

Communal Bin Review: Report To CEC Transport & Environment Committee 16 November

NTBCC along with other Community Council Representatives and a number of local Councillors received a presentation on the Communal Bin Review (CBR) Phase 5 – World Heritage Sites (Old and New Town) - on Tuesday 31 October 2023. The presentation from Council staff was in advance of a paper going to the Transport & Environment Committee (TEC) and was designed to give a briefing on the likely proposals that would be presented to the TEC. The meeting was a positive one. The main point of emphasis from those attending was that any decisions regarding the World Heritage site (Old and New Towns) and proximate parts of the City should be taken with a proper and clearly articulated process of engagement to determine the general outlook of residents regarding the future of their refuse collection in different parts of the World Heritage site.

The meeting also heard an update on the trial which commenced in October 2022 to explore alternatives to bin hubs. The trial covers saw 1000 properties issued with green gull proof sacks to replace their red boxes for the collection of dry mixed recycling. The trial to date has been regarded as positive by both residents and collection teams. Changes to the trial in light of experience were also flagged up.

The Transport & Environment Committee paper was lodged on the Council website on Saturday 11 November and is available here:

<https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/s63282/Item%208.3%20-%20Communal%20Bin%20Review%20Update.pdf>

The TEC paper covers all phases of the CBR. This paper addresses proposals for the World Heritage site about which there has been particular concern among residents regarding the placing of large bin hubs on the streets of the World Heritage site and changes to existing collection arrangements for parts of the New Town.

Implementation of Phase 5 of the trial within the World Heritage site has been paused to allow the feasibility study of possible alternative waste collection solutions to those of bin hubs to be carried out, which the Association for Public Service (APSE) was engaged to undertake. The report from the APSE leans heavily towards an underground solution for the placement of bins. The TEC report states that ‘officers do not believe this to be deliverable in the short or medium term due to financial or infrastructure considerations’, although it is regarded as ‘the most beneficial solution.’ (An overall view reflected by ASPE.) Instead, attention has been upon the pilot employing green gull proof sacks to replace the red box service and improve recycling capacity available to residents. The TEC agreed in May 2023 to extend the pilot, with the next stage commencing in mid-November 2023.

The TEC reports notes that residents in the streets concerned have embraced the trial. This has been aided by the involvement of NTBCC and affected local residents associations. During the trial there has been an improvement with littering waste due to the fact that litter is unlikely to be blown out of gull proof sacks. However, measurements suggested that there had not been a significant increase in the amount of recycling collected and a reduction in the non-recyclable waste collected. So, in May this year the TEC approved the retention of the weekly collection frequency for non-recyclable waste while decreasing the size of the gull proof sacks from 180 to 70L and increasing the collection frequency for mixed recycling from fortnightly to weekly.

The second stage of the trial is due to start in mid-November 2023 and will be undertaken for six months, the results of which will be available in summer 2024.

To address the issues with recycling and non-recyclable waste collections, the second phase of the trial will be based on a different basis from the original trial regarding sack capacity and frequency of collections. The changes are summarised below.

	Gull proof sacks capacity stage 1 (Litres per household per week)	Current Kerbside capacity (Litres per household per week)	Gull proof sacks capacity stage 2 (Litres per household per week)
Non-recyclable	180	70	70
Dry mixed recycling	GPS trial 85	120	170
Glass	20	20	20
Food waste	23	23	23

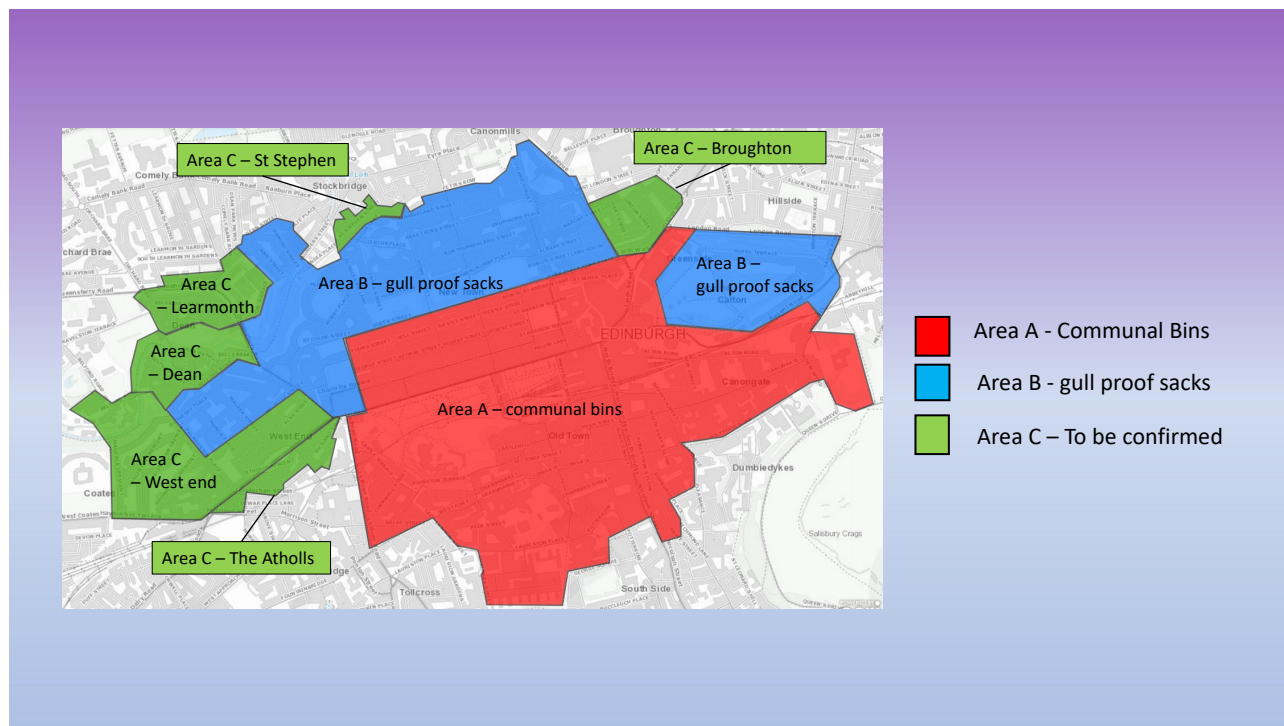
The TEC report also notes that there are outstanding issues in relation to overflowing communal bins due to overuse of these by residents who should be using the gull proof sacks. This is most noticeable where there is a mixture of services (gull proof sacks and communal bins services) provided within a small area. It is proposed to address this by simplifying the range of services provided within each part/area of the WHS and in increasing the consistency of the approach. It should however be noted that overflowing bins result from other reasons.

To ensure a sustainable waste and recycling solution for Phase 5, three areas have been identified (A, B and C) taking account of a number of factors including:

- Current service provided i.e. kerbside, communal or gull proof sack service.
- Current service provided to nearby streets/areas to minimise the misuse of the communal bin service by residents that will be provided with gull proof sacks.

A map designating the three areas is set out on the following page.

Different Designated Areas In Respect of World Heritage Site



It is proposed that properties in Area A (Old Town and George Street Corridor) will be serviced with communal bin hubs and implementation will progress. Agreement is being sought from Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland regarding specific bin hub locations. There will also be certain mitigations applied to new bin hubs to minimise the impact on the World Heritage site.

Area B has 4,460 properties with a variety of waste services including gull proof sacks (1,980 households). The TEC Report recommends that gull proof sacks are retained for all properties who currently receive this service for non-recyclable waste and mixed recycling as per stage 2 of the trial and that, subject of the outcome of stage 2 of the trial, the gull proof sacks service would be extended to cover the properties currently with communal bin service in Area B - an additional 2,000 properties.

Area C properties are mainly served by on street communal bin services (3,000 properties) but with some receiving off-street facilities, kerbside wheeled bin services and gull proof sacks (circa 270 properties). The TEC report states that: 'Due to the proximity of those areas to on-street communal bin locations outwith the WHS and also the proximity to gull-proof sacks area further assessment is required to identify the feasibility to move properties from gull proof sack to on street communal bin service and vice versa to improve service consistency.' There will be no change for those receiving a kerbside wheeled bin service.

In summary, Area A is to be designated for communal bins, Area B for gull proof sacks and Area C is still to be decided. One of the issues here is the matter of properties that do not have railings upon which to hang gull proof bags, but it is intended that new sacks would be issued with a closure flap and weighted bottom which avoids the need for them to be hung on railings.

No process for deciding waste collection services in Area C is set out in the TEC report, but at the meeting on 31 October Council officials agreed to come back and discuss how this might be appropriately taken forward

Peter Williamson
Acting Convenor, Environment Committee

12 November 2023