action Process (IAP) pilot being developed by PackUK under Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR).** The presentation set out the purpose of the IAP, the pilot methodology and the key lessons emerging for local authorities.

PackUK, as the scheme administrator for pEPR, will use the IAP from 2028 to work with authorities identified as achieving lower packaging recycling performance. Fife was selected as a pilot authority due to its representative mix of geography, housing types and demographics, and worked with SLR Consulting as its appointed support organisation. The pilot ran over approximately six months and was intended to test both the process and the type of outputs that may be required in future.

The IAP pilot was delivered in two phases. The first focused on research and evidence gathering, including the development of a service profile, data collation, alignment with policy requirements and the identification of potential improvement actions. The second phase focused on developing a draft Improvement Action Plan, supported by outline business cases, to inform future committee decisions. Workshops were used to explore service provision and to refine a long list of options into a shortlist of priority actions.

Fife’s draft Improvement Action Plan identified a series of short-term and medium-term actions, including reviewing existing collection methodologies and policies, increasing recycling capacity where viable, strengthening performance monitoring, improving governance arrangements with delivery partners, upgrading MRF capability over time, enhancing workforce training, implementing a coordinated communications strategy, and considering longer-term changes to residual waste services.

Key messages from the pilot included the importance of robust data quality and benchmarking, the need for clear and adaptable business cases, realistic governance and resourcing arrangements, and early engagement with senior management and national bodies. The presenters emphasised that the IAP should be seen as an ongoing improvement process rather than a one-off exercise, and that councils may benefit from considering service performance and improvement options in advance of the formal IAP timetable, particularly given the potential implications for future pEPR funding.

## 2. Waste Discussion Forum


The Waste Discussion Forum provided delegates with an opportunity to discuss current issues and developments affecting waste services. The session focused on the Zero Waste Scotland UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) toolkit as well as films/ flexibles and was led by Kat Laakso, Recycling Partner at Zero Waste Scotland.

**Kat Laakso provided a focus on the ETS modelling update in the first half of the forum.** This provided colleagues with a background to ETS including replacing the EU Emissions Trading System in 2021 following Brexit; aiming to incentivise decarbonisation which currently covers the power sector, energy intensive industries and aviation; it's due to include incineration from 2028 (or possibly later if aligns with EU ETS); highlighting it's a cap and trade system with participants buying allowances and surrendering them annually to cover their GHG emissions and no ring fencing of allowances per sector, banking allowed. Kat then provided information on the gather modelling and results.

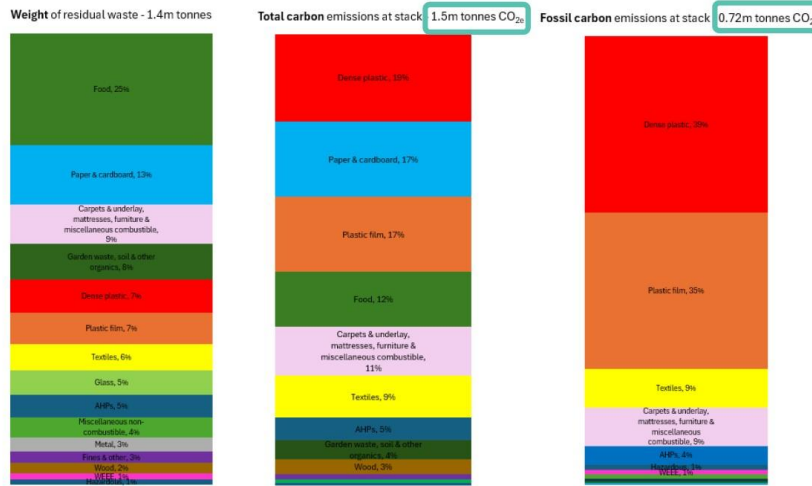
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### Gather modelling

- Emissions
  - How much fossil carbon from incinerating LA collected residual waste?
  - What are the sources of biggest emissions?
- Costs
  - How much will this cost LAs?
  - How much of these costs should be covered by pEPR?
- Decarbonisation
  - How can LAs decarbonise cost-effectively and with most impact?



# Results - emissions and sources



The second part of the forum provided a focus for flexible plastics and what we know so far. This included information on the many different names that flexible plastics are recognised as with plastic bags and wrapping being the most well understood definition.



Kat continued to provide information on the current requirements and timescales including the date for these items to be collected under pEPR – 31 March 2027.

## Requirements and timescales

- Requirement under pEPR to start collecting plastic film and flexibles **from** 31 March 2027.
  - From businesses – 31 March 2027.
  - From households – voluntary but incentivised start, compulsory when statutory Code of Practice (CoP) comes into force.
- Definition (for plastic film & flexibles from businesses) confirmed in March-26.
- Statutory CoP to confirm requirements for household collections.



The presentation also covered quantities in Scotland; collection insights from trials and operations; discussions on whether bagged or loose; MRF readiness and end markets.

Following the presentation, there was an open forum with discussions including funding; local authority contracts and implementation timescales.

### 3. APSE Comment

The seminar provided a timely overview of the significant transformation taking place across Scotland's waste and recycling sector as local authorities prepare for the changes required to meet national circular economy ambitions. Across the presentations, speakers highlighted the importance of aligning policy development, service design and operational delivery to create a waste system capable of meeting environmental objectives whilst continuing to provide efficient and effective services for communities.

It is clear that national policy ambitions are increasingly being translated into practical actions. Presentations from CIWM and the Scottish Government/Dundee City Council highlighted the wider strategic context in which local authorities are operating, including evolving policy frameworks, changing public expectations and the need for greater collaboration across the sector. The emphasis on co-design reflected a growing recognition that successful policy implementation depends upon early engagement with those responsible for delivering services on the ground. This was complemented by Zero Waste Scotland's exploration of digital technologies in kerbside collections, which illustrated how innovation and data-driven approaches can support service improvement, increase material quality and provide the evidence required to deliver circular economy objectives. Together, the presentations reinforced the importance of combining strategic vision with practical tools to support the transition towards a more resource-efficient future.

Presentations examining material recovery facilities, food waste recycling and Extended Producer Responsibility implementation highlighted the opportunities and challenges associated with changing waste collection and processing systems. A common theme was the need to balance service performance, financial sustainability and environmental outcomes while responding to significant policy reform. The experiences shared by South Ayrshire Council and Fife Council demonstrated the value of testing new approaches, learning from pilot activity and using performance data to drive continuous improvement. Meanwhile, the discussion around material recovery facilities highlighted the critical role that investing in processing capacity and material quality will play in ensuring that future recycling systems deliver maximum value from collected resources.

Overall, the seminar demonstrated that achieving Scotland's circular economy ambitions will require coordinated action across the entire waste management system. While policy reform, digital innovation and new producer-funded arrangements under Extended Producer Responsibility provide significant opportunities, their success will ultimately depend on effective implementation at the local level. For local authorities, the challenge will be to navigate a period of substantial change while maintaining service resilience, supporting residents and maximising environmental and economic benefits from waste and resource management activities.

Members can also continue these conversations through APSE Scotland's Waste and Recycling Network, which provides opportunities to share experience, explore common challenges, discuss practical responses and learn from emerging practice across local authorities. The next meeting of the Network will take place at MVV and Dundee City Council's Energy from Waste Facility Baldovie in Dundee. As well as the Network meeting itself there will also be an opportunity for attendees to participate in a tour of the facility following lunch, to register to attend this upcoming meeting please [click here](#). Network meetings are free to attend for APSE members. Previous presentations are available online [here](#) and upcoming meetings are listed [here](#).

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APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular networks, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE network meetings and would like to be added to our list of our contacts for your service area, please email [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk)

Our national networks include:

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- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation
- Parks, Horticulture and Ground Maintenance
- Recovery and Renewal
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing
- Armed Forces and Veterans Network

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