

Merseyside Recycling
& Waste Authority

ANNUAL REPORT



MERSEYSIDE RECYCLING & WASTE AUTHORITY

Welcome to the MRWA Annual Report

The last 18 months or so has been a period of great change and worry for all of us and much of what we knew was turned upside down. However, that didn't stop us from delivering our primary service - namely, to keep waste moving and to safely recycle and dispose of it. At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic we were able to work closely with all of our district council and contract partners to prioritise services and ensure that the operation of local Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), household waste transfer stations and our Energy From Waste facility were maintained for as long as possible. Both of our two main waste management contracts have extensive staffing and contingency plans in place and we were able to strike a balance of maintaining essential services, whilst protecting our staff and customers.

In conjunction with our contractors we cancelled all non-essential external meetings at our headquarters, facilities, Recycling Discovery Centres and Visitors Centres. We have also minimised the number of staff in the Authority's headquarters at any one time while helping people to work from home wherever possible.

In March 2020 we had to take the decision to temporarily close the region's HWRCs for the safety of both staff and visiting public. Most were only closed for around six weeks, reopening in May 2020, while others followed in June 2020 via an appointment booking system. The HWRCs remain open and we are hopeful that we won't have to close them again.

The pandemic obviously had a major effect on household waste levels with people having spent a lot more time at home over the last 18 months or so and this is reflected in the amount of residual waste per household increasing from 652kg to 706kg. Meanwhile, the region's overall recycling rate stands at 35%, a 2% fall from 2019/20.

By the end of 2020/21 over 490,000 tonnes of residual waste was managed via our Resource Recovery Contract - a 45,000 tonne increase on the year before.

The reopening of the HWRCs after the first lockdown saw significant queuing at all the sites as it was one of only a few legitimate reasons people could leave the house. We worked closely with our contractor Veolia and district council partners to ensure householders were safe both in terms of traffic as well as disinfecting sites as often as possible.

Early in the pandemic we ran the communications campaign 'Waste Can Wait'. With the government telling people to stay at home and not travel unnecessarily, our campaign asked people to try and waste less, reuse what they could and, if possible, store recyclable materials at home rather than visit a busy HWRC.

The HWRCs themselves managed 41,000 tonnes of material less than the year before - this will in the main be down to the Centres being closed during the first national Lockdown. It has been an unusual year and we will have to wait until 2022 to see if there is a return to pre-Covid waste levels. However, the HWRCs did still manage a recycling rate of 70% - the same as 2019/2020.

Finally, we would like to thank all of our partners, contractors, the district councils and householders for their hard work, spirit and common sense over the last year in enabling us to help manage the region's household waste and recycling. It was a true collective effort.

There is more information throughout this document about what we've been doing. We hope you find it interesting and useful.

Cllr Tony Concepcion - Chair

Carl Beer - Chief Executive

Introduction

To ensure that we reduce the impact of our actions on climate change and improve the sustainable management of waste and resources

Our Corporate Aims

Corporate Aim 1

Improve the sustainable management of waste and resources

Corporate Aim 2

We will deliver effective waste services

Corporate Aim 3

Co-operate to improve working arrangements

Corporate Aim 4

Measure and report on climate change impacts and sustainability improvements

Our Corporate Plan, Budget and Service Delivery Plans are approved by our Members annually and reports back to Members to confirm the success of outcomes for the year.

The following pages of this Annual Report summarise how effective the Authority has been in achieving its planned outcomes.



Sustainability

Waste Strategy

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant several projects had to be put on hold due to the restrictions imposed by Government. However, behind the scenes we have been delivering the initial Climate Action Plan approved by the Authority in February 2020.

Good progress has been made in assessing the potential for increased renewable energy generation from our assets, including solar panels on roofs. We have assessed methane emissions from our closed landfill sites and identified methods to work with nature and reduce our carbon impact further, such as passive methane oxidation from closed landfill sites which can reduce our energy consumption. We have commenced a waste composition analysis project to identify the key materials in the waste we manage and are developing a carbon metric to measure the Authority's carbon footprint across all our activities and to prioritise future actions.

We have worked closely with the LCR Climate Partnership Board to support development of the city region's Year One Climate Action Plan. The plan recognises the key contribution of waste and resources in tackling climate change to help the city region to meet its net zero carbon 2040 goal.

Our Zero Waste action plan is developing with a focus on preventing waste and reusing more, and we continue to host the Liverpool City Region Circular Economy Club. The Club has delivered a programme of digital events for its members tackling issues from food waste to textiles including through the online hub – www.linkedin.com/groups/8685207/profile.

The 2020s are being described as a decade of change for recycling and waste services with government working to implement the Resources and Waste Strategy for England from 2023/24. We continue to engage in the development of these policies which will affect how products are made, used and the reuse and recycling services we provide to prevent material resources from going to waste. Working with residents and stakeholders we aim to ensure the region plays its part in achieving the joint national goals of zero avoidable waste and net zero carbon by 2050.



CIRCULAR ECONOMY
C L U B
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Behavioural Change



We have continued to work with local communities to encourage waste reduction and prevention to help move waste further up the waste hierarchy. The Behavioural Change Programme (BCP) provides a rigorous approach to targeting initiatives so that they achieve a measurable outcome. The BCP has brought together activities from across the Authority to encourage waste prevention, reuse, recycling and education & awareness.

Lockdown resulted in a build of waste materials for households, so we ran the waste prevention campaign 'Waste Can Wait'. This appeared on local radio and social media and encouraged residents to think about reuse before disposal.

Recycle Right is our ongoing campaign to help tackle householder confusion about recycling and reducing 'contamination' in recycling collections. It provides advice across all of the district councils in the Liverpool City Region. This 'one stop shop' approach about what to recycle and where and what to put in which bin and why means that no matter where you live in the region the same advice applies.



The campaign has developed a range of ways to help residents recycle more and recycle better including a website www.recyclerright.org.uk; daily messages and recycling tips via its Twitter and Facebook channels @GoRecycleRight; and a handy guide which can be downloaded from the website.



Data and Performance

The Data & Performance Team maintained a high quality service level throughout the year, providing key functions such as:

- Data support to the Executive Management Team with requests focussing on increased tonnages, actual vs forecasts, waste flow and visitor numbers through our sites etc
- Contractual verifications
- Maintaining data sharing with the Waste Collection Authorities

Internal Audits with a focus on verifications and payments were undertaken and maintained a record of High Assurance with no further actions required.

Work has been completed on our internal information systems and dashboards to increase and improve the availability of data available to our Executive Management Team along with automation of regular data requests thus speeding up our response times.

The team has been integral to the delivery of two key projects commissioned by the Authority, a Carbon Metric Tool to establish the Authority's baseline Carbon Footprint and the Waste Composition Analysis. We look forward to receiving the data in 2021-22 and working with our colleagues in other sections to inform our Future Waste Strategy and Communication and Education programmes.



Education and Engagement



Despite the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting our education programme we managed to adapt and establish virtual sessions as well as a new way of monitoring digital engagements to help understand our outputs. The main content behind our sessions relate to educating residents on elements such as the waste hierarchy, how to recycle right and innovative ways to reduce the waste we create.

The Recycling Discovery Centre in Gillmoss, and the Southport Eco Centre were the main providers of education, while the visitor centre at the Knowsley Rail Transfer Loading Station remained closed all year.

The Recycling Discovery Centre responded to the closures by creating bespoke waste education resources which were downloaded over 700 times. Additionally, the launch of virtual recycling lessons, Recycling Live! in December 2021, allowed the Centre to virtually educate over 1,000 occupants from 36 individual sessions.

The Southport Eco Centre opted to run two waste education social media campaigns, one for Christmas and one for Food Waste Action Week which took place in March 2021. The Christmas campaign was sent to schools and local community groups, reaching over 4,700 individuals. Similarly, their Food Waste Action Week competition/campaign reached over 3,500 residents.

Looking after landfill

We manage seven former landfill sites to ensure compliance with environmental standards and obligations. At each of the sites there is a range of apparatus and equipment designed to monitor and mitigate the impacts of landfill emissions (landfill gas and leachate). All of the sites are monitored regularly by our environmental officers, and an annual service and maintenance plan ensures that all apparatus and equipment operates effectively.

The environmental monitoring at the sites has continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with only minor changes to the methodology to ensure compliance with social distancing.

The year has been a significant one for the Environmental Management System, with the system being subject to its triennial external reaccreditation audit, which took place in February 2021. The audit was completed successfully, with no non-conformances raised, and the Authority retains accreditation to the ISO14001 Environmental Management System standard.

Health and Safety

In response to the pandemic modifications were made at the head office in Mann Island to ensure that those that needed to come into the office could do so safely. Hand sanitisation stations were established at the points of entry, and provisions made to sanitise each workstation. A regime for maximum occupancy in offices and communal spaces was established, a 2m grid was marked out on the office floor as a guidance for safe social distancing, and glass screens installed between all facing desks.

HWRCs re-opening

After having to shut down for the first lockdown in March 2020, the Recycling Centres started to reopen to the public once again on Monday 4th May 2020. It was anticipated that there would be a significant demand upon the sites once they were reopened to the public, and the Authority worked with the District Council Highways Departments and police to establish traffic management measures at the HWRCs to manage this demand.

This anticipation was found to be accurate, with significant queuing at all sites. By and large, these traffic management systems remained in place throughout the year.

Managing 7 former landfill sites



Community projects funded to the tune of £135,000

Thirteen community groups from across the Liverpool City Region received funding to help boost recycling, reuse and waste prevention.

The £135,000 was from the MRWA and Veolia Community Fund 2020/21, which has been running annually since 2006. Projects included cookery clubs to reduce food waste, community recycling hubs, sewing classes and craft clubs, upcycling and restoration of unwanted furniture, clothes recycling and home composting workshops.

The Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns forced a delay to some of the projects, with most of them finishing in the summer of 2021. The groups had to adapt during the pandemic - delivering training and workshops through digital platforms, as well as providing meals, food support and shopping collections and generally supporting vulnerable members of society.

Acronym Community Empowerment – From Disposable to Sustainable Fashion

British Dietetic Association – Let’s Get Merseyside Saving

Centre 63 – Remake Yourself

Changing Communities - ReStore St Helens

Family Refugee Support Project – Around the World in 80 Dishes

Global Feedback Ltd – Your Food Needs You

Groundwork – Let’s Speke About Food

Hoylake and West Kirby Sea Cadets – Waste Not Want Not

Liverpool World Centre – 10 Tonne Clothing Channel

Regenerus – The Big Community Clean Up

Wirral Change Ltd – The Community Reward Scheme

Wirral Hospice St Johns – Recycle, Reuse and Relove

Wirral Youth Zone – Waste Not Want Not @ The Hive



Effectiveness

Contracts



35%	Liverpool City Region household waste recycled
490,180	total tonnes of residual waste managed via RRC
70%	materials recycled at Household Waste Recycling Centres

The network of sixteen Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), two Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs), and four Waste Transfer Stations is operated for the Authority by Veolia under the Waste Management and Recycling Contract.

The HWRCs closed in March 2020 in response to the national lockdown. Most of the Centres reopened in the May 2020, with the rest following in June 2020. Members of the public brought 140,463 tonnes of household waste to Merseyside and Halton's HWRCs in 2020/21, which had a recycling performance of 70%.

The performance of the HWRCs makes a strong contribution towards the City Region's overall recycling rate which (including waste collected at the kerbside) is 35% for the year 2020/21. Although this is a fall from the previous year's 37% we actually recycled more tonnes of material than we did in 2019/20.

The amount of household waste collected in the region has increased - at both HWRCs and from the kerbside - from 742,355 tonnes in 2019/20 to 784,534 tonnes in 2020/21. District Councils delivered 398,379 tonnes of non-recyclable waste directly to the Authority through their residual household waste collection services.

The Resource Recovery Contract (RRC) is operated by Merseyside Energy Recovery Ltd and provides the Authority with a Rail Transfer Loading Station (RTLS) in Kirkby and an Energy from Waste (EfW) plant at Wilton International on Teeside. The majority of the Authority's residual household waste is now managed through the RTLS and EfW. Last year saw 451,511 tonnes of waste delivered to the facility, which produced enough energy to power approximately 63,000 homes.

Co-operation



Our strategy is to work with other stakeholders to ensure our governance is fit for purpose now and into the future as we work more closely with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

We aim to work with partners to develop closer working relationships that lead to unified and transparent governance arrangements.

We plan to work across the City Region on collaborative projects reviewing the cost effectiveness of services.

To achieve these aims we have:

- developed options to achieve efficiency savings in MRWA services
- worked with District Councils on options for joint working arrangements
- developed options for closer integration of resource management into Combined Authority strategies
- re-examined the potential for changes to the Levy apportionment mechanism to reflect even better the investments made by the constituent District Councils.

Accountability

Governance and Performance

The Authority's governance arrangements are reviewed on an ongoing basis through the Primary Assurance Group (PAG) each year. PAG determine whether there are any areas of concern and plan for improvements through a set of defined actions for the forthcoming year. The review of governance was set out in an Annual Governance Statement approved by Members at the April 2021 meeting. No significant issues were identified through the 2020/21 yearly review.

Financial Management

The Authority spent £77M in 2020/21, 89% of which was on contracts to manage waste and statutory services. The Authority's income from the Levy in the same period was £77.5M, and enabled a contribution to be made to balances (£0.5M) as part of a medium-term financial strategy to ensure that the Levy and the Authority's expenditure are in balance.

As a part of the financial strategy for 2020/21 District Councils made additional contributions to the Authority to enable it to keep additional costs arising from Covid-19 under control. These one off contributions in respect of additional tonnages delivered during the pandemic and additional costs of highways management where queues outside Household Waste Recycling Centres were managed have been netted off the figures above – but amounted to one off support of over £3M, without which the Authority would have been likely to be significantly overspent.

A gap between expenditure and funding continues into 2021/22 as waste tonnages have remained at the increased levels even as the response to the pandemic becomes more normalised. A further Levy increase is inevitable to enable funding to be at sustainable levels.

Business Services

The Business Services section provides the Authority with effective and efficient administrative support. The Covid-19 pandemic brought about significant changes in the way the Authority delivers its services to householders and District Council partners, and how staff were able to continue to do their jobs effectively and safely.

Throughout the evolving and constantly shifting situation the Business Services team were able to support staff in the move to home working and safe office working, including the provision of IT equipment and risk assessments for all employees to ensure safe working practices at home. The team were able to maintain a continuous service and presence for the public by responding to a range of enquiries and requests over the past year.

The most significant changes brought about by the pandemic were the temporary closure of the HWRCs, the creation of a new car booking system for several HWRCs, and a new online and efficient van booking service which replaced the Permit Scheme. While we are still in the pandemic the Business Services team will continue to adapt and follow best practice for the safety of staff and to provide local householders with an effective service.

Going Forward

As we move forward through 2021 into 2022 we will be developing a new zero waste strategy to address climate change and maximise the value of otherwise wasted resources. There is a significant environmental impact brought about through the management, recycling and recovery of the thousands of tonnes of household waste we deal with each year. Every step is a chance to cut harmful gas emissions and make use of the earth's limited resources.

At MRWA we understand the importance of dealing with the prevention of waste, and the reuse and recycling of materials and products in achieving net zero carbon by 2040 and contributing to overall action on climate heating. By working together with partners throughout the Liverpool City Region we can improve the environment, support the local economy and benefit the community.

We've set ourselves a big challenge to reduce waste and to support the wider aim of a net zero carbon Liverpool City Region by 2040. To achieve this we need a plan, a roadmap to chart our journey and get us to our Zero Waste destination. We'll need to make some big steps and many small steps forward to achieve zero waste. Ultimately, we will need new ways to work together with residents and businesses to help them reduce avoidable waste.

As we develop our roadmap we'll be guided by new national targets and milestones for reducing waste. As we speak the government are working on plans for increased recycling options across the country and this is something we will need to be ready for, and we think we are.

We will continue to assist local community groups in reuse and recycling schemes via our Community Fund, with a further 17 projects having been funded recently. Similarly, our Recycle Right campaign will work around whatever pandemic conditions are put in its way and encourage households to recycle and reuse as much as they can.

Our own messages of zero waste are simple - don't buy what you don't need, purchase durable long-lasting goods, repair what can be repaired and give your unwanted items to other people. The more we all do this the less material we have to deal with and fewer resources are wasted.

The last 18 months have been traumatic but hopefully the months and year ahead will hold brighter days for all of us.

Further information

For more information about what you can and can't recycle go to:

www.recycleright.org.uk

If you are a business or organisation interested in the circular re-use of materials how about joining the Liverpool City Region Circular Economy Club:

www.linkedin.com/groups/8685207/profile

This Annual Report is only a snapshot of what we do. For more information about MRWA go to:

www.merseysidewda.gov.uk

All information was correct at the time of publishing (October 2021).



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