

WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES UPDATE

Report by Head of Municipal Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide an update on the Comhairle's Waste Strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Comhairle's Waste Strategy, which was approved in 2012, was designed to meet the requirements of The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012. Although there have been changes to guidance and new regulatory requirements, this remains the primary driver for waste regulations in Scotland.
- 2.2 As part of the Strategy, eleven Actions were identified. Nine of these Actions have been completed, with the two remaining due to be completed by 2026/27.
- 2.3 This includes the roll out of a three-weekly collection service for waste and recycling collections, with the provision of kerbside recycling service to all households in the Western Isles. This has resulted in an increased recycling rate from 31.8% to 35.1%. The Comhairle remains the best performing of the Island Authorities and is now performing at a level close to the next group of mainland authorities.
- 2.4 Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging has been confirmed, with payments due to be made to local authorities in October 2025
- 2.5 The diversion of Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) (residual waste) from landfill, compulsory from January 2026, will require all refuse collections and some bulky wastes to be sent to a mainland Energy from Waste (EfW) facility and will require a new waste transfer facility at Bennadrove Landfill. This will require funding support as there will also be a need to construct a new landfill cell to accommodate locally produced commercial and industrial wastes.
- 2.6 The new Deposit Return Scheme, which will cover Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland is now planned for 2027. This will include plastic and metal drinks containers but will not include glass.
- 2.7 Based on the confirmed increase applied by HMRC, it is likely that there will be a 21.6% increase in Scottish Landfill Tax from April 2025. This will increase the financial burden on the Comhairle but will bring landfill disposal closer to the estimated cost of disposal at a mainland EfW.
- 2.8 A potential solution has been identified for BMW collected in Uist and Barra. This will run for 2025 calendar year, to confirm performance and suitability. There will be an option to extend based on performance.
- 2.9 The introduction of a new requirement to send upholstered furniture to the mainland for incineration is expected to cost the Comhairle £18k per annum.
- 2.10 The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 and associated Route Map will drive the next set of legislative challenges for local authorities. However, it is hoped that the specific challenges faced by Island Authorities will continue to be acknowledged when designing new regulations and guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle note the report.

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Appendices	Waste Strategy for the Western Isles 2012
Background Papers	none

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	There will be additional costs associated with potential increased Scottish Landfill Tax and the anticipated cost of haulage and disposal of BMW to a mainland EfW. New waste transfer facility is likely to require funding support.
Legal	The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 Household Waste Recycling Charter: Code of Practice Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	Access to mainland service requires transport by ferry.
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	None
Environmental Impact	Reduction in waste to landfill
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Comhairle's Waste Strategy, which was approved in 2012, was developed in response to the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan and The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012. Although there have been other new legislative developments since 2012, including the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024, the primary drivers still come from The Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 5.2 Eleven Actions were identified as part of the implementation of the Waste Strategy. These Actions included waste policy changes, recycling service delivery and the identification of future waste management opportunities.
- 5.3 In 2016 the Comhairle signed up to the Scottish Government Household Recycling Charter and associated Code of Practice. This Code of Practice required the introduction of collection services for recyclable materials and provided recommended capacities for household waste bins.

- 5.4 The reduced residual waste bin capacity reflects the lower need for households - if recycling services are used correctly. This is backed up by service change experience of other Scottish local authorities where reduced residual waste capacity has resulted in an improvement in recycling participation rates and a reduction in waste to landfill.
- 5.5 In 2020, the Comhairle trialled a three-weekly waste collection service trial with enhanced mixed recycling service in the Barvas area of Lewis. The data gathered from this trial supported the expectation that this change would help to increase recycling collections and reduce the tonnage of waste to landfill.
- 5.6 A successful bid for funding to the Scottish Government Recycling Improvement Fund provided a capital grant of £846K. This allowed the new service, based on a 3-weekly collection frequency, to be rolled out across Lewis and Harris on 29 May 2023.
- 5.7 Other areas of anticipated changes to waste legislation have been delayed. The introduction of the planned Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for Scotland has been cancelled. The replacement scheme is now expected to start in 2027, at the same time as England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2025, and will not include glass bottles.
- 5.8 Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) will provide funding to local authorities from manufacturers and retailers of products that result in packaging waste. This was initially intended to start in 2024 but has also been delayed until 2025. The level of funding available to individual local authorities is expected to be provided in November 2024, with funding to be released in October 2025.
- 5.9 At this time, it is not known if local authorities will receive all of the pEPR funding as a net increase. However, there is an expectation from the packaging producer who fund the scheme, that all local authorities will provide high quality collection services.
- 5.10 New regulations from SEPA covering the disposal of Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) came into force in 2024. Due to the high probability that any waste WUDS will contain Persistent Organic Pollutants, used as a flame retardant, these products are no longer permitted to be disposed of to landfill and will need to be sent to the mainland for incineration. It is anticipated that the additional cost of disposal of WUDS to the Comhairle will be between £15-18k per annum.

WASTE STRATEGY ACTION LIST

- 6.1 The 2012 Waste Strategy identified eleven actions. Nine of the actions are considered to be complete and (green) and two are considered to be in progress (amber). The two actions that are in-progress are expected to be completed in the next two years. Details are provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1 –WASTE STRATEGY FOR THE WESTERN ISLES 2012. UPDATE FOR ACTIONS.

Action	Current Position	Status
1 Continue to support greater producer responsibility in terms of packaging minimisation and the curbing of retail marketing strategies which encourage over buying.	This Action will effectively be dealt with when Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility is implemented in 2025/26. This is expected to provide UK local authorities with a share of around £1.8bn to cover the costs of recycling and disposal of packaging wastes. The settlement figure calculated by DEFRA for local authorities is to be announced in November 2024, with payments starting in October 2025.	
2 The Comhairle takes account of the need for waste prevention in the development of its own Procurement Policy and IT Strategy.	The Comhairle has made steps to reduce printed copies of documents by moving to the use of digital platforms for meeting papers and making laptops available as required for members and staff. Photocopiers are set to print double sided by default.	
3 Consider the development of diversion for re-use at managed Household Recycling Centres.	Opportunities for separation of materials with viable options for recycling is in place at Household Waste Recycling Centres. An opportunity has been provided to local charities to access items for re-use, with some opportunities for re-use.	
4 Extend blue bin co-mingled collection service be as a means of promoting increased diversion from landfill.	Kerbside collection services for recyclates are now in place for all households and businesses across the Western Isles. There is a separate system for Lewis and Harris to Uist and Barra. This is primarily driven by the need to facilitate the collection of food and garden waste in Lewis and Harris.	
5 Cease to separately collect organic waste in Uist and Barra reconfigure the service to provide a dry recyclates collection service to all households and businesses in this area.	The withdrawal of food and garden waste collection in Uist and Barra allowed a change to a twin-stream kerbside collection service for paper and card and plastics and cans. Glass collection is facilitated by an increased number of strategically located glass banks.	
6 Explore the feasibility of developing small scale composting facilities in the Uists and Barra.	Small scale composting facilities for municipal waste has largely been discounted due to the cost of compliance with current regulations, which includes significant licensing, sampling and testing regimes with high operational costs. However, an opportunity has been developed which will allow the use of similar technology as a pre-treatment process for residual waste which is sent to a mainland processor as Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF). This technology, supplied by Advetec, uses similar principals to in-vessel composting to reduce the weight and volume of waste prior to being shipped to the mainland as a fuel. The advantage over in-vessel composting is that there is no need for a separate collection system and there is not requirement for the output to be considered anything other than a waste product. The Advetec system is due to be installed at the end of 2024.	
7 Consider the provision of recycling banks for all dry recyclates in any areas which are not included in the kerbside Blue Bin recycling collections.	This was initially provided but is no longer relevant as kerbside recycling collection services are now available in all areas of the Western Isles.	
8 The Comhairle reviews the unrestricted access for landfill disposal to mixed loads of Industrial or Construction Waste	A differential pricing regime for sorted and unsorted wastes to landfill has been introduced. This has helped to reduce the use of landfill disposal for materials that could be recycled.	
9 The Community Skip Service be the subject of a further review to consider how the operation of this service can be developed in a more regulated manner to increase the potential for greater diversion from landfill and prevent the service from being used for non-household waste.	The current Community Skip service has been made available to communities that are more than 15 miles from the nearest Household Waste Recycling Centre. The service operates using lockable skips that are under direct supervision of a community group who sign up to a Service Level Agreement with the Comhairle. The skips are only available for limited periods when volunteers are available to provide supervision. A definitive list of what types of household wastes are acceptable for disposal is provided and training for volunteers is also made available. The service is monitored, and feedback given to the group. The provision of	

Community Skips is not a statutory provision, and groups are aware that failure to manage the service correctly may result in loss of the service to their community.

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| <p>10 The Comhairle continue to explore collaborative opportunities with other local authorities in order to develop sustainable and affordable recycling, recovery and disposal options. This should include any opportunities to collaborate on the transport of recyclable and non-recyclable waste.</p> | <p>As an island authority, the opportunities to work collaboratively with other local authorities are limited. The Comhairle has good representation on the Waste Managers Network, which provides a forum for all Scottish local authorities and has provided the main Islands rep at both Scottish and UK Government levels. This includes devolved matters, such as the ban on biodegradable municipal waste to landfill and the Circular Economy Bill route map and Packaging EPR, which is UK legislation, led by DEFRA. All practical opportunities to work with neighbouring local authorities, such as Highland or Argyll and Bute councils are explored, even if this is restricted to shared knowledge.</p> |
| <p>11 The Comhairle procure expert consultancy advice and options appraisal on developing or procuring EfW capacity, as a means of treating the required diversion of non-recyclable waste from landfill.</p> | <p>This Action has been superseded by the ban on biodegradable waste to landfill. This was initially planned for introduction in 2021 but has been delayed until 1 January 2026. For the Comhairle, this will require all residual waste to be shipped to the mainland for disposal using Energy from Waste. It is expected that the use of the Advetec system for Uist and Barra waste will provide a solution that will not increase the demand on ferry capacity (residual waste from Uist and Barra is currently transported by ferry to Bennadrove Landfill on Lewis). However, there will be a significant increase in ferry capacity need for residual wastes collected in Lewis and Harris. There is also likely to be an increase in disposal costs per tonne, including transport costs.</p> |

SCOTTISH HOUSEHOLD WASTE STATISTICS

7.1 The Scottish Household Waste Statistics summary was published on 29 October 2024. This covers the period from January to December 2023

These are the highlights:

- Lowest amount of Scottish household waste generated since 2011, a further decrease of 1.1% compared to 2022.
- Scotland generated 2.30 million tonnes of household waste in 2023, down 26,000 tonnes (1.1%) from 2022.
- Overall household recycling rate was 43.5%, up slightly from 43.3% in 2022
- 0.424 tonnes of waste generated per person in 2023 - 0.184 tonnes recycled, 0.075 tonnes landfilled, and 0.164 tonnes diverted through other means
- Carbon impact of Scotland's waste was 5.35 million tonnes of CO₂e or 0.98 carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per person. This is a decrease of 179,000 TCO₂e from 2022 and reduction of 1.42 million TCO₂e from 2011

On average Scottish households generated the equivalent of 0.43 tonnes of waste per person in 2022, with 0.19 tonnes recycled, 0.11 tonnes sent to landfill and 0.14 tonnes diverted through other means, such as incineration.

7.2 The Comhairle currently has a recycling rate of 35.1% for 2023, which is an increase of 3.3% from the recycling rate of 31.8% for 2022. This increase reflects the positive impact of the change to a three-weekly collection service for Lewis and Harris.

7.3 Although this remains the fourth lowest, this is significantly higher than other island authorities, Shetland (20.7%), Orkney (21.4%) and is just below Highland (36%), West Dunbartonshire (36.2%), Dundee City (36.6%) and City of Edinburgh (38%). The recycling rate for all local authorities in Scotland are shown below.

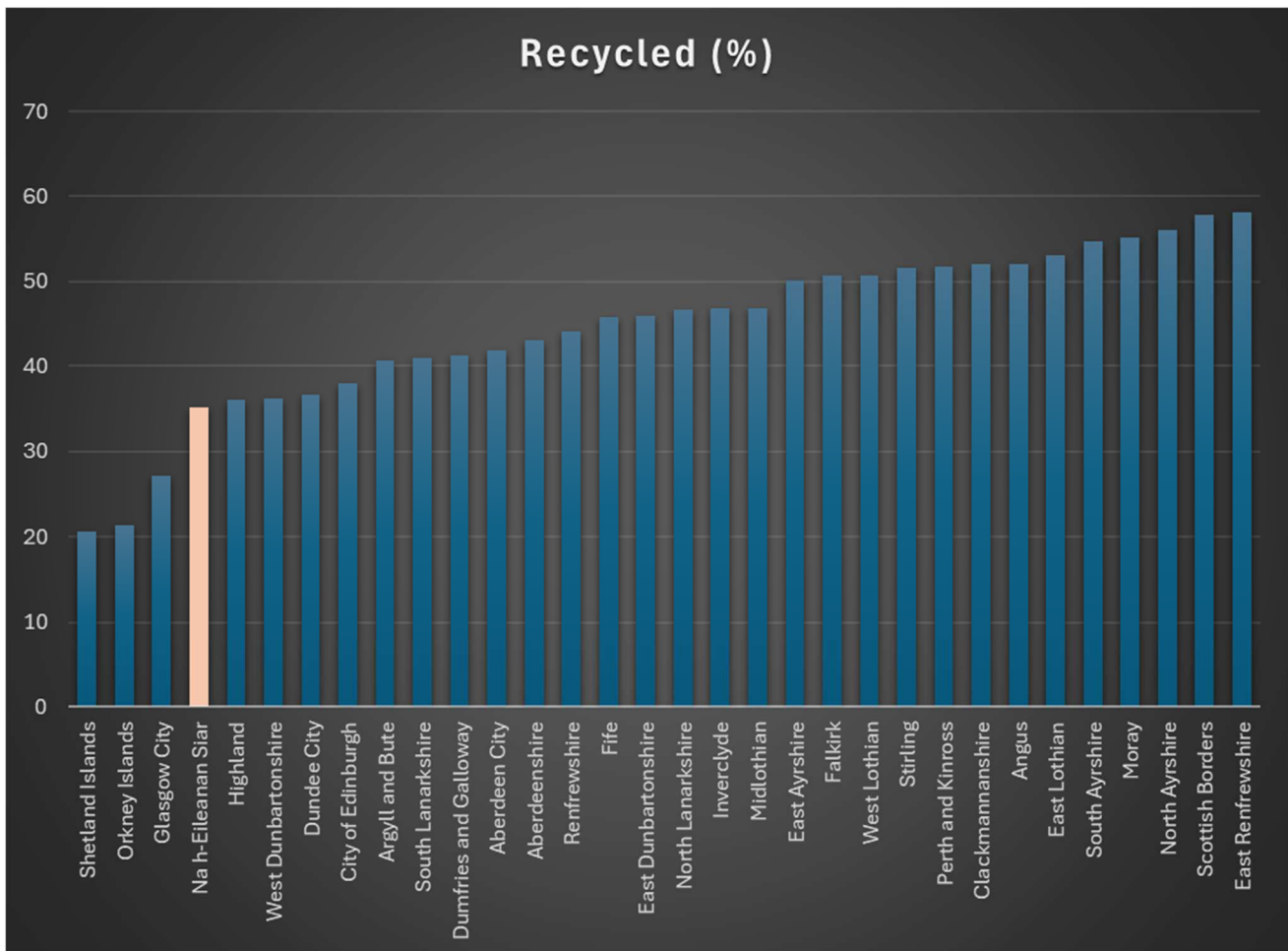


Figure 1: Recycling Rate by Local Authority (Scotland)

7.4 Further details of Household Waste data can be obtained from SEPA [Link to Household Waste Data](#)

FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 8.1 There are a number of significant waste management challenges and opportunities for the Comhairle. The introduction of extended Producer Responsibility for packaging waste will potentially provide a funding stream to cover the costs of collection, recycling and, where needed, disposal of packaging waste. Thanks to a positive engagement process with DEFRA – this is UK legislation, rather than a devolved matter – an extra category has been included to cover remote island authorities such as the Comhairle. It is hoped that this will result in true costs being used to calculate payments.
- 8.2 There remains a risk that not all of the funding will be additional to the current Block Grant. However, it is expected that the funding from packaging producers will come with an expectation that it is used for the collection, recycling or disposal of packaging wastes.
- 8.3 A Deposit Return Scheme is still expected to be introduced in 2027. This will be a UK wide system and will not include glass in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. A proposal from Wales to include glass has not been approved and is considered unlikely to progress, due to the need for an exemption under internal market powers. The introduction of DRS would be beneficial to the Comhairle as there are currently no financial benefits from the recycling of drinks containers due to the prohibitive cost of shipping materials to the mainland. For many other local authorities in Scotland, collection and recycling of these materials provides an income stream.

- 8.4 The challenges include the high probability of a significant increase in landfill tax rates for active waste from 2025, an obligation to send residual waste to the mainland to be treated by Energy from Waste from January 2026 and the need to maintain an active landfill cell to accommodate commercial and industrial wastes.
- 8.5 HMRC announced in March 2024 that the HMRC rates for landfill tax would increase by 21.6% from April 2025. For active waste this would be a tax increase from £103.70 to £126.15 per tonne. For inert wastes, such as construction rubble, the increase would be from £3.30 to £4.05 per tonne.

Table 2 HMRC Landfill Tax Rates

Material sent to landfill	From 1 April 2023	From 1 April 2024	From 1 April 2025
Active Waste Standard rate (per tonne)	£102.10	£103.70	£126.15
Clean and Inert Waste Lower rate (per tonne)	£3.25	£3.30	£4.05

- 8.6 Although Revenue Scotland has not confirmed Scottish Landfill Tax rates for 2025-26, all indications are that the rate in Scotland will not deviate from the rate in England, as this would encourage waste to be taken from England to Scotland for disposal.
- 8.7 As stated in previous Reports, the use of flame retardants for upholstered furniture that contain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), has required that any product categorised as Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating is sent to the mainland for incineration. The current estimate for the cost of the first year of this new obligation is £18k. Although not yet confirmed, there may be additional items of household waste, such as carpets and mattresses, that could be added to the POPs list in future.
- 8.8 The ban on Biodegradable Municipal Waste to landfill comes into force on 1 January 2026. CalMac have recently confirmed that deck capacity would be available for the tonnages associated with residual waste collections, estimated to be between 11-12 loads per week in the peak period - which would coincide with the time in the summer when ferry capacity is most limited. CalMac would not be able to guarantee capacity for all waste tonnages, should the wastes not covered by the ban also be included.
- 8.9 It is therefore clear that there remains a local, on-island need for landfill capacity to provide a disposal route for commercial and industrial wastes beyond the life of the current cell. Although the Comhairle's primary obligation is for municipal wastes, it has always been the provider of last resort for industrial wastes as it is clear that removing a route for waste disposal would constrain local industry. The Comhairle is in a unique position in having to use limited capital funding resources to fund a new landfill cell, as many mainland landfill sites are closing due to the shift to Energy from Waste.
- 8.10 Scottish Government have provided Consultancy support to consider options for waste transfer from Bennadrove Landfill to a mainland Energy from Waste Facility. It is expected that there will be a requirement to provide a new waste transfer building to provide an acceptable long-term solution. Short term options are also being considered, including contingency positions should there be any issues with ferry access due to weather or technical failures.
- 8.11 With the Comhairle's capital funding needed to build a new landfill cell, a case grant funding for the capital investment required to construct a waste transfer building should be made to the Scottish Government.

- 8.12 The revenue costs of haulage and gate fees for residual waste to be treated at a mainland Energy from Waste plant is expected to be significantly higher than the current disposal costs. Although the legislation that includes the ban on biodegradable municipal waste to landfill precedes the Island Act, there should still be an option for Scottish Government to consider that impact of this regulation on the costs of disposal for an island authority. This does not apply to Orkney and Shetland as they both use the Shetland EfW Plant.
- 8.13 A potential solution for the residual wastes collected in Uist and Barra is expected to be in place at Market Stance Waste Transfer Station by the end of 2024, to be commissioned in January- February 2025. Innovative technology, designed to break down the biodegradable content of waste will be used to pre-treat the collected waste. The process is expected to reduce the volume and weight of the waste by up to 50%. The output will be sent to the mainland as a Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF). As SRF performs better as a fuel than untreated residual waste, the gate fee will be significantly lower.
- 8.14 Although the SRF will require transport to the mainland by ferry, the volume of waste will be reduced by up to 50%, requiring less journeys, and there will be significantly less demand for the transport of waste on the Sound of Harris ferry as a result.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY (SCOTLAND) ACT 2024 AND ROUTE MAP

- 9.1 The Scottish Government is committed to moving towards a circular economy and playing its part to tackle the climate emergency. The Circular Economy and Waste Route Map aims to drive progress on three fronts:
- Sets the strategic direction and lay foundations for how the vision for Scotland's circular economy will be delivered from now to 2030 using the powers from the Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024.
 - Sets out priority actions from now to 2030 to accelerate more sustainable use of resources across the waste hierarchy.
 - Reduce emissions associated with resources and waste, including some of the opportunities to decarbonise the waste sector, ahead of the next Climate Change Plan (CCP).
- 9.2 The Route Map sets out strategic direction for delivering a system-wide, comprehensive vision Scotland's circular economy from now to 2030 and aims to strengthen the circular economy by modernising recycling and decarbonising disposal.
- 9.3 It is anticipated that the Route Map will allow the development of new guidance for all recycling and waste targets. Substantial progress has been made to ensure that the views from an Island local authority perspective are considered to ensure that targets that may be appropriate for a mainland authority are deliverable and affordable for an island local authority.

CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 The 2012 Waste Strategy has proved to remain relevant to the current requirements of Scottish Government's waste policies. It has delivered improved recycling rates for the Western Isles and better services to the community.
- 10.2 Constant changes to legislation and timing of introduction of schemes such as DRS has made a comprehensive review difficult. However, eleven actions were identified in the Strategy, with nine completed and two in progress.

- 10.3 There are both challenges and potential opportunities going forward. The requirements of the 2026 ban on Biodegradable Municipal Waste to Landfill will result in waste from the Western Isles having to be sent to the mainland for disposal. However, the cost of landfill is escalating and the long-term future of landfill as a disposal route for any biodegradable waste is likely to be very limited.
- 10.4 A potential solution has been found for Uist and Barra waste, using innovative technology to pre-treat waste. This is hoped to provide savings on transport costs and gate fees.
- 10.5 The Circular Economy (Scotland) Act 2024 and Route Map will provide future challenges but has been developed, so far, to take account of Island Authority constraints and limitations.