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EDITORIAL VIEWPOINT

By **Brendan Gilligan**

Are you considering purchasing a Reverse Vending Machine (RVM) for your business in anticipation of the UK's Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)?

Hold on for now! For the time being, there's no need to take any action. If you buy a machine now, it may not meet the compliance standards necessary for the upcoming scheme.

Exchange for Change, the official Deposit Management Organisation and scheme administrator for the UK's DRS across all four nations, has again postponed releasing its official list of certified Reverse Vending Machine suppliers. Initially scheduled for September, then pushed to early October, the announcement was expected by the end of October. However, as *Skip & Waste* magazine went to press, no information had been released.

DRS: Here is what you need to know

Businesses required to register as a producer, return point operator, or both can now create an account and complete **Phase 1** registration through the new Exchange for Change registration portal by 31st December, 2026.

Phase 1 is designed to establish the core business information needed for registration and should be completed as soon as possible. At this stage, businesses only need to provide basic information, including their company details, primary contact information, trading name and relevant business and mailing addresses.

Retailers in urban areas with a retail space under 100m^2 are exempt from operating a return point and don't need to register unless they want to offer one.

Earlier this year, Exchange for Change announced that urban retailers between 100m^2 and 199m^2 and rural retailers under 200m^2 can apply for an exemption from offering a return point. They still need to complete the registration process, with details on how to apply coming soon.

Phase 2 registration will open in January 2027, when businesses will be asked to provide further information relevant to their role in the scheme.

To keep up to date with news updates and announcements, and to help businesses understand whether they need to register, visit ***www.exchangeforchange.co.uk***

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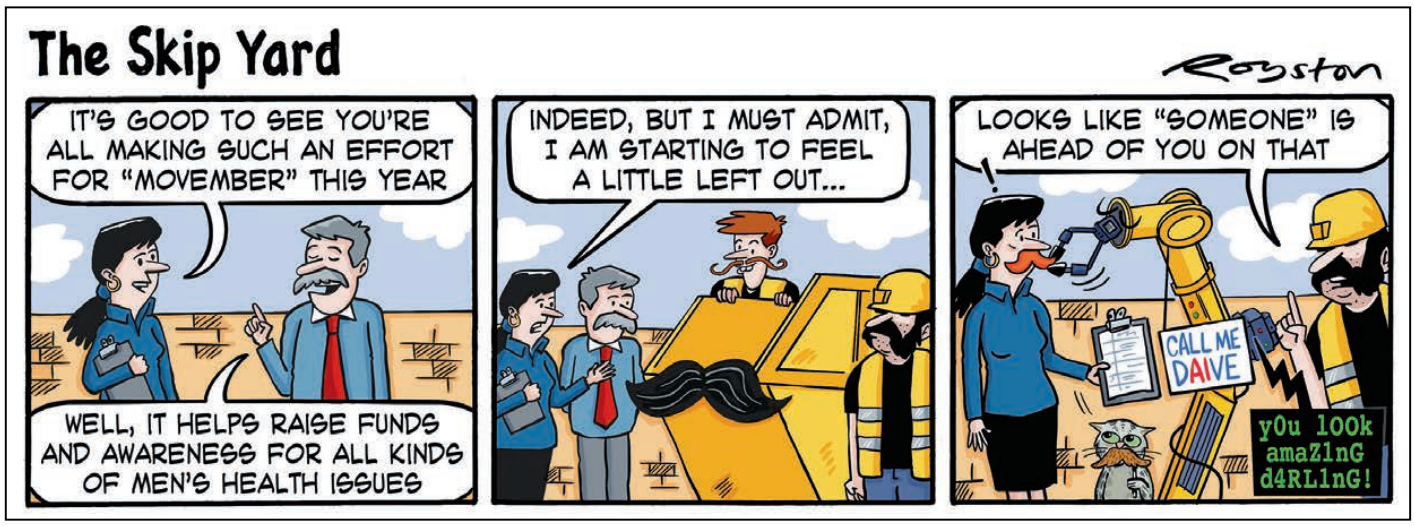
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Plastic film is difficult to recycle, but Robert Hargreaves, a legal researcher, suggests it could be transformed, potentially into a source of fuel. However, the UK's current recycling rules hinder innovation and experimentation in this area.



The Liverpool City Region Waste Crime Conference. *Picture credit: Environment Agency*

Conference marks new front in fight against waste crime

On 16th October, multiple councils collaborated with Merseyside Police, national regulators, and industry experts for what was described as Liverpool's first regional waste crime conference.

The Environment Agency and the Merseyside Police & Crime Commissioner organised the Liverpool City Region Waste Crime Conference to strengthen the fight against illegal waste activities.

Halton Borough Council hosted the event, bringing together agencies that tackle environmental crime in Merseyside. These included the Environment Agency, Merseyside Police, the Joint Unit for Waste Crime, the six local councils in the Liverpool City Region, Defra, UKHSA, and the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.

The conference united authorities from across Merseyside to improve their response to waste crime. Partners agreed to co-operate more, share information, and co-ordinate actions to stop illegal waste operations and protect communities and the environment.

As part of the Prime Minister's effort to combat waste crime, the Government and the Environment Agency are working together to ensure serious criminal gangs have nowhere to operate.

The Government will support this effort with an extra £45 million over the next three years, in addition to a £5.6 million increase announced earlier for this financial year. This funding will boost enforcement efforts and ensure that waste criminals face consequences for their actions.

Ian Crewe, Area Director of the Environment Agency in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire, said: *"Waste crime hits communities, harms the environment and undermines honest businesses and landowners. It costs the English economy over £1 billion every year, with an estimated 20% of all waste illegally managed.*

"This is not a problem that any single agency can resolve, so it is important that we attack this collectively and build on the work already taking place. By sharing intelligence and resources, we can help prevent waste crime and disrupt the criminal networks behind it."

Merseyside Police Commissioner Emily Spurrell said: *"Waste crime has a real impact on local communities, affecting the places people live, work and take pride in.*

"That's why I was delighted to support this first Liverpool City Region Waste Crime Conference. One of Merseyside's greatest strengths is our ability to work together, and bringing partners together to share expertise, intelligence and best practice is essential if we are to disrupt criminal activity, protect our communities and hold those responsible to account."

James Cruddas, Deputy Director Waste and Recycling, Circular Economy Directorate at Defra, said: *"Tackling waste crime requires a multi-agency effort. Our focus is on combining a clear national strategy with effective local delivery, ensuring that partners have the tools, intelligence and powers needed to combat criminality in the waste sector.*

"I am pleased to join colleagues in Merseyside to discuss how we can work together to protect the environment and support legitimate businesses."

Neighbourhood Chief Inspector Rob Budden from Merseyside Police said: *"Waste crime is far from a victimless offence. It blights communities, damages our environment, creates significant costs for taxpayers, and is often linked to wider organised criminality.*

"Those involved place profit before people and have little regard for the harm they cause to local neighbourhoods.

"By working closely with our partners, sharing intelligence and co-ordinating enforcement activity, we are better equipped to identify offenders, disrupt criminal networks and bring those responsible to justice."

Hosting a regional waste crime conference in Merseyside is linked to efforts made late last year to block access to a large-scale illegal waste site in Knowsley. This site was under investigation by various organisations, including local police and fire and rescue services.

In addition, a new Waste Crime Crackdown Group, chaired by Environment Secretary Angela Eagle, will unite regulators and law enforcement agencies to dismantle criminal operations and achieve tangible results.

To strengthen enforcement, the government will increase drone use, expand the roles of mayors and police, add more Environment Agency officers on the frontlines, and impose significantly higher fines to deter and punish illegal dumping.

These initiatives build on the Government's Waste Crime Action Plan, which outlines a zero-tolerance approach aimed at improving prevention, strengthening enforcement, and cleaning up the most serious illegal waste sites.

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HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD



Pictured L-R: Garth Lamb, Chief Development Officer, Re.Group, David Palmer-Jones OBE Chief Executive Officer CIRQLR, Joseph Doherty Chief Executive Officer Re-Gen, Jenny Powell Chief Operating Officer Exchange For Change, Russell Davies Chief Executive Officer Exchange For Change, John Scanlon Executive Vice President UK SUEZ, Rory Capper Head of Sustainability and Innovation Bywaters

Exchange For Change announces new UK recycling infrastructure for DRS

Exchange For Change, the organisation leading the UK Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), has announced plans for a new recycling system to support the scheme starting in October 2027.

After a thorough selection process, the scheme selected five waste management and recycling companies to handle logistics and processing across the UK. This plan aims to create a strong, reliable system and allow future growth of the recycling infrastructure.

The appointed companies and the regions they will cover are:

- **SUEZ** - the North-East, North-West, West-Central and South West regions of England.
- **CIRQLR** - the East Central, South and South East regions of England.
- **Re.Group** - Scotland, working in partnership with Hargreaves Services plc.
- **Bywaters** - London.
- **Re-Gen** - Northern Ireland.

The agreements will bring millions of pounds of investment to the UK's recycling infrastructure and are expected to create around 700 new jobs. From October 2027, three dedicated DRS processing facilities will operate in Scotland, Scunthorpe, and Guildford. There will also be two processing lines in Isle of Dogs and Newry, along with one facility in Avonmouth for shared use.

By October 2030, the plan includes building three new processing facilities in Ely, Cambridgeshire, Knowsley, Merseyside, and Avonmouth. Additionally, around 400 new recycling vehicles will help collect DRS materials across the UK.

Starting in October 2027, the Deposit Return Scheme will charge a 20p deposit on all single-use PET plastic, aluminium, and steel drink containers that are between 3L and 150ml. Consumers will get their deposit back when they return their drink containers to a return point.

Russell Davies, Exchange for Change Chief Executive, said: *"The Deposit Return Scheme will transform how the UK recycles. This is not only about preventing waste from polluting our towns, countryside, rivers and beaches, but also about investing for the long-term in new environmental infrastructure, jobs and opportunities across the UK.*

"Together the five waste management companies will create a resilient and scalable collections network that will ensure efficient collection and processing of DRS materials. We look forward to working with our partners to deliver this crucial element of the deposit return scheme when it goes live in October 2027."

John Scanlon, Executive Vice President in the UK for SUEZ, said: *"SUEZ has long been an advocate for a more resource-efficient UK economy and the deposit return scheme is a key delivery mechanism for this, collecting high-quality materials to boost domestic recycling.*

"I'm delighted Exchange For Change has entrusted SUEZ to deliver this groundbreaking service in four of its ten regions and look forward to working together to drive circularity, support domestic resource security and promote regional prosperity through the creation of local, green collar jobs."

Veolia secures key role in Protos carbon capture project

Veolia has won a contract to provide CO^2 purification technology for the carbon capture plant at the Protos Energy Recovery Facility (ERF).

The company will work with Kanadevia Inova AG, the contractor in charge of engineering, procurement, and construction.

Veolia will design and supply two units for purifying and dehydrating CO^2 for the Protos plant near Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. These units will prepare the captured CO^2 for transport and long-term storage.

Veolia said the contract marks its entry into the full-scale carbon capture market.

Anne Le Guennec, CEO of Veolia's water technology activities, said: *"This pioneering project establishes Veolia at the forefront of industrial decarbonisation and environmental security.*

"With active carbon capture projects across Europe and the US, Veolia is the partner of choice for organisations seeking to decarbonise at scale, and we look forward to accelerating additional carbon capture, utilisation and storage projects worldwide."

The Protos project is being developed at Encyclis' existing Energy from Waste (EfW) site in Cheshire and is intended to become the UK's first full-scale carbon capture facility integrated with an EfW plant.

Once operational, the facility is expected to capture around 370,000 tonnes of CO^2 annually from the adjoining ERF, which will aim to process up to 500,000 tonnes of waste each year.

The carbon capture plant is scheduled to become operational in mid-2029.

Spotlight on sustainability: Helen Czerski to address waste sector's vital role

TV presenter, physicist and oceanographer to explore the links between resources, climate and the natural world at 2026 ISWA World Congress in London.



Helen Czerski.
Picture credit: Alex Brenner

Helen Czerski will deliver a keynote address at the 2026 ISWA World Congress in London this month, exploring the vital role of the resources and waste sector in addressing some of the world's biggest environmental challenges.

Czerski will use her keynote to examine the impact human activity is having on nature and the climate, and how better management of resources can support resource resilience, protect natural ecosystems and help society operate within planetary boundaries.

The keynote will form part of the three-day 2026 ISWA World Congress, hosted by CIWM at the QEII Centre in London from 9th-11th November. Returning to the UK for the first time in 30 years, the Congress will bring together around 1,200 international professionals from more than 50 countries to examine the major challenges and opportunities facing the global resources and waste sector.

Sarah Poulter, Chief Executive of CIWM, said: *"Helen has an exceptional ability to make complex scientific and environmental issues accessible, engaging and relevant to people's everyday lives.*

"The challenges around waste and resources cannot be separated from the bigger questions facing our planet. Bringing Helen's perspective to the Congress will help us make those connections and challenge us to think more widely about the role our sector can play in creating a more sustainable future."

Czerski joins an international line-up of speakers that includes Janez Potočnik, former European Commissioner for the Environment and Co-Chair of the International Resource Panel, widely regarded as one of the world's foremost advocates for the circular economy.

The Congress will feature more than 200 speakers and 120 technical sessions covering issues including the circular economy, climate finance, extended producer responsibility, plastics, behaviour change, infrastructure, skills and the development of more resilient resource systems.

For further information and to register, scan the QR code.

Autumn Budget: Help for hauliers, but recycling needs more recognition

The Washed Aggregates Trade Association (WATA) has welcomed the Government's decision to extend the fuel duty freeze until July 2027, saying the move will help ease some of the cost pressures facing businesses across the waste and recycling sector.

The extension, announced by Chancellor John Healey in his first Budget last month, provides continued support for businesses reliant on road transport at a time when fuel costs remain a significant operating expense.

However, WATA says fuel duty is only one part of the wider cost pressures facing washed aggregate operators, which process construction, demolition and excavation waste into reusable materials for the construction and remediation industries.

Andy Hill, CEO of WATA, said: *"Fuel duty is an important part of the picture, but keeping the washed aggregates sector financially viable requires a broader approach. Businesses need confidence that they can invest in their facilities, that the regulatory framework supports the recovery and reuse of materials, and that there will be a strong market for the products they produce.*

"The Government can help deliver that through targeted investment support and by requiring a minimum of 35% washed recycled aggregates in publicly funded infrastructure projeects. This would support responsible recycling businesses, help create greater certainty for investment and conserve natural resources by keeping valuable materials in circulation."





WATA backs MPA call for Government survey into recycled aggregates

The Washed Aggregates Trade Association (WATA) has backed a call for a Government-led survey into the scale of the recycling of waste to produce aggregates in Britain.

A recent report by The Mineral Products Association (MPA) estimates that recycled and secondary aggregates accounted for 72.8 million tonnes, or 31% of total aggregates supply, in Great Britain in 2024.

The MPA has now called on the Government to conduct its own survey to replace the last available Government statistics, which are almost 20 years old.

WATA backs the MPA's call and has welcomed the report overall, which highlights the significant contribution recycled and secondary aggregates make to Great Britain's construction materials supply.

WATA said the report's findings recognise the scale and importance of the recycled aggregates sector, while highlighting the need to understand better how materials are recovered and returned to productive use.

Andy Hill, CEO of WATA, said: *"The scale of the figures demonstrates that resource recovery is already an important part of aggregates supply in Great Britain.*

"Washed aggregates play an important role in that contribution. Specialist wash plants are recovering valuable materials from construction, demolition and excavation waste and producing washed recycled aggregates and other usable mineral products every day.

"The MPA has pointed out that the last comprehensive Government survey of construction and demolition waste was in 2008. The way we recover and process construction materials has continued to develop during that time.

"A current picture of the industry would be extremely valuable, not only in establishing how much material is being recovered, but also in understanding the range of materials and products now being produced and how they are being used.

"We would welcome the opportunity for the washed aggregates sector to contribute to that work," he added.

Work begins to clear illegal waste site in Wigan

Acumen Waste Service Limited has begun preparatory work to clear an illegal waste site in Bickershaw, Wigan, Greater Manchester.

The 25-tonne illegal waste dump, located on Bolton House Road, spans land owned by both Wigan Council and the Duchy of Lancaster, which is the King's private estate.

Acumen is currently clearing vegetation from the site to prepare for waste removal, set to begin this month.

Councillor Nazia Rehman, Leader of Wigan Council, said: *"The contract signing and mobilisation at Bolton House Road is a clear sign of progress and a significant moment for the community who have had to deal with the impact of the illegal waste site.*

"Reaching this stage also demonstrates the commitment of the council and partners to deliver the necessary framework for waste clearance, but our work does not stop here.

"We will continue to work with residents to ensure their voice is heard in the future of the site and will continue to support the Environment Agency's criminal investigation to make sure those responsible are held accountable for the damage and distress they have caused."

After a major fire at the illegal waste site in July 2025, a multi-agency partnership, including the Environment Agency, was formed to manage the site, prevent further waste dumping, and minimise risks to residents and the environment.

Once government funding was secured, Wigan Council has led a unique procurement process to move forward with waste removal. This approach was agreed by the multi-agency group to ensure that local residents remained at the heart of decision-making.

Environment Secretary Dame Angela Eagle said: *"We are taking decisive action in Wigan Borough to clean up this horrendous site and hunt down the criminals who left local residents to deal with the consequences."*

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SCAN ME



BIR launches 'Future Recyclists' initiative

The Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) launched a new initiative, 'Future Recyclists', at its World Recycling Convention in Malaga, Spain, last month, aiming to attract and retain the next generation of recycling talent.

With UK graduate job vacancies dropping by 45% year-on-year and a projected 2% gap in green jobs, the recycling industry faces both opportunities and challenges.

'Future Recyclists' will showcase the industry's role in conserving resources and reducing energy use while promoting meaningful careers in a competitive job market.

The initiative will feature a website with inspiring content, testimonials from young recyclers, and information about job roles, designed to appeal to Gen Z with its engaging, snackable format. Initial feedback on the site has been very positive, and it is set to launch in the coming months.

Susie Burrage OBE, President of BIR, who has spearheaded the initiative, comments: *"Recycling is an essential industry but does not always receive the recognition it deserves as an exciting, dynamic and financially rewarding career destination. We need to show the next generation the opportunities within an industry that supplies vital recycled raw materials, drives innovation, and helps shape our planet's future.*

"We need traders, finance professionals, commercial strategists, scientists, engineers, data specialists and creative thinkers to help our businesses innovate and meet the challenges ahead. These careers have real purpose and directly contribute to resource conservation and a more sustainable future. Through 'Future Recyclists', we want young people to see those opportunities - and see a future for themselves in our fabulous recycling industry."

Recycling offers many career opportunities that people may not know about. It goes beyond sorting and processing materials. The industry needs skills in materials science, engineering, trading, finance, and business development. Careers in recycling include finding new ways to recover valuable resources and helping businesses grow. This field supports individuals with various skills, interests, and goals.

The website will help young people discover these job opportunities. It will include sections on industry stories, practical career advice, frequently asked questions, a mentor hub, and detailed guides about different recycling sectors. These resources will provide a clearer understanding of how the industry works, the roles available, and how to start a career in recycling.

As part of this initiative, BIR plans to connect with universities worldwide. This will raise awareness of recycling careers among students and connect new talent with industry businesses. By connecting the industry with new talent, 'Future Recyclists' aims to help BIR members find future employees and build the skills needed to drive innovation and growth in recycling.

Defra eases 2026 PRN recycling targets for certain materials

The UK Government has lowered packaging recycling obligations for plastic, steel, and wood because it is concerned producers may not meet their legal targets for 2026.

Environmental consultancy Ecosurety says the current market will not generate enough Packaging Recovery Notes (PRNs) to meet these obligations, putting the UK's compliance with mandatory recycling targets at risk.

From 2026, new regulations mean that exporters can only issue PRNs when the packaging waste is received by accredited overseas processors, rather than when it leaves the UK.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) said it would consider actions to reduce the risk of failing to meet these obligations.

A Defra spokesperson said it is addressing raised concerns and working with regulators to ease pressure, ensuring recycling performance remains strong while setting realistic targets. They aim to ensure the system is effective for all stakeholders.

The four UK environmental regulators, including the Environment Agency, have issued a new Regulatory Position Statement (RPS) indicating that producers and compliance schemes will typically not face enforcement for achieving reduced recycling percentages for 2026, specifically for:

- **Plastic:** 83% of the original obligation.
- **Steel:** 92% of the original obligation.
- **Wood:** 90% of the original obligation.

These reductions are a temporary measure for this year, and Ecosurety describes the intervention as unprecedented in the UK's PRN system's nearly 30-year history.

Robbie Staniforth, Ecosurety's Chief Policy & Impact Officer, supported the decision, noting that changes in export rules and new IT systems have caused instability. He acknowledged that officials set recycling targets before fully understanding the impact of these changes, prompting intervention.

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Recycling PVC team presented with their award at the Oldham Business Awards

Oldham recycling specialist wins prestigious sustainability award

Recycling PVC, based in Oldham, Greater Manchester, is celebrating its win at this year's Oldham Business Awards, taking home the Sustainable Innovation Award. This recognition highlights the company's groundbreaking work converting old window frames into high-quality recycled material, which can be repurposed into new windows and doors.

At the heart of the company's award-winning approach is a closed-loop recycling process that recovers uPVC from old windows and doors, helping to reduce waste going to landfill and support more sustainable manufacturing. For every tonne of recycled material produced, around 140 new window frames can be manufactured, saving approximately two tonnes of CO^2 emissions compared with using virgin uPVC.

Part of the global profine Group, Recycling PVC is planning to further expand its recycling operations over the next 12 months, with the potential to create further jobs for local people.

uPVC windows have traditionally been difficult to recycle because they contain a combination of materials, including glass, steel reinforcement and other components. Recycling PVC has invested in specialist dismantling, shredding and separation technology to overcome these challenges. The process produces high-grade recycled polymer that can be returned directly to manufacturing and used to make profine's Greenline window and door systems, ensuring valuable materials are reused rather than sent to landfill.

Commenting on the win, Ian Murray, Managing Director of Recycling PVC, said: *"We're absolutely delighted to have won the Sustainable Innovation Award, particularly as it's recognition from our local business community here in Oldham.*

"We've invested heavily in developing the technology and processes needed to turn old windows into high-quality recycled material that can be used to manufacture new products. It's a great example of how innovation can make a real difference to the environment while also creating opportunities for British manufacturing.

"Oldham has a proud industrial heritage, and we're pleased to be playing our part in its future. This award is a fantastic achievement for everyone involved in the business and recognition of the hard work and commitment of our team."





GMG Energy's £100k project set to deliver carbon-cutting benefits

GMG Energy, based in Upper Bighouse in the far north of Scotland, has reached a significant milestone in its commitment to achieving net zero by 2035, with a new sawdust drying and biomass briquette production system now entering beta testing before becoming operational.

The £100k investment forms part of its wider decarbonisation strategy developed following a detailed carbon audit which identified practical and achievable opportunities to reduce emissions across the business.

The result is a clear roadmap to net zero, with the new sawdust dryer among the most important projects delivered to date.

GMG Energy has built its reputation on optimising the value of locally sourced timber while supporting rural communities with renewable energy and timber products. The latest investment strengthens that circular approach by turning a sawmilling by-product into a valuable, low-carbon fuel source.

The new system reduces sawdust moisture content from 35% to 10%. Once dried, the material can be processed into renewable biomass briquettes suitable for domestic wood-burning stoves and heating systems.

By drying and processing sawdust and woodchip on-site, the company expects to reduce transport requirements significantly, cut associated emissions, and maximise the value of a resource that would otherwise leave the business as a low-value by-product.

Malcolm Morrison, Director of GMG Energy, said: *"Following our carbon audit, we developed a realistic and achievable plan to reach net zero by 2035. A key part of that strategy was closely examining how we could reduce emissions while making better use of the materials already produced through our sawmill operations.*

"This project does exactly that. Instead of transporting wet sawdust long distances, we're able to process it on-site, significantly reducing transport emissions and turning a by-product into a valuable renewable fuel."

The system uses a fully automated drying process in which sawdust is fed into a rotating drying drum. Material continually passes through the system until it reaches the required moisture content before moving to briquette production equipment.

The process uses renewable heat already generated through the company's existing biomass infrastructure, improving overall operational efficiency and supporting GMG Energy's ambition to create a near zero-waste operation by ensuring more of the timber processed on site is fully utilised.

Morrison added: *"We're producing a couple of tonnes of sawdust every week, so finding a better use for that material was an obvious opportunity. The new system dries the sawdust to the ideal level before converting it into briquettes that customers across the region can use in wood-burning stoves.*

"It's a great example of circular economy thinking in action. We're reducing waste, creating a new income stream for the business and producing a renewable fuel that can stay within local communities rather than being transported hundreds of miles."

With commissioning now underway, the sawdust drying and briquette production system is expected to become fully operational in the coming weeks.

Enfinium secures 10-year fuel deal for Yorkshire EfW plants

Enfinium, an Energy from Waste (EfW) operator, has signed a 10-year agreement with A1 Recycling and Renewables NW to provide waste to its facilities in West Yorkshire.

A1 will supply waste from its Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Greater Manchester to two EfW plants: Ferrybridge and Skelton Grange.

Wayne Robertson, Enfinium's Chief Commercial and Strategy Officer, said: *"We are happy to begin this partnership with A1 Recycling and Renewables. This long-term agreement will create a steady outlet for unrecyclable waste from Greater Manchester while helping us continue to produce homegrown energy at our West Yorkshire facilities. We look forward to expanding our partnership and finding more ways to work together in the future."*

Enfinium added that the deal will strengthen its long-term fuel supply plans and support waste management and energy generation at its West Yorkshire plants.

Simon Ince, Managing Director of A1 Recycling and Renewables NW, shared: *"We are excited to secure this long-term deal with Enfinium, building on our existing relationship. Reliable partners in energy from waste are crucial to our operations, and this agreement gives us the confidence to grow our business and serve our customers better. We look forward to enhancing our partnership with Enfinium in the coming years."*

This agreement follows Enfinium's recent deal with Remondis UK, which will supply waste to the Ferrybridge 1 and 2 and Skelton Grange facilities.

Additionally, Enfinium has a 25-year agreement with SSE to supply heat from its Skelton Grange plant for the Aire Valley Heat Network. In this arrangement, Enfinium will initially provide 6MWth of heat to the network, starting in the first quarter of 2027.



Picture credit: Enfinium

Kingston University to lead £3.6m waste robotics hub

Kingston University has been selected to lead the UK's first dedicated waste and recycling robotics adoption hub as part of a £40 million government scheme.

The National Waste and Recycling Robotics Adoption Hub (NORAH), funded by Innovate UK and based in the Southeast of England, is one of eight Robotic Adoption Hubs to be rolled out across the UK to offer advice and support to businesses and public services looking to use the latest technologies and switch to automation.

Led by Professor Vasilis Argyriou, an expert in computer vision and AI at Kingston University, the £3.6 million NORAH project (£1.5 million for Kingston University) will help UK waste and recycling sites test and adopt robots to recover more materials, send less to landfill and create skilled jobs - accelerating deployment of automation in one of the most technically challenging industrial environments.

Fewer than 5% of UK waste facilities have adopted automation - which is due to some robotic systems struggling to operate reliably in waste conditions where materials are often contaminated, heterogeneous and deformable. As a result, operators cannot predict performance, quantify return on investment or confidently deploy systems.

The hub will address this gap by enabling robotics systems to be tested, validated and implemented on real waste streams. Initial focus is on complex materials such as textiles, mixed recyclables and soft-material waste, where current systems perform least reliably but where gains in recovery and productivity are greatest.



The NORAH project will investigate how robotic sorting systems can overcome challenges posed by variable waste streams and contaminated materials. *Picture credit: Kingston University*

Using advanced sensing systems, multi-arm robotic sorting cells and digital simulation, technologies will be validated on live contaminated waste streams, generating measured data on classification accuracy, throughput, contamination handling and material recovery. This is combined with site-specific economic modelling to provide payback and investment cases, reducing uncertainty and enabling faster adoption.

Services include:

- *Real testbeds using contaminated, heterogeneous waste streams, including textiles, mixed recyclables and deformable materials;*
- *Independent benchmarking using operator-specific waste samples, generating measured performance data rather than vendor-derived metrics;*
- *Integration support within Materials Recovery Facilities and legacy infrastructure, including constrained layouts and variable feedstock;*
- *Training and workforce transition programmes focused on safe operation in contaminated waste environments;*
- *Innovation programmes addressing sector-specific challenges such as mixed fibre sorting, contamination removal and automated disassembly;*
- *Access to waste operators, local authorities and commercial facilities, providing direct routes to deployment and live operational validation.*

The NORAH project, led by Kingston University, will feature a consortium including the University of Kent, the West London Waste Authority and robotic developers, waste operators, local authorities and national bodies. The hub will combine deployment with research capability and policy alignment, ensuring solutions are aligned to industry needs, regulatory requirements and scalable deployment pathways - enabling a wider uptake of robotics across the waste sector.

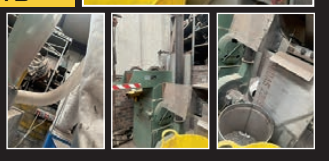
Discussing the project, Professor Argyriou said the plan was to support more than 150 organisations and deliver operational deployments by 2030. *"The National Waste and Recycling Robotics Adoption Hub will help UK recyclers move proven robotics from the lab into live operations, keeping valuable materials out of landfill, cutting carbon emissions, creating skilled jobs and accelerating the circular economy."*

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Mush ado about nothing

Sometimes, when you read an employment tribunal judgment, you wonder whether you've accidentally wandered into a discarded *Monty Python* script. This month brought an absolute mind-bender.

It begins with a recently promoted deputy care manager discovering mushrooms in a Tesco delivery, suffering what was described as a *'panic attack triggered by a mushroom phobia',* and subsequently threatening to *"bang out"* a colleague who was allegedly laughing about the incident. She received a disciplinary warning, was later dismissed for unrelated performance concerns, and ultimately won £6,000 because, according to the tribunal, the disciplinary process and warning amounted to disability discrimination.

Apparently, this is where we are as a society now.

I have a confession, though. I am terrified of spiders. Not mildly uncomfortable. Not *"I'd prefer it if they remained outdoors".* Properly, irrationally, embarrassingly terrified. If a medium-sized spider appears in my house, I leave. The spider has the full run of the place.

What I have never done, however, is threaten physical violence against someone who finds this amusing. That's probably because it isn't in my nature to threaten physical violence (and believe me, there have been times in my life it would have been justified!)

It's a fact that most people do find it amusing that me, a grown up, is afraid of something that weighs less than a pair of false eyelashes - and yes, I've been known to take flight when I've seen one of those on the floor - and, if I'm honest, it is amusing.

The spectacle of a supposedly rational adult running away screaming from a creature the size of a raisin is funny. If I discovered that colleagues had laughed at my reaction to a spider, I'd probably join in. Let's face it, my dignity would already have left the scene.

This is why I struggle with the central premise of the tribunal's reasoning.

The judgment appears to accept that the claimant's threat arose directly from a panic attack linked to her disability and therefore she had little or no control over the comment. Consequently, disciplining her for threatening a colleague created a humiliating environment.

Yet that seems to assume something rather extraordinary: that panic attacks can temporarily suspend responsibility for threatening behaviour.

For me, this finding is not entirely comfortable.

The difficulty is that workplaces generally operate on the rather old-fashioned principle that people should not threaten a colleague. They can raise grievances, and surely that would have been the reasonable response to the colleague laughing about the incident.

Of course, context matters. A threat uttered in distress is different from calculated intimidation. Nobody sensible would argue otherwise, however, there is a significant difference between understanding behaviour and excusing it.

The tribunal seems to have crossed a line.

Let us also spare a thought for mushrooms themselves.

Throughout human history, mushrooms have endured dreadful public relations. They have been blamed for poisoning, hallucinations, crop failures and suspicious deaths. Fairy tales portray them as homes for magical creatures with questionable intentions.

Now they are apparently capable of causing threats and triggering litigation.

The humble mushroom must be wondering what it did to deserve this.

That is quite a journey for something whose greatest ambition was probably ending up in a risotto or a fry-up.

Perhaps what troubles me most is the apparent disappearance of proportion.

A colleague laughs at a phobia. This is not ideal behaviour. It is unkind and immature.

But it is also very human.

People laugh at irrational fears because, by their nature, they are irrational. We laugh at the mismatch between the non-existent threat and the reaction. We laugh because we share a nervous reaction to seemingly erratic behaviour.

Nobody is genuinely suggesting that a packet of mushrooms was a genuine threat. The humour comes precisely from the fact that it wasn't.

By contrast, threatening violence against a colleague is a genuine threat, yet somehow the judgment turns this on its head.

This leaves us all in an awkward position: employers, HR and employment law advisers. Frankly, it's a joke, but not a funny one.

I also think that in a care setting, where professionalism and emotional control matter, most people would regard the claimant as unsuited to such an environment.

To be fair to the tribunal, that was not the question before it. Judges decide the claims brought before them, not the wider philosophical question of whether a fear of mushrooms, or the reaction, is rational.

And ok - perhaps I am being a wee bit unfair. In this case the employer accepted the claimant had a known anxiety condition and that it was in scope of the Equality Act 2010, and the law rightly protects disabled employees from being disadvantaged because of conditions beyond their control. That is an important principle.

But it is also possible to believe two things at once: that a phobia deserves understanding, and that threatening a colleague deserves scrutiny.

These positions are not mutually exclusive. If anything, they are exactly the sort of balance that employment law should strive to achieve.

Instead, we seem to have reached a curious place where an irrational fear someone found amusing, which led to a threat, is seen as less problematic than the employer's right and duty to invoke a legitimate disciplinary process. You couldn't make it up!

Right, I'm off - just spotted a spider. And if I catch any of you laughing...

Your next driver has three other tabs open

Skip hire is not just competing with other skip firms for drivers. It is competing with every employer that runs a lorry.



By **Reece Dalgas**

I put two job adverts from Leeds side by side. One was a Class 2 skip driver role: 6.30am start, roll-on roll-off or hook lift experience needed, domestic and commercial sites, £15 an hour plus holiday pay. The other was Class 1 supermarket work out of a depot in the same city at £16 to £20 an hour on days and up to £21 on nights, with full induction and training provided.

The pay gap is not dramatic. What struck me was what each advert was selling. Supermarket adverts sell an easy day. One agency advert for a supermarket depot in Southampton this spring promised mapped-out routes, *"easy clean straightforward cages, no handballing,"* paid breaks and a subsidised canteen. A skip driver's day is chains, sheeting, tight access, customers and a queue at the tip. Nobody calls that no handballing.

That is the problem in a nutshell. Skip hire does not recruit from a skip hire pool. A driver with a Category C licence, a valid DQC and a digital tachograph card can work for you, a supermarket, a builders' merchant, a tipper firm or the council. Hold C+E and the options widen again. All those employers are fishing in the same water.

And the water is getting shallower. In November 2025, the Road Haulage Association said the UK needs to train 60,000 new HGV drivers a year for the next five years, and that around 100,000 drivers had let their DQC lapse in the previous year. That is roughly one in six working-age lorry drivers, and many were in their 30s and 40s, not retiring.

Simpler Recycling has added demand on top of that. Most councils in England had to have weekly food waste collections running by 31st March 2026, and they have been buying vehicles and recruiting crews to run them. Babergh District Council's cabinet report expected its new food waste service to create seven new Class 2 driving posts. Repeat that across England, and it is a lot of Category C drivers being hired on local authority terms.



So what does a skip firm have to offer?
More than it usually says.

Home every night. Most skip work runs within a local radius, Monday to Friday. For a driver with years of trunking or nights, that is worth a lot, and it rarely sits at the top of an advert.

A skill, not just a licence. Working a hook loader or chain lift wagon safely in a narrow residential street is something a supermarket driver cannot do. Train it, name it in the advert, and pay for it when a driver brings it.

A route upwards. In a small firm, a good driver can become a yard supervisor, a transport manager or the person holding the site's technical competence. Few supermarket drivers will be offered that.

There is also a pool most firms ignore. Those lapsed DQC holders still have their licences. A driver who stepped away in their late 30s needs 35 hours of periodic training to come back. Offering to fund it may be a stronger hook than another 50p an hour.

None of this works if the advert says *"Class 2 driver wanted, competitive rates."* The driver reading it has three other tabs open. Say which licence you need, whether it is hook or chain, the start time, how far from the yard the work goes and what the pay is.

The sector likes to say it struggles to recruit because people do not want to work with rubbish. I do not think that is the main reason. We are competing for licence holders with every employer that runs a lorry, and most of them are better at telling drivers why the job is worth taking.

Reece Dalgas is the founder of WasteGrid, a specialist recruitment platform for the UK waste, recycling and environmental services sector.
wastegrid.co.uk ***reecedalgas@wastegrid.co.uk***

Waste company turns to Isuzu for first 11-tonne skiploader

North Yorkshire-based skip hire company Phillips Waste Management has taken delivery of its first-ever Isuzu truck, a versatile 11-tonne F110.240 mounted with a skiploader body, supplied by local dealer Thompson Commercials.

Replacing a 12-tonne skiploader from another manufacturer, the new Isuzu was chosen to provide a more reliable, easy-to-manoeuvre option capable of servicing residential and commercial customers with limited access points, helping to support the company's continued growth in domestic waste collection operations across Selby, York and the surrounding areas.

Emma Phillips, Owner of Phillips Waste Management, says: *"Our smaller skiploaders play a vital role in supporting some of our trickier-to-reach customers. After experiencing repeated downtime with our previous truck, we wanted a reliable, agile and dependable replacement that would stay on the road as our operations continue to grow. Isuzu has ticked those boxes from day one, with the truck delivering a great first impression. Our driver has been very happy with its handling and overall performance.*

"Joe Uttley and the team at Thompson Commercials were fantastic to work with throughout the process. We looked at several options, but Isuzu stood out because of its compact footprint and excellent manoeuvrability. It is perfectly suited for sites with tight access, where it will spend most of its time."



The new Isuzu was chosen for its reliability and ease of manoeuvring, enabling it to serve residential and commercial customers with limited access points and supporting the company's continued growth in domestic waste collection across Selby, York and the surrounding areas

Phillips Waste Management operates a 10-strong commercial vehicle fleet, with its other vehicles plated between 16- and 32-tonnes, and used to manage larger jobs, including construction and demolition operations.

The new Isuzu 11-tonner will be primarily deployed for residential work, which comprises around 30% of the company's customer base. It will deliver and collect 2- and 4-yard skips frequently used for house clearances, garden projects, home refurbishments, and general household waste. On the road five days per week, the new truck is expected to travel at least 30,000 miles annually.

The chassis comes with the manufacturer's three-year unlimited mileage warranty, which includes 24/7 roadside assistance as standard, and is supported by the Isuzu Truck Customer CARE team and its comprehensive Dealer Network.

Opened in 2020 with a single truck and 20 skips, Phillips Waste Management has grown significantly over the past six years. It now operates more than 700 skips, providing a full range of waste management services across East and North Yorkshire from its two sites in York and Selby.

Another skip wrap with an important message behind it



Budget Waste Management, based in Worcestershire, is well known for celebrating special occasions by displaying messages on its skips, which *Skip & Waste* magazine has previously featured. This time, the company is proud to support Andy's Man Club and help spread the message that #ITSOKAYTOTALK.

With a predominantly male workforce, men's mental health is particularly important to Budget Waste Management, both within its team and across the wider local community they serve every day.

Their skips travel throughout Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, and the surrounding areas, so the business wanted to utilise that space to promote a message that could genuinely make a difference.

If seeing this skip encourages even one person to start a conversation, reach out for support, or check in on someone else, then it has fulfilled its purpose.

To learn more about Andy's Man Club or to find your nearest group, visit ***andysmanclub.co.uk***



Credit: Tim Bryne and Dudley Printing and Binding Services (publisher)

The 90s: Charting a decade of refuse fleet transformation

Tim Bryne, who holds a degree in Waste Management from the University of Northampton, is a Chartered Waste Manager (MCIWM) accredited by the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management. He is also an International Waste Manager, certified by the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA). With years of experience in various roles within the industry, Tim currently serves as an International Waste Management Consultant.

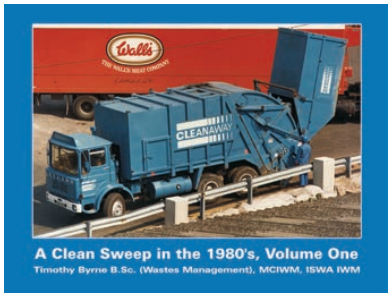
He recently published his latest book, *'Cleaning Away The 1990s'*, which you can buy on eBay by scanning the **QR code**.

The book provides a detailed account of a transformative decade in British municipal refuse fleets. Tim continues his technical histories - most notably his *A Lifetime of Waste* series - by examining an era marked by corporate acquisitions, environmental changes, and new fleet designs.

The 1990s saw the decline of uniform council-owned fleets as private companies like Cleanaway, Biffa, and SITA took over local contracts, introducing unique liveries, standardised wheelie bins, and advanced compaction technology.

Byrne highlights Cleanaway's role in this transition, showcasing the shift from open-topped dustcarts and manual loading to modern, high-capacity rear-end loaders (RELs), front-end loaders (FELs), and roll-on/roll-off (RoRo) container systems.

Don't miss this chance to gain valuable insights from the best!



Tim's interest in waste transportation vehicles and waste management began at the age of four. He has authored numerous publications, and earlier this year, he released Volume One in this series, *A Clean Sweep in the 1980s.*

If you have any questions for Tim or wish to enquire about ordering Volume One, you can reach him via email at ***garbage32@hotmail.co.uk***





Successful introduction positions BMI MAXXLite as a popular choice

After its successful summer launch, bmi's new MAXXLite 125YD Moving Floor Trailer has quickly become a popular choice for operators looking to maximise payload, improve efficiency, and get more from every journey.

Designed and manufactured in the UK, the MAXXLite was developed to meet growing demand for lightweight trailers that deliver increased payload capacity without compromising the strength, durability, and reliability required in demanding operating environments.

At the heart of the MAXXLite's appeal is its impressive 7,740kg tare weight. By reducing the unladen weight of the trailer, operators can maximise the amount of material carried on each journey, making better use of available payload capacity and potentially reducing the number of journeys required.

Since its launch, bmi has seen strong interest in the MAXXLite, with operators recognising the practical benefits of combining a lightweight design with the robust construction for which bmi trailers are renowned.

The trailer's payload potential is proving to be a key factor behind customer orders, particularly for operators focused on improving transport efficiency and reducing the cost associated with moving materials.

For high-mileage operations, even relatively small improvements in payload can make a significant difference over time. By carrying more on each journey, operators can increase productivity and make better use of their existing fleet.





The MAXXLite also reflects bmi's continued focus on developing trailers around the real-world requirements of operators.

"The response to the MAXXLite since its launch has been extremely encouraging," said Brendan McIlvanna, Managing Director at bmi Trailers. *"We developed the trailer with one of the biggest challenges facing operators in mind - how to maximise payload while still having a trailer that is built to withstand demanding day-to-day use.*

"The feedback we have received from customers has reinforced that this is exactly what the market is looking for. The combination of a 7,740kg tare weight, increased payload potential and the durability associated with bmi is proving to be a compelling proposition."

Proudly designed and manufactured in the UK, the bmi MAXXLite 125YD Moving Floor Trailer is engineered to help operators carry more, improve efficiency and maximise the return from every journey, and is quickly establishing itself as an important addition to the bmi moving floor range.



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Lancashire waste collection provider scales up with NPIF II funding

Commercial and residential waste collection specialist Busy Bins is focused on growth after securing a six-figure investment from FW Capital Debt Finance, managed by FW Capital as part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II (NPIF II).

Owner Josh Morris and his dad Mike Morris launched Busy Bins in 2015. It operates as a waste collection service provider and also offers skip hire and junk removals, supporting households and businesses in Bury, Rochdale, Manchester, Oldham, Bolton and Salford.



Pictured L-R: Josh Morris, Owner at Busy Bins and Barry Wilson, FW Capital

The NPIF II - FW Capital funding supports Busy Bins' growth strategy, including expanding its current team of 12 to 20 employees and increasing its marketing activities. It is also helping introduce more automated technology to improve the customer experience and make its services more accessible, personalised, and convenient.

Josh Morris, Owner at Busy Bins, said: "*Busy Bins was born when local councils reduced the number of residential waste collections on offer. Despite their best efforts to recycle, people struggled with overflowing bins and needed a solution. So we stepped in with reliable refuse collections. Since then, the business has grown, and we have a loyal customer base thanks to our dependable services.*

"The funding from FW Capital is supporting our next phase of growth as we look to meet the increased demand for our services. The whole process was easy, and everything was followed up at a good speed to ensure we received the right funding for our business needs."

Barry Wilson, Investment Executive at FW Capital, added: *"Josh and Mike spotted a gap in the market and since then have enjoyed fast growth. The NPIF II investment will make a big impact in supporting their growth ambitions further as they look to expand the team and invest in enhancing their services."*

The £660m Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II (NPIF II) covers the entire North of England and provides loans from £25k to £2m and equity investment up to £5m to help a range of small and medium-sized businesses to start up, scale up or stay ahead.



Recycle Fife invests in fleet to power skip hire expansion

Recycle Fife continues to invest in its skip hire operation by adding six brand-new trucks, strengthening its position as the market-leading skip hire provider in Fife, Scotland.

The new fleet includes four MAN skiploader trucks and two MAN hookloader trucks, adding capacity and helping Recycle Fife meet growing demand across the region.

The investment is part of the company's ongoing commitment to providing a reliable, professional and efficient skip hire service for both domestic and commercial customers in Fife. The introduction of newer, more efficient vehicles will also help reduce the company's carbon emissions, supporting Recycle Fife's continued focus on improving the environmental impact of its operations.

Craig Sneddon, Manager at Recycle Fife, said: *"This investment in six new trucks is an important step forward for Recycle Fife and reflects our commitment to providing customers with a reliable, efficient and professional skip hire service.*

"The additional capacity will help us meet growing demand, while the latest equipment brings benefits for both our customers and our drivers. With improved comfort, enhanced safety features and reduced downtime, we're continuing to invest in the future of the business and the service we provide across Fife."



Investment in a modern fleet

Adding six new trucks to the fleet means Recycle Fife can continue to improve its service while reducing potential downtime. New, modern vehicles are more reliable and help ensure skips can be delivered and collected efficiently, keeping customer projects moving.

The new trucks also provide a smart, professional appearance when arriving at customers' homes, businesses and construction sites.

For customers, that means a dependable skip hire service backed by a modern fleet and a local team with extensive experience in waste management and recycling.

The new trucks also benefit our drivers, with improved cab comfort making day-to-day work more comfortable.

Importantly, the vehicles are equipped with remote-control systems, allowing drivers to operate the skip-loading equipment remotely. This provides greater control during loading and unloading and helps improve health and safety by allowing the driver to maintain a safer position away from the immediate operating area.

Demerger marks launch of Richards Recycling

A.R. Richards, a business based in Market Drayton, has demerged its operations, creating a new recycling division under the A.R. Richards Group.

Established in 1980, this family-run business will now operate through two distinct divisions.

Richards Recycling will manage the group's waste management, skip hire, aggregates, and builders' merchant operations, while A.R. Richards will focus on agricultural contracting and plant hire.

Finance Director Sam Richards said the demerger would let the businesses operate more independently. She expressed: *"Operating independently allows us to become more streamlined and agile in our functions, enabling us to respond to changes and grow more effectively."*

Richards Recycling provides waste management services, including collection, recycling, and disposal, with its main operational area covering Shropshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, the Midlands, and Mid-North Wales. The company can also support projects across the UK when suitable.

Their services include waste collection, skip hire, recycling, aggregates, and builders' merchant operations, all aimed at helping businesses manage waste, stay compliant, and control costs.

The company's Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) process various waste streams, including general waste, wood, farm waste, inert waste, and hazardous materials.

Richards Recycling offers skip hire for domestic, trade, and commercial customers, with sizes ranging from four-yard skips to 40-yard roll-on roll-off (RoRo) containers. They provide regular Euro Bin and wheelie bin collections across Shropshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, Wales, and the surrounding areas.

Additionally, the recycling division supplies aggregates across Shropshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, and Mid/North Wales, including crushed rock, sand, gravels, recycled substrates, topsoil, and decorative aggregates for construction, agricultural, and landscaping projects.

The demerger lets Richards Recycling focus on waste, recycling, and associated merchant operations, while the separate A.R. Richards division continues its agricultural contracting and plant hire activities.

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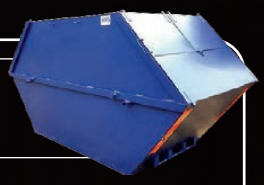
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CLEARAWAY RECYCLING:

Building for the future with the Lindner Jupiter and support from Mach Tech

*Processing around 1,800 tonnes of material every week requires equipment capable of delivering day after day. For **Clearaway Recycling**, investing in a **Lindner Jupiter primary shredder** supplied by **Mach Tech Services** has delivered the capacity, versatility, and reliability needed today, while becoming central to the company's plans for future expansion.*

AT A GLANCE

Mach Tech has been the UK & Ireland distributor for Lindner since 2007.

- **1,800 tonnes per week**
- **50-60 tonnes per hour**
- **Lindner Jupiter primary shredder**
- **RDF production**

Clearaway Recycling predominantly produces Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) for the export market, while also supplying material to Energy from Waste (EfW) facilities within the UK.

Handling approximately 1,800 tonnes of material each week, the business operates in a demanding environment where reliable primary shredding is fundamental to keeping material moving through the wider processing plant.

However, when it came time to invest in a new shredder, Clearaway was entering relatively unfamiliar territory.

"We'd never had a static shredder before," explains Paul Whitehair of Clearaway Recycling ***(pictured)***. *"There were a lot of shredders to choose from, and this is when we started talking to Colin at Mach Tech."*



As the sole UK & Ireland distributor for Lindner shredders, Mach Tech worked with Clearaway to understand its operational demands and identify the right shredding solution.

After assessing the available options, Clearaway selected the Lindner Jupiter.

One characteristic in particular helped the machine stand out for the business: versatility.

"We were quite impressed with the Jupiter," says Paul. *"It was quite versatile for our operation, for what we wanted to do."*

Although price naturally factored into the decision, Clearaway found the Jupiter competitive with the other machines being considered. Ultimately, its ability to meet the requirements of the operation proved decisive.

"The price was about on par with everybody else, so it wasn't too much of a hard decision because of the versatility of the machine. That's why we chose it."

Delivering the throughput

Today, the Lindner Jupiter operates as Clearaway's primary shredder, positioned at the beginning of the waste processing line.

Incoming material consists predominantly of commercial and industrial waste, together with smaller





quantities of construction and demolition waste. The Jupiter performs the initial size reduction before material moves through downstream separation equipment, including ballistic separators, magnets, eddy currents, manual picking, and air separation.

With the performance of the primary shredder influencing everything that follows, throughput is critical.

Clearaway reports that the Jupiter is capable of processing approximately 50 to 60 tonnes per hour, depending on the waste stream entering the machine.

"We've been doing about 50 and 60 tonnes an hour, all hands on the waste stream going in," says Paul.

"We are actually using it as a primary shredder, which is what it was sold as, and it's doing a very good job of that."

For an operation processing around 1,800 tonnes each week, that performance has made the Jupiter an integral part of the facility.

Installing for the future

Clearaway's investment was never simply about meeting its immediate processing requirements.

The company has secured planning permission for a new building as part of its continued expansion. Rather than designing the new facility around the shredder, the company is planning the building around the existing Lindner Jupiter.

"The Lindner was put in place with this in mind," Paul explains. *"The building is being built around the Lindner, part of expansion for the company, making things safer."*

It is perhaps one of the strongest indications of the confidence Clearaway has placed in the machine and the role it is expected to play in the company's future operation.

Installation of the Jupiter was completed in collaboration with First Grade, with Mach Tech working closely alongside the team to integrate the shredder into the facility.

For Paul, the process proved refreshingly straightforward.

"Mach Tech worked very closely with them. Not a problem with it going up. Everything went according to plan, which in the waste industry isn't the norm."

Support beyond installation

For any high-volume waste processor, machine performance is only part of the equation.

When equipment sits at the beginning of a processing line, access to replacement parts, experienced engineers, and responsive technical support can be equally important.

As the sole UK & Ireland distributor for Lindner shredders, Mach Tech provides support throughout the working life of the equipment, from initial machine specification and installation through to servicing, maintenance, repairs and parts supply.

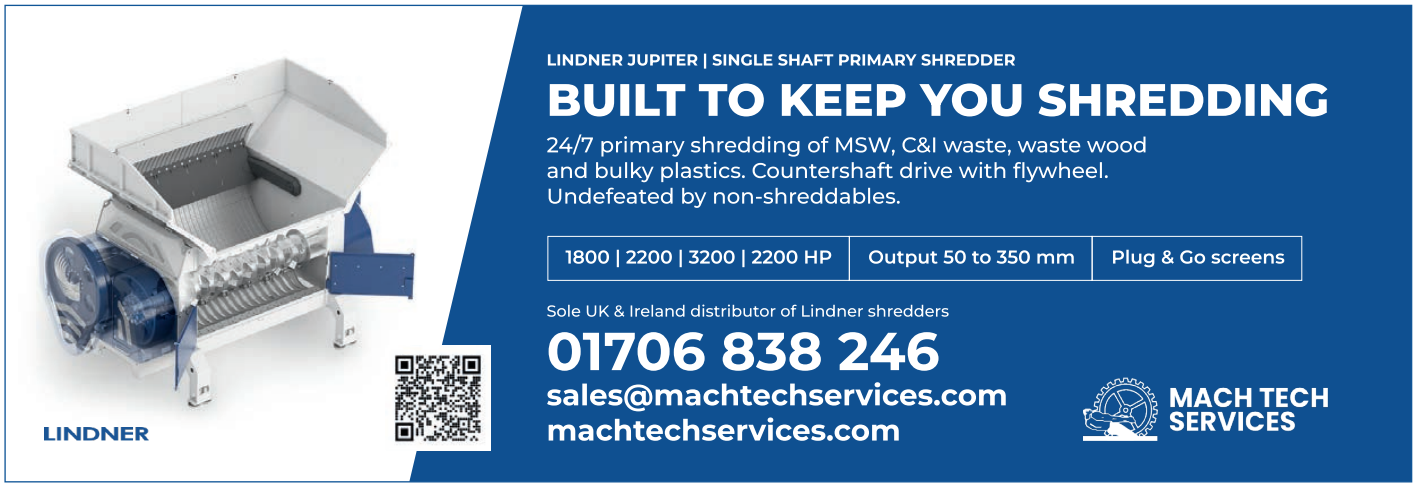
Clearaway has continued working with Mach Tech for parts and aftersales support since the installation.

"General backup from Mach Tech has been very good," says Paul. *"Whenever we needed the parts, they were there. Pretty good turnaround."*

For Clearaway, the relationship looks set to continue.

Asked whether he would work with Mach Tech again on future machinery projects, Paul's response is uncomplicated:

"Yes, I'll use Mach Tech again to install the machine."





Lindner Merak 2800 DT set for UK tour through Mach Tech

In early 2027, waste and recycling operators across the UK will have the opportunity to put the Lindner Merak 2800 DT through its paces as Mach Tech takes the mobile single-shaft shredder on a nationwide demonstration tour.

For operators considering their next shredder investment, specifications and brochures can only tell part of the story. The real test comes when a machine faces the materials it will encounter every day.

That is exactly what Mach Tech intends to demonstrate when the Lindner Merak 2800 DT arrives in the UK in early 2027.

Bringing the demonstration to the Customer

Mach Tech will work with customers and partners to test specific waste streams, discuss individual processing requirements and demonstrate how the Merak could integrate into existing day-to-day operations.

Rather than asking operators to judge performance based purely on technical specifications, the tour provides an opportunity to see how the machine responds to the materials that matter to their businesses.

Whether that is commercial and industrial waste, waste wood, bulky waste, plastics or other challenging materials, the objective is simple: put the Merak to work and see what it can do.

Mobile shredding without a mains connection

One defining characteristic of the Merak 2800 DT is its diesel-hydraulic drive.

Unlike a stationary electric shredder, the machine does not require a fixed mains electricity supply. It can operate independently of the power grid without the need for an additional generator, allowing shredding to be taken directly to where the material needs to be processed.

Mounted on a tracked chassis, the Merak can be repositioned around a yard or between processing areas, combining mobility with Lindner's proven single-shaft shredding technology.

For sites without sufficient electrical infrastructure, temporary processing operations, or businesses that need the flexibility to move their shredder, that independence can be particularly valuable.

One machine, multiple applications

Versatility is central to the Merak concept.

The Merak 2800 DT can be configured with three interchangeable cutting systems, allowing the machine to perform primary, universal or secondary shredding duties.

Depending on the configuration and application, operators can adapt the machine to different materials and required output sizes, providing the flexibility to tackle a broad range of processing requirements.

A quick-change screen system also enables the output size to be adapted for different jobs without lengthy changeovers.

The result is a mobile machine designed to cover multiple applications rather than being restricted to one particular waste stream or processing requirement.



Could your site be one of the stops?
Mach Tech is inviting waste management and recycling businesses to register their interest in hosting or attending a Merak 2800 DT demonstration as part of the 2027 UK tour. Speak to the team and register your interest today.

MACH TECH SERVICES
LINDNER

01706 838 246 **sales@machtechservices.com**

For further infomation about the Merak 2800 DT, scan the QR code.

Mach Tech Services is the sole UK & Ireland distributor for Lindner shredders.

The Big BoyT TJ-01 raises the bar for scrap metal recycling

Ecohog, a family-owned recycling equipment manufacturer, has launched its latest machine, the BigBoyT TJ-01. A Heavy-Duty Modular Scrap Trommel.

This robust trommel is purpose-built to enhance scrap metal processing and produce a clean oversize fraction. As sustainability remains at the forefront of the industry, the BigBoy-T is the ideal solution for scrap yards, metal recycling plants, and waste management companies.

Engineered for operational efficiency, robust durability, and modular versatility, the BigBoyT TJ-01 delivers throughput with less downtime and wear parts in scrap metal processing.

The BigBoy-T TJ-01 can process up to 120 tonnes per hour, offering high throughput and productivity for large-scale recycling operations.

Notably, its easy-to-maintain modular components minimise operational interruptions, saving time and money for recycling businesses. The robust trommel drum, combined with state-of-the-art screening and separation technology, ensures your operation stays ahead of the competition.

Available in a range of modular configurations, the BigBoyT TJ-01 allows customers to tailor the system to their operational needs. As a result, it supports optimal performance and cleaner material output for diverse scrap metal recycling applications.

This Scrap Cleaning Line (SCL) incorporates the BigBoyT TJ-01 with the Ecohog EST-8220S Trommel to further separate the less bulky midsize scrap fraction fines, producing three clean products.

The BigBoyT TJ-01 offers many configurations for even cleaner results. It can improve steel-quality output by adding key magnetic machines to the process, such as the THM ECS-2000 Eddy current separator for further separation of ferrous and non-ferrous materials.



With integrated magnetic separation modules, the BigBoyT TJ-01 supports steel purity by recovering non-ferrous materials, helping deliver cleaner scrap and maximise value for scrap yards and metal recyclers.

The BigBoy-T TJ-01 is thoughtfully named after Turlough, aka 'TJ', the Ecohog founders' son and a dedicated member of the Ecohog team who sadly passed away earlier this year.

Scan the QR code to watch a video of the BigBoy-T TJ-01 in action on site.

Blackpool Skip Hire upgrades to the HAAS TYRON 2000 XL QC

Blackpool Skip Hire has continued to invest in its waste processing capabilities by upgrading to the HAAS TYRON 2000 XL Quick Change (QC). Processing construction, demolition (C&D), wood and green waste, the HAAS TYRON 2000 XL QC slow-speed shredder has provided Blackpool Skip Hire with a robust and versatile solution for shredding mixed waste streams, helping to prepare materials for further screening and separation via the picking line to recycle, create energy and reduce landfill.

Josh Teale, Director, Blackpool Skip Hire, said: *"We previously relied on two shredders to process our C&D, wood waste and green material, but upgrading to the HAAS TYRON 2000 XL QC has allowed us to bring our shredding operation together into one high-performance machine. With the power and versatility to handle higher volumes of material, the TYRON has been a very worthwhile investment for our business."*



With two independently driven shredding shafts, the HAAS TYRON 2000 XL QC gives operators greater flexibility when processing different materials, making it well suited to varied waste streams. The speed, direction of rotation and reverse times can be adjusted directly via the control system, allowing the machine to be adapted to suit the material being processed. In Blackpool Skip Hire's case, the materials they process include C&D, wood and green waste.

The latest generation of TYRON shredders features HAAS TYRON 2000 XL QC system, designed to make maintenance and configuration changes quicker and more straightforward. The modular system allows the complete shredding unit to be replaced in just 45 minutes, with shaft changes taking around 90 minutes, reducing the time the machine needs to be out of operation. This helps maximise uptime while making servicing and future changes easier to manage.

Ben McQuaid, Director, CRJ, added: *"After more than 20 years of doing business with Mick Teale, it's a real pleasure to see that relationship continue into the next generation with Jake & Josh. We're delighted to have supplied the brothers and the team at Blackpool Skip Hire with their new HAAS TYRON 2000 XL QC. Built on trust, loyalty and many years of doing business together, relationships like this are what make our industry special."*

From initial specification to installation, the HAAS TYRON 2000 XL QC was tailored to meet site requirements and improve daily operations. CRJ demonstrated the machine on-site, showcasing its impressive performance and build quality.

Now fully integrated into Blackpool Skip Hire's operations, it delivers the necessary processing capacity and efficiency for their busy waste management needs. CRJ will continue to provide ongoing support and servicing.

Blackpool Skip Hire is part of Teale Materials, a strategic waste and recycling group based in Lancashire.



SMS service engineers and vehicles supporting waste and recycling operators across the UK

MORE THAN JUST SHREDDERS

Keeping waste and recycling operations running smoothly

In the waste and recycling industry, equipment reliability is critical. Whether it's a shredder processing confidential documents, a baler handling recyclable materials, a conveyor feeding a production line, or a refuse collection vehicle completing its daily rounds, unexpected breakdowns can quickly result in lost productivity, increased costs, and operational disruption.



Refurbished SDX static shredder demonstrating SMS's mechanical and engineering capabilities or shredder remanufacture

At **Shredding Machinery Solutions (SMS)**, we understand that keeping equipment operational requires more than simply replacing failed components. It demands practical engineering expertise, preventative maintenance, reliable spare parts availability, and the ability to repair or refurbish equipment when required.

Although SMS built its reputation in manufacturing, servicing, and remanufacturing mobile shredding equipment, our engineering capabilities extend across a much broader range of machinery used throughout the waste, recycling, and secure destruction industries.

MORE THAN JUST SHREDDERS

Modern waste processing equipment relies on mechanical, hydraulic, and electrical systems, and a failure in any of these can halt operations.

SMS offers a full range of engineering services, including mechanical repairs, hydraulic maintenance, electrical fault diagnosis, PLC support, fabrication, welding, and structural repairs.

Our engineers can maintain, repair, and refurbish equipment such as shredders, balers, compactors, conveyors, hoppers, feed systems, and bin lifts. Our services include knife and cutter replacement, bearing and drive repairs, hydraulic system maintenance, electrical troubleshooting, structural fabrication, and LOLER examinations when needed.

Importantly, SMS services extend beyond our own equipment; we also support machinery from various manufacturers, offering an independent engineering resource for existing equipment.

COMPREHENSIVE SPARE PARTS SUPPORT

Access to the right replacement parts is crucial for minimising equipment downtime.

SMS has a wide supplier network that offers spare parts for shredders, balers, compactors, conveyors, bin lifts, and refuse collection vehicles from various manufacturers. We can help customers source everything from shredder knives and motors to hydraulic pumps and electrical components.

Parts can be supplied independently for in-house maintenance or installed by SMS engineers as part of a repair or servicing programme.



Collage of shredder knives, cutters and machined spare parts.

KEEPING REFUSE COLLECTION VEHICLES ON THE ROAD

Refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) operate in demanding environments, with components like bin lifts and hydraulic systems facing heavy use. Even minor failures can disrupt service and strain the fleet.

SMS offers specialised RCV body and equipment services, including bin lift repairs, hydraulic diagnostics, compaction repairs, and body refurbishment.

With a wide range of replacement parts, SMS supports fleet operators with maintenance and full engineering

MECHANICAL, HYDRAULIC AND ELECTRICAL REPAIRS | FABRICATION AND WELDING | SPARE PARTS FOR MULTIPLE MANUFACTURERS | SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS | RCV AND BIN LIFT MAINTENANCE | LOLER EXAMINATIONS AND REFURBISHMENT



An engineer carrying out maintenance work on a blue refuse collection vehicle bin lift

services, enhancing vehicle availability and extending fleet life.

PLANNED MAINTENANCE AND SERVICE CONTRACTS

Preventative maintenance is key to minimising unexpected breakdowns and controlling costs.

Regular inspections can identify developing problems before they result in major failures. Worn bearings, damaged hydraulic hoses, deteriorating electrical components or excessive wear in moving parts can often be addressed during scheduled maintenance rather than following an expensive breakdown.

SMS provides planned servicing, preventative maintenance, breakdown repairs, and customised service contracts for individual machines, multiple pieces of equipment, or entire fleets.

Their maintenance programmes are tailored to fit your operating needs, equipment usage, and current maintenance practices.

By combining scheduled servicing with technical expertise and easy access to parts, SMS helps customers reduce downtime, improve reliability, and manage maintenance budgets more effectively.

REPAIR, REFURBISH OR REPLACE?

As new machinery and specialist vehicles become increasingly expensive, replacement isn't always the most cost-effective or environmentally friendly solution. Targeted repairs and refurbishments can significantly extend the lifespan of many machines and vehicle bodies.

SMS specialises in refurbishing and remanufacturing shredders and specialist vehicle bodies, leveraging expertise in mechanical engineering, welding, hydraulic repairs, and electrical upgrades.

This approach applies to other waste processing equipment as well, like balers and compactors. Refurbishing existing equipment minimises waste and maximises asset value.

ONE ENGINEERING PARTNER, MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS

With experienced service engineers operating across the UK, supported by engineering facilities, parts stock and an extensive supplier network, SMS offers a practical, multi-disciplinary approach to equipment maintenance and repair.

For operators seeking to simplify maintenance arrangements, reduce downtime and extend equipment life, having access to a single engineering partner covering multiple disciplines can offer significant advantages.

Get in touch with the team today!

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AFTER - REMANUFACTURED BY SMS





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SCAN ME!

"Steelmakers are under increasing pressure to maximise recycled-steel utilisation without compromising product quality or furnace performance. The Copper Reduction Circuit addresses both sides of that equation. It enables processors to produce a cleaner, more consistent shred product. The result is greater flexibility in the furnace charge and more value recovered from every tonne of scrap."



Eriez Copper Reduction Circuit raises recovery rates for steelmakers

Eriez® has developed the Copper Reduction Circuit for steel mills, an integrated system that helps scrap processors produce premium low-copper shred.

Built around the Eriez Shred1® Ballistic Separator and a Magnetic Scrap Drum operating as a polishing stage, the Copper Reduction Circuit upgrades conventional shredded scrap into a premium ferrous product containing less than 0.20% copper. The system also recovers additional clean ferrous material from streams directed to picking stations, increasing the amount of recycled low-copper steel available for use in the melt mix.

Copper contamination remains a significant challenge for steelmakers using recycled scrap. Conventional shredded scrap can contain more than 0.33% copper. Because copper cannot readily be removed once it enters the melt, mills often must limit the proportion of shredded scrap in the furnace charge and rely more heavily on higher-cost metallics, including pig iron, direct reduced iron (DRI), and prime scrap.

"Steelmakers are under increasing pressure to maximise recycled-steel utilisation without compromising product quality or furnace performance," said Mike Shattuck, Business Development Manager-Recycling, Eriez. *"The Copper Reduction Circuit addresses both sides of that equation. It enables processors to produce a cleaner, more consistent shred product. The result is greater flexibility in the furnace charge and more value recovered from every tonne of scrap."*

At the core of the system is the Shred1 Ballistic Separator, which uses magnetic attraction and ballistic forces to separate processed shred into two material streams. The premium No. 1 fraction, typically representing approximately 75% of incoming material, consists of cleaner, more liberated ferrous shred containing less than 0.20% copper. The remaining No. 2 fraction is comprised of a higher concentration of copper-bearing and composite material.

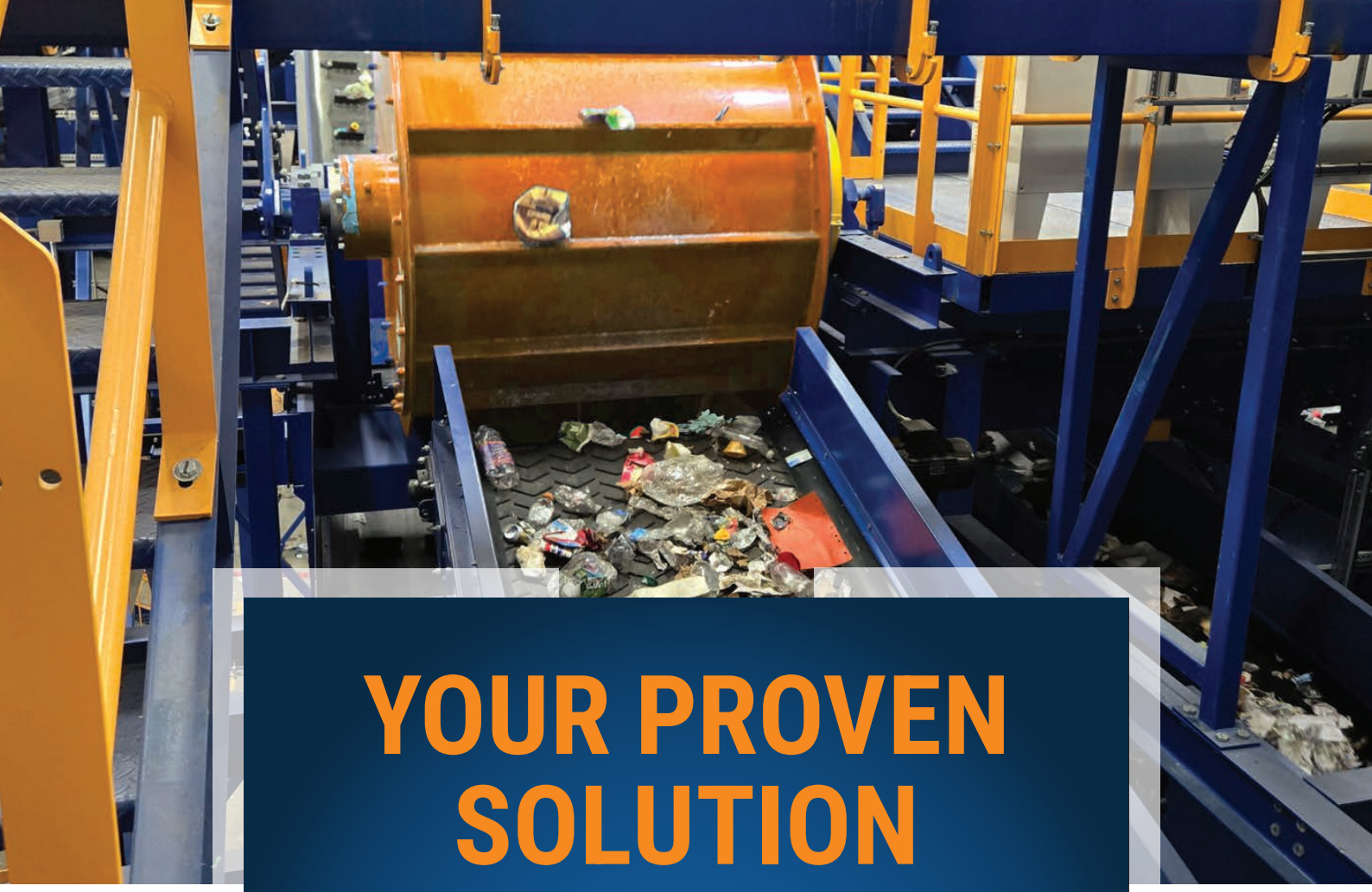
The No. 2 fraction passes under a magnetic scrap drum operating as a polishing stage. The polishing drum removes 1 to 3% of nonferrous material and debris, which increases the yield for each melt. Ferrous material recovered at the polishing drum reports to the picking station, where copper-bearing materials are picked from the shred. This shred is then diverted to the low-copper fraction as a low-copper shred (No. 1).

According to Eriez process data, only approximately 15% of the original infeed ultimately reached the picking station in one documented configuration. The circuit has demonstrated low-copper shred performance in the 0.16% to 0.20% copper range and, when Shred1 is paired with Magnetic Scrap Drum technology, has significantly helped to increase melt yield.

Growing interest in both Shred1 technology and the Copper Reduction Circuit reflects the steel industry's focus on increasing recycled-steel utilisation while maintaining scrap quality and furnace performance.

Established in 1942, Eriez is a global leader in separation technologies. Our commitment to innovation has made us a driving force in several key technology areas, including magnetic separation, flotation, metal detection, X-ray inspection, and material handling equipment.

For more information about Eriez' metals recycling technologies, scan the QR code.



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CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS

Is it the right time to consider a career in metals recycling?

In this article, ***Siân Hinds, Senior Commercial Manager at Enicor,*** *discusses the recycling industry's widening skills gap and explains why the sector needs to challenge perceptions to show how rewarding a career in metals recycling can be.*



An overlooked career option

When it comes to choosing a career, working in metals recycling is unlikely to be the first option that springs to mind, unless of course you already know someone connected to the trade. However, as the industry continues to expand, it is becoming more important than ever that we attract fresh young talent to drive the sector forward.

With a variety of roles, the sector demands and rewards hard graft and passion. The potential to learn, travel, support global environmental goals, build commercial networks, and forge lasting relationships makes it a fulfilling lifelong career for many. But we still need to get that message out into communities, colleges and schools.

The skills young people need

For those considering a career in metals recycling, the future is exciting. Recycled metal is becoming increasingly recognised as an asset that will underpin growth in manufacturing and construction. As a result, the UK metal recycling sector is growing rapidly and becoming increasingly sophisticated and technologically advanced. The accelerating transition to net zero is driving increasing demand for recycled metals, particularly steel, aluminium, copper, and critical minerals.

At Enicor, we have already taken on three young people new to the industry this year. We didn't expect them to have experience, just the right attitude, strong communication skills, bags of enthusiasm, and a sense of entrepreneurship.

While we don't offer a formal apprenticeship scheme, our 'traineeships' are designed to make sure each team member gains experience in all aspects of the business, whether they are working in accounts, the commercial team, or in operations. Deep knowledge of metals, their grades and values, along with an understanding of the regulatory environment in which we operate, is key in this industry. We believe that the best way to learn is through the job.

An industry-wide challenge

The future for metals recycling looks incredibly bright, but there is concern in the industry that progress could easily be hampered by the UK's growing skills gap. The sector faces an ageing workforce, a shortage of engineering capability, increasing technology complexity, and fewer school leavers considering roles in the industry, leading many experts to worry that the industry will face a deficit of talent right when it's needed most.

In fact, more than 80% of UK metals companies cite skills shortages as a top concern. There are several initiatives to help bridge the gap, including the introduction of the Metal Recycling General Operative (MRGO) Level 2 apprenticeship, the British Recycling Association (BMRA) Academy for technical and safety training, and progress on widening access to apprenticeships by leveraging government-funded training grants.

Women in Recycling is a great initiative that has been successful in attracting more women into what has traditionally been seen as a male-dominated industry.

Is a job in the industry the right choice?

If you want to get into the industry, the best place to start is probably by asking to work in your local metals recycling yard





during the academic holidays to get a real feel for what it's like.

The first thing to know is that health and safety is taken extremely seriously. Whether you're working on a temporary or permanent basis, strong health and safety awareness is essential. Beyond that, you'll gain an understanding of the materials that come into the yard and how they are graded, as well as the commercial awareness needed to validate loads.

Alongside finding out what processing machinery is used on the yard (and how to use it), you'll also be given an insight into how the industry is regulated - including knowledge of UK environmental laws, end-of-life vehicle regulations and the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013.

As you go deeper into the industry, you'll find many specialist areas, such as advanced materials and alloy identification, which involve understanding rare earth metals in electronic waste and vehicle parts to ensure they are recovered and their value maximised. Accurate documentation and record-keeping are vital to give end markets confidence that everything that goes back into the market is fully compliant, especially for depollution and DVLA processes.

We are also seeing increasing use of AI and robotics in our shredding and sorting systems, which requires understanding



advanced digital equipment, as well as the mechanical and hydraulic equipment used for heavy work.

The commercial aspects of the roles are diverse, so understanding markets, pricing, and the logistics of getting materials to the right place at the right time is essential. However, they're also a key part of what makes this sector so interesting, and where the right expertise can help build a resilient business in an often fast-changing, dynamic market.

Do what you love!

As a Senior Commercial Manager, I love what I do. Every day is different; you meet such a variety of people. I am proud that we are part of the wider recycling industry, helping protect the planet by recovering valuable metals for reuse and reducing the need to extract ores and the associated impact that has on the environment.

Recycling is becoming much more sophisticated and far less carbon-intensive than extracting metal out of the ground. This is why recycled metals are becoming increasingly important as a real asset to businesses that want to specify lower carbon materials - whether that's in construction, infrastructure or manufacturing. There has never been a better time to work in the industry.

DWT: one month in, what have we learned?

Getting information to Defra was only the first challenge. Now the question is how Digital Waste Tracking (DWT) fits into the rest of the business. By ***Andrew Dyble, Managing Director, Midsoft***

By the time you read this, waste receivers in England and Wales will have been reporting through Digital Waste Tracking for more than a month. The deadline has passed, systems are in place, staff have learned new procedures, and thousands of digital records are now being created every day.

So perhaps it's time to stop asking, *"Are we ready for DWT?"* A more useful question now is: *"Is the way we're doing it actually working?"*

For some businesses, the answer will be yes. A relatively small number of movements and a simple submission process may be all they need. For others, the first few weeks will have exposed something rather different: duplication.

The daily duplication test

A customer has already been recorded. A job has already been booked. Waste information has already been collected. A vehicle and driver may already have been allocated. The load arrives, a weight is recorded, and a ticket produced.

Then somebody has to deal with DWT. If that means sitting down every day and entering information that already exists somewhere else in the business, the submission may be digital. The process isn't.

Don't just look at what your DWT software costs. Look at how much staff time it is consuming. How many minutes are spent finding information and entering it again? How often does somebody have to go back and check a customer, job, registration, waste description or weight? How often does an error need correcting?

Multiply that by the number of movements you process every day, then by every working week of the year. Suddenly, integration starts to mean something rather more tangible than a line on a software feature list.

If somebody has to re-enter information you've already recorded, the submission may be digital. The process isn't.

An app can still be the right answer

None of this means every receiver needs a complete waste-management system. They don't. For a smaller operation, a straightforward application that collects the necessary information and submits it through the API may be entirely appropriate.

The important distinction is between a submission tool and an operational system. A submission tool needs to understand the information required for DWT. An operational system needs to understand your business. And those are two very different jobs.

Waste isn't one process

After more than 20 years developing waste software, one thing we've learned is that there is no standard waste business. Skip hire doesn't work like trade waste. A transfer station doesn't work like a broker. Aggregates bring different requirements again.

Even two skip companies can have completely different ways of pricing, scheduling, exchanging skips, allocating vehicles, weighing loads, producing tickets and invoicing customers.

That's why adding more features to a simple DWT application doesn't necessarily turn it into a waste-management system. Integration isn't about how many boxes the software can tick. It's about how information flows through the operation.

If the customer, job, vehicle, waste details and weight already exist, ideally nobody should have to type them again. Enter the information once and use it wherever it's needed.

The next challenge is already taking shape.

Digital Waste Tracking doesn't stop at the receiving site. Carriers are expected to face their own reporting requirements from October 2027, bringing another stage of the waste journey into the system.

But connecting those stages isn't as straightforward as it might appear.

Consider a skip operator. A customer books an exchange, the system allocates the job to a driver, the collection takes place, and the waste arrives at a receiving site. Along the way, jobs may be rearranged, loads redirected and arrangements changed.

Creating a movement reference is only part of the process. The real challenge is ensuring that information follows the job from collection through to the receiving site, even when arrangements change. This isn't simply a technical challenge. It's an operational one.

England is also preparing to replace the existing waste carrier, broker and dealer registration arrangements with a new permitting framework for waste transporters and controllers.

For smaller operators, that means further changes are coming, and their systems will need to adapt.

The opportunity is to connect information that businesses already hold, rather than introduce another layer of administration.

As more stages of Digital Waste Tracking are introduced, that connection between customer, carrier, broker, and receiver will only become more important.

So perhaps the bigger question for the industry is: are we digitising the waste journey, or simply creating more digital forms?

Don't solve October forever

The system you chose to get through 1st October doesn't necessarily have to be the system you use forever. The first month has given businesses something they didn't have before the deadline: experience. Use it.

Look at where staff are duplicating information. Look at where information is being requested from carriers. Look at what happens at the gate. Look at what was already known when the job was created.

And before adding yet another application to solve the next piece of DWT, ask whether the information could simply flow from the systems that already run the operation.

Because DWT is only just beginning. The businesses that get the most from it won't necessarily be those with the cleverest submission app.

They'll be the ones that stop having to enter the same information over and over again.

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Director – Westbury Environmental Limited
Tracey has worked in the waste industry for over 35 years across all sectors. She now acts as a consultant supporting small - medium site operators providing advice and services in waste regulation including permitting, waste recovery, end of waste and environmental management systems.



BUSINESS CLINIC CONSULTANCY

Final countdown for TCMs as RPS 326 deadline nears

Technical competence and the changes brought about by the new Standard Rules permits have been covered in these pages before. So why is it worth revisiting the subject now?

Because the Environment Agency's Regulatory Position Statement RPS 326 expires on 31st December 2026, and the Agency has made it clear it will not extend it again.

RPS 326 was introduced because, when the Agency consolidated several older Standard Rules permits in December 2024, some operators suddenly found that the technical competence qualification appropriate for their old permit did not fully cover their new one.

The RPS has given affected operators time to obtain the additional WAMITAB qualifications they need. That breathing space is now running out.

SR2022 No.1 – soils, soil substitutes and aggregates

Old SR2008 No.11 and SR2009 No.6 permits were consolidated into SR2022 No.1.

TCMs operating under those old inert treatment permits may have held LROC4 - Inert Physical Treatment. The current CIWM competence route for SR2022 No.1 is LROC2 - Non-Hazardous Treatment to Produce Soil.

That does not necessarily mean starting again from scratch, but it does mean that the qualification held needs checking to establish what additional competence, if any, is required.

SR2022 No.4 – non-hazardous waste recycling

This is likely to be particularly relevant to skip hire and waste transfer operators.

Several old non-hazardous transfer-with-treatment permits were consolidated into SR2022 No.4. Many TCMs may therefore already hold MROC1 - Non-Hazardous Waste Treatment and Transfer, or an equivalent older qualification.

However, SR2022 No.4 also allows the storage of hazardous batteries, WEEE, and asbestos.

If you do not store asbestos, CIWM identifies the current route as MROC1 plus MROC17 - Storage and Transfer of Hazardous Waste.

If you do store asbestos, the requirement increases to MROC1 plus HROC4a - Managing Transfer of Hazardous Waste.

This distinction is important. Although the permit allows asbestos storage, CIWM specifically distinguishes between sites that actually store asbestos and those that do not.

If you are relying on the non-asbestos route, make sure your waste acceptance procedures and EMS reflect the fact that asbestos is not being accepted.

SR2022 No.5 – non-hazardous waste transfer

A similar issue applies to SR2022 No.5. Operators moving across from older non-hazardous transfer permits may previously have relied on a non-hazardous transfer qualification.

Under the current competence arrangements, a site operating SR2022 No.5 but not storing asbestos requires MROC17 - Storage and Transfer of Hazardous Waste. If asbestos is stored, CIWM identifies HROC4a as the appropriate route.

Again, check what your TCM already holds. Some TCMs, particularly those previously operating permits that already included asbestos storage, may already have the necessary competence.

And what about SR2022 No.6?

RPS 326 also covers household waste recycling centres whose old SR2008 No.12 or SR2015 No.19 permits were consolidated into SR2022 No.6.

This may be less relevant to the typical skip hire operator, but it should not be forgotten. The current CIWM qualification for SR2022 No.6 includes the hazardous HWRC pathway, MROC14a, so affected HWRC operators should also check whether additional competence is required.

What should you do now?

Check whether your permit was one of those consolidated into SR2022 No.1, No.4, No.5 or No.6.

Get a copy of the qualification your TCM actually holds - don't just assume that having "a WAMITAB" is enough.

For No.4 and No.5 sites, establish whether you actually store asbestos, as this changes the competence route.

Check your existing qualification against the current CIWM/WAMITAB risk-tier requirements and speak to your qualification centre about any additional units required.

Most importantly, act now. RPS 326 requires the additional qualification to be gained by 31st December 2026, not simply booked by then.

RPS 326 has given operators additional time, but it has not removed the underlying legal requirement to demonstrate technical competence.

Your permit would have changed automatically.

Your TCM qualification did not necessarily change with it.

And after 31st December 2026, the Environment Agency says this particular breathing space is over.

If you need help checking your permit or technical competence requirements, get in touch. We are happy to help.
Tel: 01952 879705.

WESTBURY ENVIRONMENTAL

Please visit our website for further information: www.westburyenv.co.uk or drop us a line at info@westburyenv.co.uk

Recycler urges action to keep weight-loss jabs of kerbside collections

After a significant increase in sharps found in recycling collections, Sherbourne Recycling is urging householders to follow best-practice recycling guidelines when disposing of potentially hazardous items.

The Coventry-based Materials Recycling Facility (MRF), which processes more than 175,000 tonnes of co-mingled household waste every year, operates the most advanced plant of its kind anywhere in the world. Embracing the latest developments in handling robotics and pioneering AI control, the facility sets the global standards in output quality and process efficiency.

Despite working closely with local authorities to improve resident education, operatives report a steady rise in hazardous items found on the line. Alongside needles, syringes and insulin pens, used 'weight-loss jabs' are quickly becoming one of the site's most prevalent contaminants.

Sherbourne quickly points out the terrifying potential consequences of sharps, citing a recent incident in Doncaster. In this instance, a refuse worker was taken to hospital after a used weight-loss needle pierced two pairs of gloves that he was wearing. Following four vaccinations, several booster shots and multiple blood tests, he is now campaigning to highlight the risks of improper waste disposal.

Layla Shannon, Business Development Director at Sherbourne Recycling, commented: *"Over the past few months, we've experienced a notable rise in the number of sharps discovered at our MRF. While it may be easy for residents to throw used items into the nearest bin, we're keen to get the message out there that it puts our crews, operatives, and sorting staff in real danger.*

"Carrying the risk of life-altering blood-borne diseases, needle injuries require urgent medical assessments and ongoing investigations. Impacting team members that are simply doing their best to separate your waste, improper disposal is simply irresponsible."

Alongside injuries and the risk of infection, Shannon suggests that sharps have a wider business impact too. She continues: *"The safety of our staff is obviously the first and most important reason to clamp down, but it's impossible to escape the commercial impact of improper sharps disposal too. Alongside disrupting operations, damaging equipment and contaminating otherwise*



recyclable loads, we also have to pay to dispose of items that can't be recycled."

So, what should residents do with their needles, syringes, insulin pens and weight-loss jabs? If recycling bins are out of bounds, should they be thrown in landfill instead? Shannon concludes: *"All sharps should be disposed of in a rigid, puncture-resistant BS-compliant container and taken to a participating community pharmacy or your local GP surgery. Some residents may even be able to arrange a clinical waste collection through their local council.*

"Safe and careful disposal of hazardous items is easy, but better education is needed as more residents than ever consume these products in the home."

Advice on best practice sharps disposal can be found at ***https://www.gov.uk/request-clinical-waste-collection***

New £20m AD facility set to transform food waste in Dorset

A £20 million anaerobic digestion (AD) facility has opened in Dorset, capable of processing over 50,000 tonnes of food waste annually.



Picture credit: Eco Sustainable Solutions

Operated by Eco Sustainable Solutions, it produces biomethane that is injected into the local gas network.

Planning permission was granted over a decade ago, with construction starting in 2024 and commissioning happening earlier this year. The facility is staffed by six full-time operators and is located within Eco's 40-acre Eco Park at Parley.

Simon Boyd, Vice-President of the Dorset Chamber, inaugurated the facility and expressed amazement at its ability to convert food waste into energy that can heat around 7,000 homes. He emphasised the importance of diversifying energy sources to reduce costs for businesses.

Justin Dampney, Managing Director of Eco Sustainable Solutions, highlighted the facility's role in response to the Government's recycling reforms.

It can recycle more than 1,000 tonnes of food waste weekly, generating renewable biomethane for the gas network and nutrient-rich biofertiliser for agriculture. He assured that safety and design were prioritised to ensure the facility's long-term service to the region.

Eco operates sites at Parley, Piddlehinton and Weymouth, processing green waste, wood, road sweepings and food waste for customers including Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council and Dorset Council.



Preston with the ReBoot bin, fellow students and Associate Principal, Catherine Bartholomew

Leicester student driving change in e-waste recycling

A local 17-year-old student from Beauchamp City Sixth Form in Leicester has launched a new e-waste campaign, thanks to his passion for the environment, with help from Lionheart Educational Trust and technology provider XMA. The ReBoot scheme aims to save around a tonne of electrical waste from the city's landfill sites and prevent c.10.65 tonnes of CO^2 from entering the atmosphere over the next five years.

Preston's passionate plea and powerful presentation to his Sixth Form leaders highlighted the real problems caused by sending electrical items to landfill, including soil pollution as chemicals leach into the earth and bin lorry fires caused by damaged lithium batteries, putting people's lives in danger. However, Preston also emphasised another major issue: the difficulty people face accessing a recycling centre when they lack transport or cannot drive, an issue affecting many young people and students.

Through the ReBoot scheme, the intention is to install 17 recycling points across the Trust, at Lionheart schools and colleges, allowing students and members of the public to safely recycle their old electrical items at easily accessible collection points.

The ReBoot scheme has been backed by Lionheart Educational Trust and its technology supplier, XMA. The first ReBoot bin was recently installed at Beauchamp City Sixth Form and has already received a number of items, with the remaining 16 schools in the Trust planning to have their bins installed over the next couple of years.

Speaking about his initiative, Preston said: *"I wanted to show that electronic waste isn't just a distant problem. It's something we all contribute to. I also wanted to show that it is a problem we can all help reduce and solve through small, practical actions. I'm proud that the ReBoot scheme will help make recycling electronic waste more accessible. I'll be encouraging all my fellow students to make good use of the ReBoot scheme."*

Inspired by Preston's passion, Associate Principal Catherine Bartholomew at Beauchamp City Sixth Form worked with Lionheart Educational Trust's operations team to explore practical solutions. Through their established partnership with technology provider XMA, an organisation experienced in managing electronic waste, they identified an opportunity to bring recycling closer to the school community.

Electronic waste contains a mix of valuable materials, hazardous substances and reusable components. XMA's recycling process aims to recover core metals, plastics, glass, and functioning parts, ensuring they don't cause soil, water, or air pollution through improper disposal. Valuable materials such as gold, silver, copper, palladium, and tin are recovered during processing. These precious metals are refined and reused in new electronics, directly supporting a circular economy.

XMA will manage collections and provide regular updates on recycling outcomes. This includes tracking carbon reduction, with each electronic device recycled through the scheme expected to save 32kg CO^2e.

Bartholomew added: *"Preston's presentation was both thought-provoking and inspiring. It's a great example of student voice leading to real change. By working together with our partners, we've been able to turn an idea into a practical initiative that benefits both our school community and the environment."*

Luke Bennison, Head of Circular Economy at XMA, said: *"We are delighted to support the ReBoot initiative as part of our commitment to sustainability and our circular economy approach. By making e-waste recycling more accessible, we can help reduce environmental impact while giving valuable materials a second life."*

ReBoot represents a powerful collaboration between students, educators, and industry, showing how local action can support global environmental responsibility. It is also a valuable lesson in environmental awareness for the sixth form's students.

£565k fund boosts e-recycling for 2 million households

Material Focus confirms 15 new pilots have been awarded funding from the 2026 Electricals Recycling Fund, with £565,031 of funding committed to projects that will make it easier for almost 2 million UK households to recycle their small electricals.

A total of 1,963,118 households will benefit from more accessible small electrical recycling options, as Material Focus research shows 880 million electrical items are held onto in UK homes - equivalent to 30 items per household.

Delivered by councils and community organisations across the UK, the pilots will create new on-street bring banks, community collection points in high-footfall locations such as libraries and leisure centres, and refurbished existing bring banks.

Items such as hairdryers, tablets and laptops, old kettles and cables will be accepted, helping to remove some of the practical barriers that can prevent unwanted electricals from being recycled. Many of these unwanted electricals contain valuable materials that can be recovered through recycling, while others can be repaired, reused, or rehomed.

Since the launch of the Electricals Recycling Fund, over £3.5 million has been granted to 92 pilots across the UK.



Previous funding rounds have delivered more than 900 new collection points, making it easier for over 13.5 million people to recycle. These pilots have enabled more than 1,000 tonnes of small electricals to be recycled and helped 33,000 items find new homes.

Scott Butler, Executive Director of Material Focus, said: *"We're delighted to be supporting another 15 pilots through the Electricals Recycling Fund in 2026. These projects show the importance of making recycling easy, visible and convenient for people in their local communities."*

"There are still hundreds of millions of unwanted electricals sitting unused in UK homes. Making it easier for people to recycle or reuse these items is an important part of tackling the UK's growing electrical waste challenge."

Material Focus is the UK's leading independent non-profit tackling e-waste, and the organisation behind the award-winning Recycle Your Electricals campaign.

For more information, visit: ***www.materialfocus.org.uk***



Pulpex opens first commercial fibre bottle factory in Glasgow

Pulpex, a UK packaging technology company, opened its first commercial manufacturing facility near Glasgow last month, capable of producing up to 40 million fibre bottles annually and creating approximately 39 skilled jobs.

This plant marks the transition of fibre bottle technology into industrial production and is the first step towards a goal of one billion units per year. Supported by the UK's National Wealth Fund and the Scottish National Investment Bank, the development showcases a viable, lower-carbon alternative to glass and plastic packaging at a commercial scale.

Sandy Westwater, Chief Executive Officer, Pulpex, said: *"The opening of our Glasgow facility marks the moment Pulpex moves from proving the technology to proving the industrial model. We have developed and industrialised a breakthrough packaging technology in the UK, and Glasgow is where partners and brand owners can now see it running.*

"Every Manufacture Under Licence conversation we have from today is a conversation about a working plant rather than a prototype enabling the start of a material impact on our environment by reducing CO^2 emissions and critically, removing plastic waste on land and in our oceans."

Pulpex's patented fibre bottle platform is made from sustainably sourced wood pulp and is free of hidden plastic, so it can be recycled through standard household paper and card streams. This compatibility helps brands meet regulatory requirements, such as the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation and the UK's Extended Producer Responsibility.

The bottles are engineered for compatibility with existing filling infrastructure, facilitating adoption without costly changes.

Pulpex sources non-specialist commodity pulp globally, eliminating barriers to new packaging formats. They also provide licensed manufacturers with a complete production supply chain, delivering a renewable, recyclable option that maintains product performance and brand identity.

The Glasgow site already has commercial demand, with over 90% of its capacity sold for the current financial year. Notable early adopters include Purely Scottish Natural Mineral Water, which will introduce the UK's first paper bottle for natural mineral water, and smol, a household cleaning brand, which will use Pulpex bottles in the liquid laundry sector. Further launches with major global brands are expected soon.

The Glasgow site serves as the main facility for Pulpex's growth into international markets. It shows how licensed manufacturing can be used worldwide while keeping UK leadership in technology and intellectual property. The



plan to reach one billion units relies on a licensing strategy. This means transferring the Glasgow model to established packaging companies instead of requiring brand owners to be manufacturers.

This facility is a significant step not only for Pulpex but also for the entire sustainable packaging industry. By combining large-scale production, proven technology, and compatibility with existing filling lines, Pulpex has created a strong base for fibre bottles. This development aims to move fibre bottles from niche products to everyday packaging, supported by recyclability, clear environmental benefits, and a global licensing approach.

With Glasgow now operational, Pulpex enters a new phase of growth - defined not by proving what is possible, but by delivering it at scale.

More bin hubs expected in Glasgow from next April

A new report suggests that more bin hubs, aimed at improving recycling rates throughout Glasgow, are expected to be installed starting next April.

The City Council is enhancing its recycling services to make waste management easier for residents, address safety issues faced by collection crews, reduce missed bin collections, and help keep back courts tidy.

So far, the City has set up 700 hubs in pilot areas. These purpose-built bin hubs typically serve an average of 40 flats and are located at the front of properties.

A recent Freedom of Information (FOI) request revealed that over £2.5 million has been spent on supplying and delivering Glasgow's bin hubs since the programme began.

At a recent scrutiny committee meeting, Councillor Stephen Curran asked for more information about the rollout of the bin hubs and whether certain areas of the city were under particular pressure.

A response has been provided and is expected to be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

The response states: *"The bin hub project has implemented nearly 700 bin hubs across four pilot areas and throughout the entire south-west region of the city. The programme has paused while we evaluate the first full phase of the rollout. The next phase is expected to begin in April 2027.*

"The upcoming phases will concentrate on areas facing existing challenges related to health, safety, and accessibility, particularly within predominantly tenement buildings in various locations across the city. These issues will be assessed and prioritised before the next stage of the bin hub rollout."

£10m funding secured to recycle demolition waste into cement

Reclinker has secured £10 million in Series A funding to enhance its cement recycling process for commercial production.

This innovative method transforms demolition waste into cement without the need for kilns, quarried limestone, or fossil fuels, utilising existing electric arc furnaces used for recycling steel.

Developed at the University of Cambridge, Reclinker's technique recovers cement paste from construction debris and converts it back into clinker, the key ingredient in cement.

This process operates in electric arc furnaces, allowing for the simultaneous production of both new cement and recycled steel.

The method is expected to cut emissions by 50% immediately, with further reductions as the technology scales, at a cost comparable to traditional cement production because it eliminates the need for kilns and fossil-fuel heat.

During trials at 7 Steel UK's site, Reclinker produced thousands of tonnes of material and made its first commercial sales.



Pictured L-R: Stephen Price, Clean Growth Fund; George Irven, AP Ventures; Bill Yost, Reclinker; Gareth Mayhead, Development Bank of Wales; Poppy Brewer, Reclinker; Ben Woodhouse, Clean Growth Fund; Pippa Horton, Reclinker; Alex Garavel, AP Ventures; Cyrille Dunant, Reclinker.

The new funding will help scale production in Cardiff and expand to other electric arc furnace sites in Europe and the US.

Bill Yost, CEO of Reclinker, expressed excitement about the funding, noting that it signals strong UK investor support for decarbonization and the growth of green industries in Wales.

The funding round was co-led by Clean Growth Fund and AP Ventures, with contributions from Development Bank of Wales and existing investors like Zero Carbon Capital and Cambridge Enterprise.

Stephen Price from Clean Growth Fund highlighted the challenges of decarbonising the cement sector but praised Reclinker's approach as a prime example of how leveraging existing infrastructure can lead to significant emissions reductions.

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DR ANNA WILLETTS

Anna is an environmental criminal lawyer, specialising in defence work in the waste and recycling industry. She is dual-qualified, having completed a PhD in geochemistry and worked as an environmental consultant for five years before qualifying as a lawyer.

Anna represents waste and recycling businesses and directors who are prosecuted by the regulators for environmental and waste offences.

BUSINESS CLINIC LEGAL

Waste Bill demands more from large companies

Following the House of Lords Inquiry into Waste Crime last September, Baroness Sheehan, who chaired that Committee, has introduced a Private Members' Bill (4th June 2026).

This is a Bill to require large companies to appoint a named director responsible for compliance with statutory waste duty of care obligations; to make such companies financially responsible for the clean-up and clearance of waste they have generated or controlled where that waste is mismanaged, and the duty of care has not been discharged; and for connected purposes.

Baroness Sheehan invited me, along with other industry colleagues from the ESA and CIWM, to a meeting with Peers to provide information ahead of the second reading, due on 20th November.

The proposed bill provides that:

- *Every large company ("a company") must appoint one named director responsible for the company's compliance with the waste duty of care. The named director must take reasonable steps to ensure that the company has effective systems and controls in place to ensure compliance with the waste duty of care.*
- *Reasonable steps include the use of risk assessments and due diligence processes when contracting services.*
- *The named director must (a) ensure that the company has effective reporting arrangements in respect of the systems and controls set out in the Bill, and (b) report annually to the board of the company on the extent to which the company has met the waste duty of care. The company must keep a written record of the appointment of the named director and their responsibilities.*
- *A company must notify the regulator of the identity of its named director.*
- *A company must notify the regulator of any material breach of the waste duty of care and any reasonable suspicion of criminal activity in their supply chain which relates to waste.*

Any measures proposed to tackle waste crime are to be applauded. The House of Lords Committee's efforts, in my view, have really pushed the waste crime Agenda into the public eye and are starting to force the government and regulators to take action, see Andy Burnham's recent 'waste crime crackdown'.

I find some of that slightly misleading, however *('steeper fines' - there is already potential for unlimited fines under the Environmental Sentencing Guidelines - not sure how you get steeper than that.....)* but again to be applauded for the focus and thought. Previous Prime Ministers seem to have had little interest in this area, so it is pleasing that Mr Burnham appears to be taking action.

Whether this Bill becomes law remains to be seen, so colleagues and lawyers alike will be watching with interest.

Anna is 'Past President' of the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management and Co-Convenor of UKELA's Waste Working Party. E: ***anna.willetts@gunnercooke.com***

Axil strengthens operations with WasteBot technology

Axil, a leader in waste management, has partnered with WasteBot, a company specialising in automation for the waste sector.

This partnership aims to improve how Axil operates. Together, they combined Axil's waste management expertise with WasteBot's automation technology. Axil has automated part of its invoice processing, ensuring that every automated transaction is checked and validated to a high standard. This process is faster and more efficient than manual processing.

As a result, Axil's teams now have more time to focus on what matters most to customers: providing site support, reducing costs and carbon emissions, and finding better routes for materials.

Richard Delooze, Managing Director of WasteBot, said: *"We're delighted to have partnered with Axil, an organisation that shares our commitment to innovation and continuous improvement within the waste management sector.*

"Our work with Axil shows what automation can deliver when it is applied properly. Accuracy at volume, and consistency at every step.

"We're looking forward to helping more organisations realise the potential of automation and AI technologies."

Ed Morgan-Smith, Senior Advisor at Axil, added: *"Working with WasteBot has allowed us to apply proven automation to high-volume processes where precision and consistency matter most.*

"The time this saves is significant, and it means our teams can focus on continuing to innovate for our customers and on reducing their cost and carbon."

WasteBot's software robots mimic and combine human interactions across digital systems. They process routine business tasks quickly, accurately, and consistently, achieving a scale that would be impossible without them. The WasteBot team has 35 years of combined experience in waste management and automation technology. They have created a library of specific automation tools tailored to how waste businesses operate.

This project shows what waste management companies can achieve by adopting digital transformation and highlights the benefits of intelligent automation.

www.axil-is.com
www.wastebot.ai



Smiley Monroe launches podcast to spark industry conversations

Smiley Monroe has officially launched *Beyond the Belt*, its very own podcast. The show goes behind the product to the people, problems and practical fixes that keep quarries, mines, recycling and waste plants, and construction projects moving.

Headquartered in Northern Ireland, Smiley Monroe supplies customised conveyor belts, conveyor components, and cut rubber and plastic parts for materials handling across mobile equipment, mining, quarrying, recycling and waste management.

Why a podcast, and why now

Beyond the Belt will share valuable, reliable insights into the industry, some legendary stories and Smiley Monroe's take on wider business topics shaping how we work, including AI, culture and values.

Rather than a sales pitch, each episode is a relaxed, practical conversation with the people behind the business, from experts who solve customers' problems every day to the teams who shape our culture and operations.

"Our customers deal with our people every day, but they don't often get to know them on a deeper level. Beyond the Belt is a chilled conversation about belts and life at Smiley Monroe, as well as an opportunity for our customers to send us their questions or pick up some hints and tips," says Lucas Perales, Digital Marketing Executive and Executive Producer, Smiley Monroe.

What listeners will take away

Smiley Monroe wants every listener to leave each episode with something they can use, or a clearer picture of who they're working with:

- **Company Values always at work, even when they're not noticed.** The first episode focuses solely on Smiley Monroe's Hi5 Values, how we nurture a strong culture, and the impact this has on our colleagues and our customers' experience
- **Succeeding goes beyond belts on the field.** Alongside industry topics, the show will explore wider business themes such as AI in the workplace, sustainability strategies, and career stories. All focusing on how Smiley Monroe is always aiming for a thriving future.
- **A real sense of the people behind the final product.** Listeners will hear directly from experts who support them and understand the thinking behind a recommendation.

Listen and follow

Episode One: The Hi5 Effect - How our Culture Reaches Our Customers is now available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and YouTube. Search *Beyond the Belt* or scan the **QR code** to visit the podcast page.

Listeners can send questions and topic ideas to the team using the form on the *Beyond the Belt Page*, or by sending an email to **hello@smileymonroe.com**

Children driving recycling habits at home, says research

Children are increasingly influencing how their families recycle, with more than one in five parents saying their children have corrected them for recycling incorrectly.

Research commissioned by Biffa and conducted by Censuswide, surveying 3,000 UK adults and 1,000 children aged five to 16, found that environmental education is having an impact beyond the classroom.

About 86% of adults said their children's environmental education influenced their household's recycling habits, while 88% of families said their child's education helped them reduce food waste.

More than one in five parents (21%) said their children had corrected them for recycling incorrectly, while 58% of children said they knew more about recycling than their parents.

Almost eight in 10 children (78%) also said they could teach adults how to look after the environment.

Georgia Gibson, Biffa's Social Value Manager, commented: *"Never underestimate the pester power of children. What starts in the classroom can quickly make its way into the family home, with children encouraging parents to recycle more, waste less food and make greener choices."*

She added that the findings showed children were becoming *"passionate advocates"* for sustainability and could help turn *"good intentions into everyday habits"*.

Biffa said its findings support evidence that environmental education can influence behaviour beyond the classroom. The company runs its Wasteaters education and community engagement programme, which aims to educate young people about waste, recycling and sustainability.

It also includes the character Whitney the Wasteater and two children's storybooks, *Whitney the Wasteater* and *The Wrong Bite*, which aim to teach children about reducing waste and recycling correctly.

Gibson added: *"By giving young people the knowledge and confidence to speak up, we're helping them become catalysts for positive environmental change at home and in their communities."*

BUSINESS CLINIC CONSULTANCY

Permitting: A constructive conversation with the EA

JESSICA MORGAN-SMITH
Partner at MPG, based in Bingley, Bradford and Skipton, North Yorkshire



*Jessica has a wide experience of planning, permitting, operations, compliance, management systems and enforcement support. If you have any queries about planning, permitting or compliance, please contact **jessica@mpgyorks.co.uk** or **07936359662**.*

MPG

As a permitting and planning consultancy in the recycling sector, we have had many experiences and have heard plenty of other companies' challenges with environmental permitting. I was asked to chair the October *Compli Forum* meeting about permitting, to bring those experiences together and have a constructive conversation about what could work better.

We were really pleased to welcome Alex Chown, Programme Manager for Accelerated Permitting Transformation at the Environment Agency (EA). Alex's participation gave members a chance to explain what they are experiencing and hear about the work being explored to improve the process.

A recurring concern was uncertainty. Members described applications taking years to determine, with no knowledge of where their application stands in terms of timescales.

Such delays create commercial difficulties. Waste availability, markets and operating arrangements can change while an application sits in a queue. Businesses must commit resources without knowing when they will receive a decision or whether their original proposals will still meet their needs.

Communication was another strong theme. Members questioned the practicality of short deadlines for information requests after lengthy periods without progress. Clearer communication around validation, reasonable extensions and opportunities to resolve missing information were all highlighted.

Experiences of enhanced pre-application advice were mixed. Some members had received useful responses, demonstrating the value of informed early engagement. Others reported long waits and caveated advice that left important questions unresolved. The shared request was for practical guidance that helps applicants prepare better submissions.

Alex explained that digital application tracking is part of the EA's longer-term vision. There is no confirmed delivery date yet, but being able to see an application's progress would be a welcome development.

We also discussed how reporting could better explain the time spent at different stages, including validation, determination and waiting for information from applicants. Alex agreed to investigate whether existing systems could provide that breakdown.

We had a positive discussion about where the Forum can contribute to the wording and use of standard rules. The majority of the people on the call work with these requirements every day, so they are well placed to identify wording that could be clearer or conditions that create practical difficulties. Alex welcomed specific examples and suggestions, which will help us turn experience into useful feedback.

The main next step is to establish a dedicated permitting group, which I will be supporting Tina Jackson with at *Compli*. We want to bring together examples, identify shared priorities and put forward practical suggestions through a coordinated discussion with the EA.

We touched on other possibilities, including pre-operational conditions and better co-ordination between planning and deposit for recovery permitting. These are ideas for further consideration, rather than agreed changes, but they were useful conversations to start.

I came away feeling positive about simply being heard by the EA! There is plenty to do, but having an open discussion with people who understand the process from different sides is a good starting point. Thank you to Alex and everyone who contributed. I look forward to the next steps.



STOPPING FIRE WHERE IT STARTS:
How one recycling operator protects its plants

Ask any waste operator what keeps them awake at night, and fire will be near the top of the list. Blazequel tracks publicly reported fires at UK waste and recycling sites, and the picture is getting worse: more than 150 between January and September 2026, more than double the 71 recorded over the same period in 2025.

This risk affects the whole industry. For one multi-site recycling operator, the aim was clear: protection had to fit the way its plants actually work.

Start with the process, not the specification

Blazequel reviewed the process plan with the operator's team, from tipping hall to shredders, conveyors, and storage bunkers, asking at every stage: where is a fire most likely to start, and where would it do the most damage?

Layer one: catch it on the line

Flame and ember detection watches the highest-risk points: shredder infeeds and outfeeds and the conveyors that follow. When a detector triggers, localised deluge discharges straight onto the machine or belt, so a hot spot is dealt with where it starts rather than carried down the line into the building. Further deluge zones protect the under-process bunkers, where a fire could develop unseen below the process plant, out of sight of the cannons.

Layer two: eyes on the tipping floor, day and night

Fire Rover monitors the tipping floor and storage areas at both sites with thermal imaging and flame detection, manned by trained operators 24/7. Fires in these environments are unpredictable, and every alarm triggers a verified response, with water cannons aimed precisely at the source, day or night.









Lessons for any waste site

- Understand your process first. Know your hazards and how you want to deal with them before you look at fire protection suppliers or equipment.
- Prioritise your risks. Score each area on site by probability and impact, and protect the highest risks first.
- Tackle fire at source. A hot spot stopped on the conveyor never reaches the bunker.
- Plan for when nobody is watching. Monitored detection protects the site out of hours.

Many technologies, one system

Effective fire protection in a recycling environment combines several specialist technologies: flame and ember detection, deluge, monitored cannons, fire alarm and plant shutdown. Blazequel's approach brings them together into one system that works as a whole, with a single central point of command. It is built for the operating environment and designed for maintenance, so servicing has minimal impact on day-to-day operations.

In practice

The aim is simple: deal with hot spots at source, before they have a chance to develop. The best fire protection is the kind nobody outside the site ever hears about.

Not sure where your own site stands? Blazequel's Fire Risk Workshops help operators identify and prioritise their fire risks before choosing equipment. To book a place, email ***sales@blazequel.com***





Could your plastic film packaging serve a purpose? We won't know until recycling laws change

ROBERT HARGREAVES
Lecturer in Law, York St John University



From the clear covering on your microwave meal to the flimsy bread bag lying on the kitchen counter, plastic film is notoriously tricky to recycle. But what if those annoying bits of plastic waste could be put to better use?

This hard-to-recycle plastic could be transformed, potentially into a source of fuel, but the UK's current recycling rules make it difficult for companies to innovate and experiment.

The main legal barrier is the definition of recycling itself. Under the rules that UK waste law is built on, recycling cannot include turning waste into anything that will be used as fuel. A separate category for the plastics that are the hardest to recycle, recognising fuel made from waste that would otherwise be burned, would give companies more scope to experiment with new ways to process it.

As a legal researcher, I study how the law decides what counts as recycling. My work raises a simple question. If the rules allowed it, could dealing with one problem, plastic waste, also help ease another: our dependence on imported fuel?

In Darlington, north-east England, a chemical recycling company has received planning permission for what it describes as the UK's first large-scale plant for recycling plastic film. The company, Endolys, plans to process up to 120,000 tonnes a year of waste plastic film, such as bread bags, wrappers and pouches, and turn it into so-called pyrolysis oil, subject to the Environment Agency granting an environmental permit.

Pyrolysis involves heating plastic to a very high temperature without air. Without oxygen, the plastic cannot burn, so it breaks down into pyrolysis oil, along with some gas and solid residue. It is a little like making charcoal, where wood is heated without being allowed to catch fire.

Recycling waste plastic film this way has had mixed results worldwide. In Texas, US, ExxonMobil now processes more than 70,000 tonnes of plastic waste a year this way. But in the Netherlands, a Rotterdam pyrolysis plant with a deal to supply Shell never reached its planned capacity and has now closed for good. In Japan, a plant using a related process with very hot, pressurised water opened in 2025, and can process 20,000 tonnes of waste plastic a year.

What happens to the oil? Plastic doesn't go in one end and come out as diesel. Pyrolysis oil is closer to crude oil. It must be cleaned and refined before it can become fuel, or used to make new plastics. The new facility at Darlington expects to produce around 80,000 tonnes of pyrolysis oil a year.

There is a catch for energy security.

Endolys has agreed to sell all of that oil to a global trader for European refineries. A plant only strengthens the UK's own supply if the oil stays in the UK.

At the moment, most of this kind of plastic is burned in incinerators. Burning plastic can produce dioxins, toxic chemicals linked to cancer, although modern incinerators filter out most of them and must meet strict limits.

Because pyrolysis works without air, fewer of these chemicals should form. An Italian study comparing the two found the health risks from pyrolysis were low. For people living near an incinerator for many years, it put the cancer risk close to one extra case in every million people, the level the researchers treated as acceptable and a common benchmark in health risk assessments.

A German study found that turning plastic into oil, rather than burning it, could cut greenhouse gas emissions from waste management by more than half, and by up to 94% as Germany's electricity becomes cleaner.

Pyrolysis plants often burn some of their own gas to keep running, and that part is regulated much like an incinerator. Inks, food residue, and chlorine from some plastics can end up in the oil and need to be removed. When the oil is finally burned as fuel, its pollution and carbon are released then. And in Darlington, some residents have petitioned against the plant over health fears.



Plastic film is one of the hardest materials to recycle

Rules matter

UK waste policy tries to keep plastic in use as plastic, recycled into new bottles, trays and packaging. Turning plastic into fuel generally doesn't count as recycling.

That makes sense for plastic that can be recycled. But plastic film is one of the hardest materials to deal with. Councils in England were due to start collecting it from every home by March 2027, but the Government has pushed that back to 2030, partly because there aren't yet enough places to recycle it. Meanwhile, much of it is burned to generate a little electricity.

For those genuinely leftover plastics, I believe that the line between recycling and fuel deserves a second look. At the moment, the rules do little to encourage plants like Darlington to sell their oil in the UK, so the energy security benefit goes elsewhere. Rules that rewarded keeping this oil at home could change that.

Plastic waste will never replace imported oil. On its own, Darlington's 80,000 tonnes of oil a year would match only about 0.1% of the 61 million tonnes of oil products the UK used in 2025. That's roughly half a day's worth. But Darlington is one plant.

England's rubbish still contains around 4.2 million tonnes of plastic a year. If half of that were turned into oil at Darlington's rate and kept in the UK, it could meet a little over 2% of the country's oil needs. With the right rules, a small, steady supply from bread bags and food wrappers in our bins could help the UK be a little less exposed to future fuel shocks.

This article first appeared at www.theconversation.com

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BUSINESS CLINIC ENVIRONMENTAL

Goodbye to recycling

The Environment Agency published a long-expected consultation on *A Resource Framework for Aggregate from Inert Waste* on 16th October 2026, which closes for comments on 8th January 2027. The proposal is to replace the existing WRAP Quality Protocol with the new framework document. After an initial read, many colleagues and I have significant concerns. To obtain the full document, search "aggregate protocol consultation".

Waste types

• The waste types that can be used to produce aggregates remain mostly the same, which is disappointing as I was hoping for EWC 19 12 12 to be added to include recovered bricks, concrete, etc. from mechanical treatment.

• The addition of 19 12 12 is essential as the definition of 19 12 09 in the new document states *"naturally occurring minerals only"*. The allowance for uncontaminated concrete, bricks, tile, etc. previously included meant that feedstock from mechanical treatment could be processed under this code. Not anymore.

• The U1 exemption allows 19 12 12 aggregates to be deposited on land whilst still being described as waste. It is bizarre that the same aggregates cannot be processed under the new framework given the change in the definition of 19 12 09.

• How will aggregate recycling and wash plants be able to use this framework? There isn't a word in the consultation to assist!

• In summary, the waste types are too restrictive, which does nothing to provide certainty for the industry.

• We had hoped for clarity on the above issues to resolve ongoing disputes with officers, but it provides none. It will allow officers to be even more restrictive when inspecting aggregate recycling operations.

• The document still uses inert waste as a term but removes the definition from the old document. The use of the word inert is a throwback that has no place in anything other than landfill legislation.

• The waste types include 17 03 02 *"Bituminous mixtures from the repair and refurbishment of the asphalt layers of roads and other paved areas only"*. Not inert.

• Changing 17 09 04 (mixed C&D), with a broader definition, would help.

Contaminants

The 1% allowance for other materials remains for testing in accordance with BS EN-933-11, which permits up to 1% by mass of cohesive materials (e.g., clay and soil), metals, wood, plastic, rubber, gypsum, and plaster. The document is confusing, as it earlier states that *"Incidental quantities (an occasional piece and not present throughout the waste) of physical contaminants (such as peat, silts, wood, plastics, rubber, metal) may be present with the input material but must be removed during the processing of the waste....."* This has been through a working group allegedly and should be better written.

I could go on, but the waste types remain the biggest problem for me because they limit what can reasonably be processed. The change to 19 12 09 removes the ability to include waste from transfer stations. When companies are investing millions in processing technology, they need certainty. Is the only answer to self-certify your products?

In summary, the document contains very small changes which have a huge impact, and it does nothing to address the issues we have been raising for several years. I wish I was missing something, but sadly I am not. Please submit your response before the deadline, as this consultation will harm the industry in its current state.

If you have any questions about this article contact Marco on ***01606 558833*** *or e-mail him at* ***marco@oaktree-environmental.co.uk***

GOT A QUESTION **ASK THE EXPERTS**

£3.5m boost for Scottish firm pioneering new type of plastic recycling

ReVentas, a West Lothian start-up pioneering a new type of plastic recycling, has been awarded £3.5m in grant funding from Scottish Enterprise to support the development of its solvent-based recycling technology over the next three years.

The funding, awarded as part of a £9m project, will help ReVentas further develop its proprietary recycling technology, with a particular focus on difficult to recycle plastics such as films found in food packaging. These materials remain one of the biggest challenges in plastic recycling today and will become an increasing priority for councils from 2028 onwards as requirements to collect and process films expands across the UK.

ReVentas' patented dissolution recycling technology uses a chemical solvent to rapidly dissolve waste plastics, filter out contaminants including colour and odour, and produce a natural, virgin-like polymer that can be used directly in high-value applications such as packaging, automotive, and consumer products. The technology operates at low temperatures and pressures, reducing both process cost and carbon footprint, providing a sustainable route to recycling plastics at scale.

CEO and Founder of ReVentas, Tom Rose, said: *"Plastics are essential to every part of our lives, but we have not yet delivered workable solutions to deal with them at the end of life. ReVentas is providing a simple, scalable solution that can ensure the waste plastic we produce today is directly used in the products we buy tomorrow.*

"By continuing to develop our technology in Scotland, ReVentas can impactfully contribute to Scotland's important net zero and circular economy goals."



Lighthouse Charity seeks vital funding to help workers in need

For 70 years, the Lighthouse Charity has delivered life-changing, life-saving support to the construction community, but it now faces one of its toughest years as demand for its services reaches record levels.

As we approach the busiest and most challenging period of the year, the charity is launching an urgent appeal to raise £200,000 to ensure it can continue meeting increased demand for its services.

So far this year, the number of families reaching out for financial, emotional and physical wellbeing support has increased by a staggering 51%. Food deliveries are up 65%, and the charity has funded over 7,000 counselling sessions, providing immediate support to those struggling.

Resources to meet this unprecedented demand are under pressure. The construction industry is facing pressure from a tough economy and unpredictable external factors that affect companies and individuals alike. The charity estimates it needs an additional £200,000 to maintain its services.

Sarah Bolton, CEO of the Lighthouse Charity, said: *"The demand for all areas of support continues to grow. Our 24/7 helpline and 1:1 online chat service provides a beacon of hope for those with nowhere else to turn, and so far, we have met this unprecedented demand.*

"Every day, our team hears firsthand about the incredible pressures people face: workers unable to cover even basic necessities and travel costs, and people trying to cope with caring for sick children and relatives.

"Our workforce is battling against relentless cost increases in materials, housing, fuel, food, and energy costs, all whilst working long hours, often away from home and in challenging environments."

In the first seven months of this year, the Lighthouse Charity supported over 6,000 families and delivered over 8,000 meals.

"These food shops aren't just for people unable to work through illness or injury." Sarah added: *"We're receiving calls from people who are in full-time work but still can't afford to feed their family, as well as paying for increased fuel, housing and energy costs.*

"We're also having to step in and fill the gap that's being left by statutory rights and provisions to help people get through the week; our workforce can't absorb the additional costs, and they need immediate help.

"It's a perfect storm, and we need to act now. We need the support of the industry to ensure that we can continue to deliver our vital services.

"To achieve that, we need to raise £200,000 by Christmas, and we're urging our industry leaders to join together in a unified force to support our community. This is an urgent appeal from the heart for donations that will help us deliver a life-changing and life-saving difference to someone today."



Sarah Bolton, CEO of the Lighthouse Charity

Individuals and organisations can donate today via the dedicated Winter Appeal webpage by scanning the QR code below. The page also details how donors' money is spent and the impact it makes on someone in need.

If you or anyone you know is struggling, reach out for 24/7 free and confidential support. 24/7 Helplines: **0345 605 1956, (UK) 1800 939 122 (ROI)**

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JOHN CRAWFORD

John trained at Saltcoats Burgh in the late 60s. After a decade he moved to PD Beatwaste Ltd/ Wimpey Waste Management Ltd. He then joined the Civil Engineering Dept at Strathclyde University before posts at Renfrew, Hamilton, Inverness and East Ayrshire Councils.

A Fellow of CIWM, John served on their Scottish Centre Council from 1988-2009. He is a Fellow of the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland and was their President between 1991-92.

Coping with authority!

A few years ago we carried a story of someone being convicted for slapping an Environment Officer. Having been both Regulator and regulated in over four decades, I've some sympathy for any individual trying to get the job done in difficult circumstances, only to be confronted by an official quoting some licence condition that may have been inadvertently breached. It's also difficult when it seems the Regulator has little experience of how a waste treatment or disposal facility actually operates.

I sat my first HGV test in 1972 after convincing the Boss I could road-test our trucks and adjudicate drivers' complaints because our mechanic wasn't very good. I turned up at the Test Centre in our newest Commer RCV and immediately mucked up the formal reversing part, so I told the Examiner it was a waste of time continuing. He blanked me and insisted we carry on for the best part of two hours, after which he announced I'd *'failed to meet the required standard'* (no surprise there!)

On the next test, things were going quite well until he (the same Examiner) told me to *'turn left'* and I missed a 'no entry' sign. So I'd failed again and was quite rude to him. The Boss's ultimatum that this was my last chance saw me pitted once more with the same Examiner, and when I passed this time, I tried to apologise for my previous behaviour, but he just blanked me again!

I'm trying to explain that, being on the receiving end of regulation, it's often easy to take comments from officialdom personally (although I admit I worked alongside one of two regulators who seemed to enjoy putting operators through the mill), but most are just doing their job. As a Regulator, I was only ever threatened with violence once, and that was because I intervened to stop a colleague being thumped (off the record I'd had a bit of sympathy for the bloke who wanted to smack him, given my colleague's approach).

So how does a good Regulator get the message across? It helps if you can explain why you're asking for changes (saying *'because it's in the regulations'* isn't helpful) and being a bit sympathetic to practical situations (e.g. when the winds are at gale force, I don't think it's fair to insist a landfill operator has somebody clearing wind-blown litter from the perimeter fences, or complaining when things are held up at a MRF because a vehicle has broken down on the delivery side).

If the police were called to our local town football matches when our younger supporters antagonised the visiting supporters to provoke a punch-up, the streetwise cops would say nothing, stand beside the biggest loudmouths, and the chanting would stop. But any cops who stood back and lectured the hooligans received a load of abuse. They then tried to arrest the ringleaders, and a melee broke out. It's all in the approach!

LOOKING AHEAD - FUTURE FEATURES

DECEMBER 2026: ISSUE 251
Wash plant solutions.
C&D waste / aggregates

JANUARY 2027: ISSUE 252
Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs). Sorting & separation solutions

FEBRUARY 2027: ISSUE 253
Industry vehicles: Skip hookloaders, RCVs, electric etc.

MARCH 2027: ISSUE 254
Software systems for skip hire & waste management.
Digital Waste Tracking (DWT)

MAY 2027: ISSUE 255
Compactors & balers.
Paper & cardboard recycling

JUNE 2027: ISSUE 256
Recycling machinery & equipment

JULY 2027: ISSUE 257
Shredders. Energy from Waste (EfW) - renewable energy sources

AUGUST 2027: ISSUE 258
Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs). Sorting & separation solutions

SEPTEMBER 2027: ISSUE 259
RWM preview.
Software systems for skip hire & waste management.
Digital Waste Tracking (DWT)

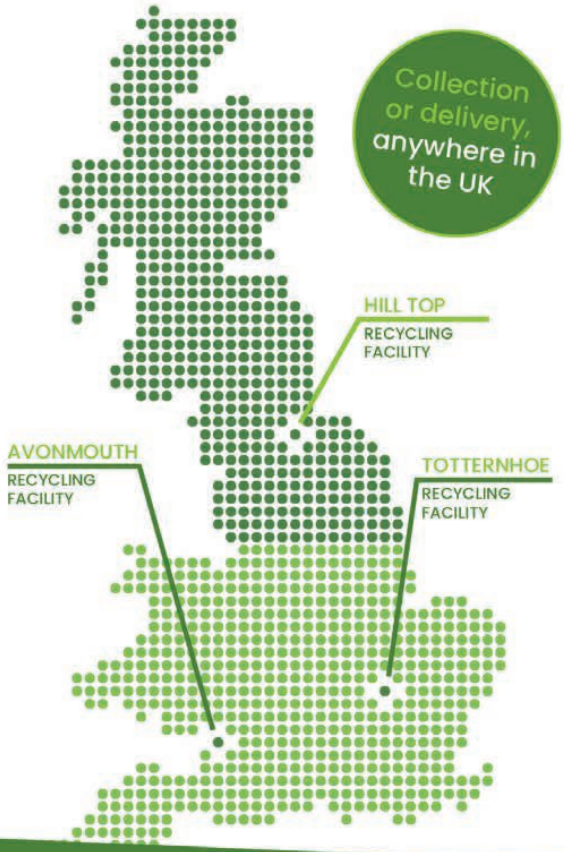
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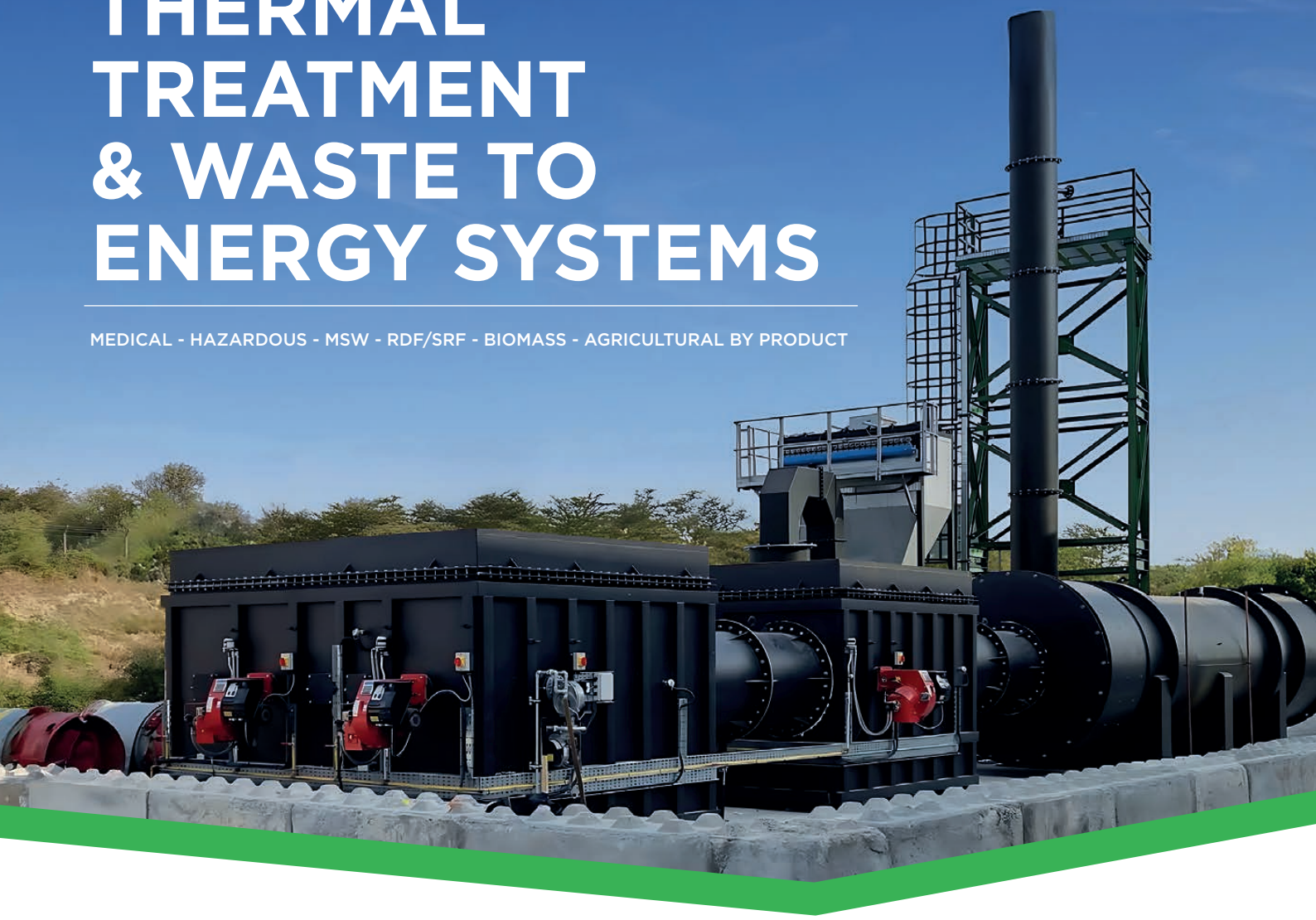
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