



Rising from the Ashes

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Aberdeen City Council



- Approx 117,000 households
- Waste arisings 105,000 tonnes
- Recycling rate circa 45%
- Fully comingled glass included kerbside collection (fortnightly)
- Highest recycling rate of the Scottish cities (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee)



The Zero Waste Project



- Approved in 2014
- Change from kerbside sort box and bag to comingled collection
- Reduced residual waste capacity
- Approval to procure and energy from waste facility
- Development of the Altens East Facility

Altens East

20tph Materials Recycling Facility and
30tph Refuse Derived Fuel Facility

Depot for collection vehicles, staff
welfare, car park and offices

4Ha site and £27m capex provided by ACC

Built and operated by SUEZ

Visitor centre





So what happened?





A weekend to forget.



- Friday 8th July, many key staff were on leave
- Fire believed to be under control by 10 pm
- Re-ignition later that night and then burned until the following Wednesday
- Office building relatively untouched – fire wall
- RDF end of building still standing
- MRF completely destroyed and demolished



Now what?



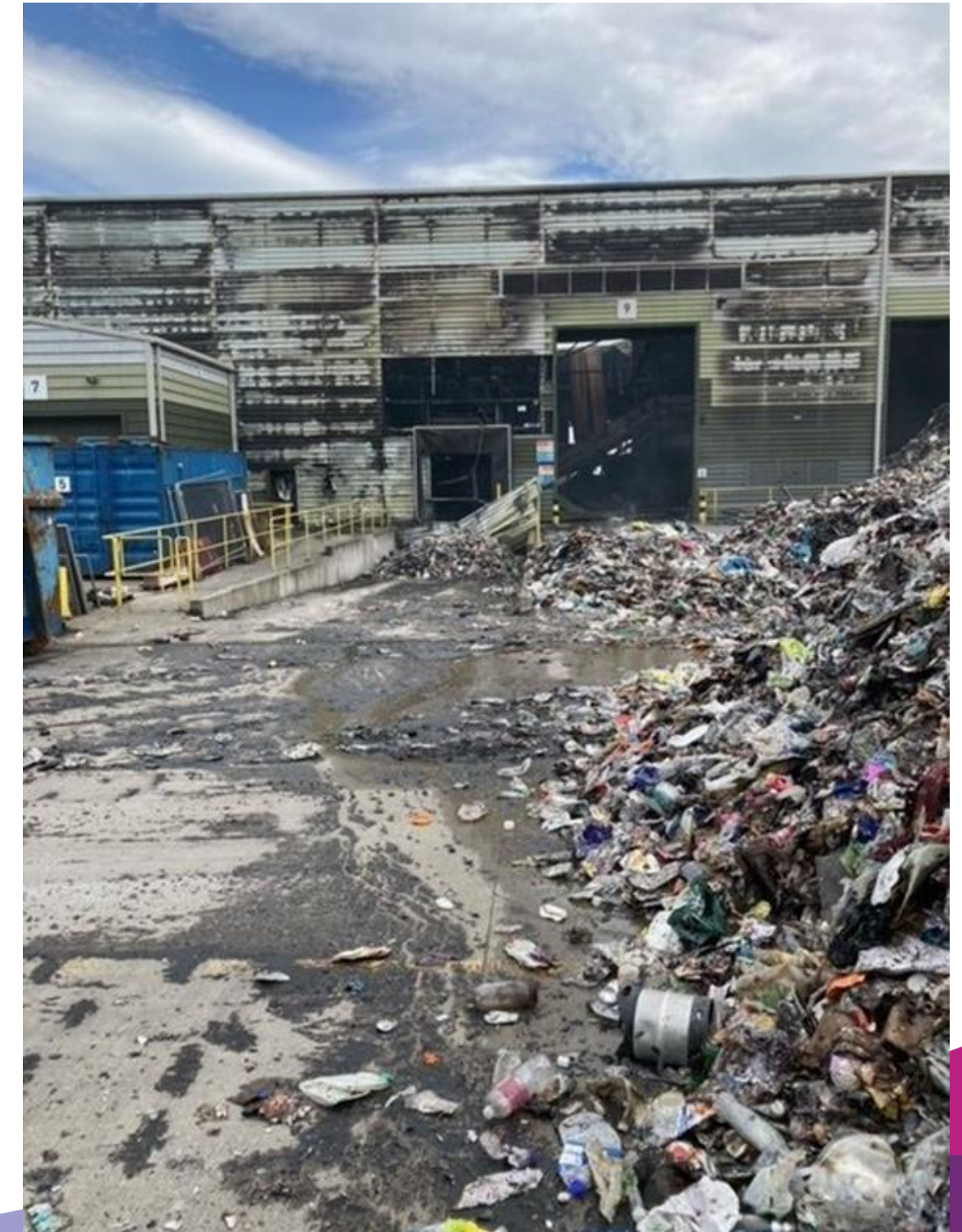
Panic and shock.

Instructed by Fire Service to remove RCVs on Sunday afternoon

Altens was tipping facility for all general waste and mixed recycling collections

Staff, PPE, documents, keys, etc all in the burning building

Where's that contingency plan....?



The contingency plan



We did have one, but never expected this.

The Fleet Depot was the contingency, but squeezing 60 RCVs in with no notice was not easy.

SUEZ acted quickly and arranged for our other smaller transfer station to take the residual waste (SUEZ still have an operating landfill nearby)

Mixed recycling was a problem, limited options for glass included material. No transfer facilities.

Quick thinking supervisor rescued the necessary kit from the building on Saturday – staff rotas, radios, keys, laptops, etc.

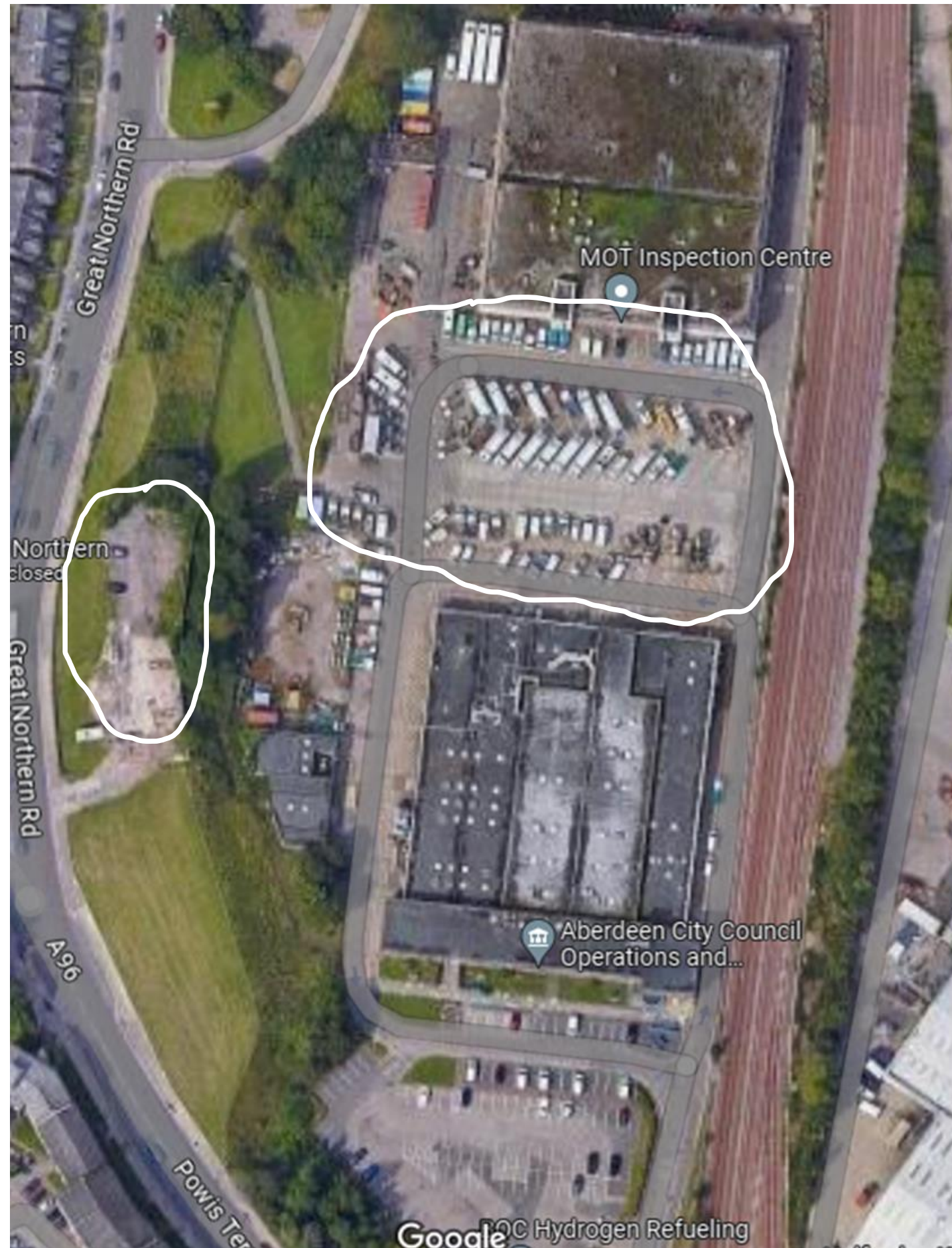
The reality of the contingency

Insufficient space for a team of that size to relocate.

- Insufficient welfare facilities
- Little/no staff parking
- Security access to the office building took time
- Segregation of the team
- Constant pressure from other depot occupiers – “cuckoo in the nest” – created some internal tension
- Routing disruption



The Challenge



Monday's Collections...?



They didn't happen. But on Tuesday they did!

Operations colleagues from Roads, Building Services, Fleet and Grounds rallied:

- > Setting up temporary office space for Ops Team
- > O licence temporary approval gained to operate from other depot
- > Provision of replacement PPE for frontline staff
- > Support to Fire Service – tankering in water and provision of temporary welfare facilities

An impressive team effort, depot and transfer/tipping facility destroyed, collections only disrupted for one day.

15 months on - where are we now?



- Planning permission secured for the rebuild of the MRF/RDF, due to re-open early 2024
- Operations Team have relocated to Altens in portacabins in the lorry park area. It's a squeeze but its home.
- Office staff still WFH/spread across various locations.
- New energy from waste facility now online and accepting the residual waste.
- Mixed recycling still headed south for processing but SUEZ have now taken back control of the transfer operation.

Today's contingency operation



- Still no mains power
- Temporary ICT connections
- Limited staff parking
- Demolition site next door

Lessons learned



The contingency plan was reviewed and shared, but at the time nobody actually looked at it – it wasn't really written with this kind of event in mind - a summarised contingency plan for easy reference would have been useful.

Spare RCV keys – how quickly could we have got them if needed?

Out of hours – plan need to consider whether the contacts and processes are different.

The Ops team's knowledge and quick thinking and instinctive reactions were impressive.

Emotional impact on staff was never really considered.

Contract clauses – Force Majeure. Business Interruption insurance.

Summary



A very traumatic experience for us all and one we will never forget, but the important thing was that no one was injured.

Its been a very difficult period but the rebuild is underway and despite the many challenges it has brought the team together and is an excellent example of the true resilience of the team.

We are very proud of the fact that collections were only missed for one day (yes we did get complaints despite the national news coverage of the incident...!).

We are looking forward to the opening of our shiny new depot and MRF in 2024 😊.