

Waste Collection Problems Identified during NT&BCC Fact-Finding Exercise

We find it helpful to separate Trade waste arrangements and collections from domestic waste, since it seems that the main problems we identified are different for these two separate waste streams. It is likely that in some locations, problems with both types of waste collections impair the cleanliness of the streets. Street-cleaning is given a separate section.

We have indicated the department we think is responsible after each bullet point. These are Waste Services (WS), Street Cleansing (SC) and Environmental Wardens (EW). (IT) is used for website issues.

TRADE WASTE

KEY CONCERN: Lack of enforcement

- [WS] New system introduced to City Centre in 2015 appeared highly successful initially, reducing number of trade waste bins to very few.
- [WS] During the following months there has been a substantial increase in the number of trade bins on the street, and the number continues to increase. We had understood that bins would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances, but it now seems to be the norm for each business to have several small bins where previously they had one large bin. The Hard Rock Cafe and Alexander Graham Bell, for example, each have over a dozen bins on Rose Street Lane, and it is hard to believe that such large premises are unable to store their waste in their premises. We are unclear if this is an interim measure, and if so what the timescale for compliance is.
- [EW] [WS] Following months have seen substantial increase in number of trade bins on street, and failure to enforce the new system's "sticks" when waste is badly presented. Are these "sticks" (fines, other actions?) adequate to improve behaviour?
- [EW] The new system uses "sticks" when waste is badly presented. Are these "sticks" (fines, other actions?) adequate to improve behaviour? More importantly, are there appropriate enforcement procedures in place and being taken. There is little evidence of environmental wardens carrying this out.
- [EW] Number of Environmental Wardens in City Centre may be problematic, also the requirement to work in pairs when "on the streets". Is this requirement justified? Are Environmental Wardens properly managed across the city? How many are there in total, and do the shifts worked provide an adequate service 24-7?
- [EW] Is the system for reporting problems with trade waste clear to members of the public, and is it working? Do reports produce a sufficient response in an acceptable period of time? NTBCC considers it unreasonable to expect the public to police waste collections in the city centre, which is a mostly commercial area. Ensuring the system is complied with and that trade waste is not causing nuisance/reduction of amenity/eyesore on the streets should be the responsibility of Environmental Wardens.
- [WS] The new system is to be extended across the city in the next 6 months (?). Will this draw managers' focus away from ensuring the city centre system is operating well?

- [EW] The on-street collection windows are not being monitored, so bags of waste accumulate on the streets. Unless businesses are regularly fined for non-compliance, there is little incentive for them to change their behaviour.
- [WS] There is huge inefficiency in having so many trade companies collecting waste at different times every day, and it results in constantly messy streets even when collections are being carried out correctly.
- [EW] The maintenance of on-street bins is poor.
- [EW] Environmental Wardens have too many responsibilities, and are unable to adequately carry out all the tasks they are expected to do. Some responsibilities could/should be moved to other 'workgroups', eg Street Cleansing, Police, Waste Services personnel, etc.
- Residents have suggested that Traffic Wardens, who have eyes on many city centre streets every day, could be given the responsibility to report any street cleanliness issues they see.

DOMESTIC WASTE

KEY CONCERN: Lack of monitoring / quality control

- [WS] System for waste collections is too complicated, and changes are introduced too often, with poor information to the people affected by those changes. Too many different types of container, confusing for public, particularly if moving from one area of city to another. Also confusing for visitors to Edinburgh. Also means that several vehicles need to go along the same route to collect all waste/recycling streams.
- [WS] Number, type, and placement of containers appear haphazard in many streets. Is there a system for calculating requirements, and for monitoring whether these calculations work in practice? If a bin is regularly overflowing at time of collection, more bin capacity or more frequent collection is needed.
- [EW] The bins get moved about by WS and by the public. What system is in place to ensure they remain in the right place?
- [WS] In several instances, CEC are unaware of the existence of a waste or recycling container; in such instances, no regular collection is made, the container is emptied only when reported overflowing by a member of the public.
- [WS] [IT] There is no system on the CEC Waste website for updating information on the type and location of waste/recycling containers.
- [WS] [IT] Some types of container are not on the website at all - eg the 3300-litre packaging recycling bins, as found on East Claremont St.
- [WS] It is confusing to have identical containers (3300-litre, dark green) for more than one type of waste: 1. domestic for landfill and 2. packaging for recycling
- [WS] [IT] Reporting of problems with waste collection is not managed well; Most people are unlikely to report problems to begin with (Someone else's problem), so the system needs to be as helpful as possible

- [WS] After a report is made, the timescale for solving the problem is unacceptably long. For example, if a domestic waste bin is reported overflowing, the deadline for solving that is between 2 and 3 days (irrespective of the frequency of collection of that bin). Resources to respond to reports are inadequate?
 - The timescales for dealing with reports contravene the Scottish Government Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (2006)
- [EW] An attempt to report dumped mattress on a Saturday showed that although an environmental warden was “on call”, they were unable to respond to the report, and could not be contacted directly. The emergency switchboard was not prepared to record details of the dumped item.
 - It seems that fly tippers are aware of this weekend service ‘drop-out’, as the number of mattresses, sofas, chairs etc dumped on Friday nights and Saturdays appears much higher than other days
- [WS] Waste collection crews are expected to report side waste, and ensure it is collected. This takes time, and the same crews regularly fail to achieve their required collections, which is a disincentive to report side waste. Time pressure would be an even greater disincentive to sort out the side waste during collections by vehicle. This is probably a particular problem with collections of OMB (3300-litre, side-loading) bins, but same problem occurs with the smaller (1280-litre, wheeled) bins - side waste left uncollected and unreported.
- [WS] Some residents suggested that, in general, communal bins encourage greater volumes of waste compared to a collection system where waste is kept in households until collection day. This seems intuitively likely; do WS have any system of monitoring waste production per person per week in areas using communal bins compared to areas using household bins?

STREET CLEANING & FLY-TIPPING

KEY CONCERN: Poor system for reporting / response too slow

Note: fly-tipping is included here only because it’s not dealt with by Waste Services

- [SC] Unlike waste collections, which are well organised in theory, it is unclear what arrangements exist for cleaning streets, roadside gullies, and pavements. Same uncertainty for public rights of way, pathways that are not part of the road network, and cycle paths.
- [SC] A schedule of regular cleaning appears to be in place for some streets (eg city centre, some in New Town) but not all. Possibly only on ‘arterial routes’: does that leave most streets served only by a ‘request service’ for street cleaning?
- [SC] Responses to reports of streets needing cleaned due to accumulations of litter have been patchy (from ‘properly addressed within 1 day’ to ‘never dealt with’).
- [SC] Sweeping vehicles do not appear to achieve much cleaning effect on streets in New Town & Broughton area - since most streets always have large numbers of parked cars. Often what is needed is a man/woman with a brush, backed up with a green machine, and enough time allocated for carrying out an adequate job.

- [SC] At least once a year in early winter there should be a routine thorough sweeping up of leaves. There have been instances of basement flats being flooded when gullies clog up with leaves.
- [SC] Reports of fly tipping are usually dealt with relatively promptly (ie items removed within 2 days - but see comment above about code of practice requirements)
- [SC] It's not clear that fly tipping is always addressed properly; fly tipping should be investigated by Environmental Wardens, but sometimes (possibly due to lack of wardens) the "task force" ie Street Cleansing removes items without attempting to find out who did the tipping. This leaves no incentive for going through the proper channel to have bulky items collected
 - This highlights a potential problem with the reporting system - who is it that decides what the response to a particular report should be? If by telephone, it's the person on the other end of the phone, who may not be well-versed in how to respond to different types of reports.
- [SC] [EW] Pallets left by businesses after a delivery are abandoned on the street. These constitute fly-tipping, but need to be referred on by the wardens as well as members of the public. They create a lot of clutter in Rose Street lanes for example, and can cause traffic blockages if other waste then has to be placed on the road rather than the pavement due to lack of space.
- [WS] [EW] Building debris left after road repairs are carried out need to be removed. Waste Services or Environmental Wardens need to hold the Roads Dept to account for this.