

# Household Waste Recycling Centre Booking System



## Supporting information for LGC Awards - Digital Impact Category

Kent County Council operates a network of 19 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) across the county for the use of Kent's 1.6 million residents to bring their household waste for recycling and final disposal.

The Kent network typically receives 3.5m visits a year and manages approximately 145,000 tonnes of domestic waste, at a cost of nearly £10m, which is paid for in full by council tax.



# Benefits of the real-time online booking system for Kent's HWRCs

## Increased recycling rates

Monthly recycling rates for 2021/22 have increased to just under 70%, compared with 65% in 2019/20.



There is now a steadier throughput of visits, allowing staff more time to interact with and help customers, rather than managing traffic queues. This leads to reduced contamination, improved recycling levels and greater material segregation.

## Fewer car journeys to HWRCs but with more waste

Data has found that the average load of waste taken to HWRCs per vehicle has increased since the booking system has been employed. Prior to the booking system, on average each vehicle would bring 44kg of waste to



the HWRC. This has increased to around 60kg per vehicle.

This means that people are coming to the HWRCs less often (which is evident from booking uptake data) but with more waste each visit. This results in fewer car journeys which provides wider environmental benefit.

Customers also avoid wasted car journeys as they are guaranteed to be able to access the HWRCs.

## Less queuing, including on public highways

There has also been a huge reduction in traffic queueing at the busiest HWRCs, particularly at the centres where there have been complaints from Kent Police, bus operators, local residents and customers queuing to use the service. This improves both road safety and local journey times. The managed approach to accessing the sites has also resulted in a reduction in engine idling.

The real-time system allows customers to visit HWRCs without unnecessary delays. Demand is now better managed and the full daily operating hours are better utilised.

## Reduced contamination of waste

HWRC operating contractors report that through greater customer assistance and interaction, as a result of the booking system, they are more able to ensure customers dispose of or recycle their waste in the appropriate area. This leads to reduced contamination, improved recycling levels and greater material segregation.





### Fewer disruptions for maintenance

Maintenance of the HWRCs can now be planned in line with customer demand, rather than disrupting the service at times when customers are accessing the centres.



### Improved communication with customers

Communication with customers has been improved through the use of the online booking system. We can now inform them directly of any potential service issues or emergency closures, avoiding unnecessary journeys. It is also much easier to interact with them through online surveys.



### Financial savings

The contracted operators will be able to reduce operational overhead costs by £150k per annum as the demand at the sites is better managed. These savings can be wholly attributed to the booking system and the resulting changes in the way the HWRCs are operated.



# Customer feedback

**As part of the consultation with local residents, people were asked how they felt about using a booking system in future.**

"I absolutely love the booking system, I find it a much easier process in terms of visiting the depot – no long queues and everyone feels much calmer and it is a more relaxed visit. I know when I go it is going to be managed well and the staff at the Faversham depot are exceptional in terms of service and friendliness."

"It would be good to be able to register my details so that I don't have to re-enter them every time I make a booking. The booking system has been a huge positive. I used to dread arriving at the centre to find a big queue. Now I can plan with confidence and it all works well. Thank you, well done and please keep the system!!!"

"I am severely visually impaired and use a screen reader software to access websites. I was able to complete the booking process without any difficulties."

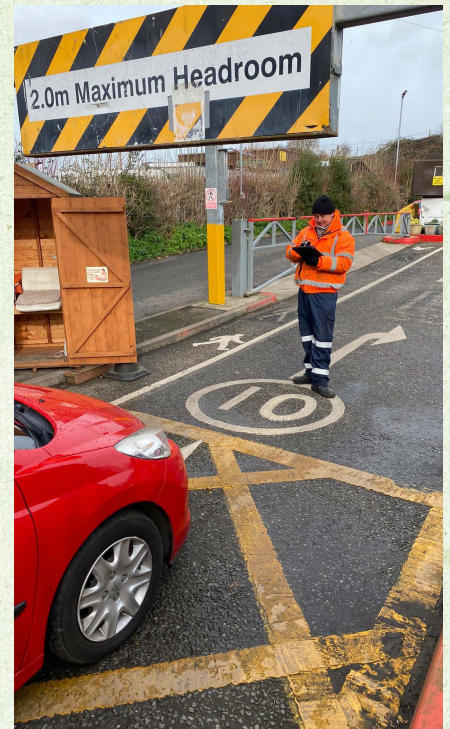
"The booking system as at present is excellent and allows ease of controlled access to the recycling centre. The system ensures minimum waiting time and a definite slot at the centre. The staff control everything very well, and there is no time wasted, in addition the staff at Tovil Recycling Centre are very helpful, thank you."

There was a significant difference in the views of those who have and have not used the booking system.

More than 5,000 people (52%) who had used the booking system were positive about using it in future. Of those who hadn't used the system, just 96 respondents (10%) felt positively about the future.

One customer told us how their opinion changed once they had used the system:

"I visited the Maidstone HWRC yesterday afternoon. I had expressed reservations in the consultation about changing to bookings for the future. However, now that I've visited using the system I have become a complete convert. My journey to "the tip" has never been so predictable or speedy. It has to have been the very shortest visit I've made, even with a full car load of hedge cuttings. Staff were free to be even more helpful than usual. To cap it all, there was no queue of cars in Burial Ground Lane. Thanks, and if you are able to add my comments about being converted by the experience to the consultation that would be great."

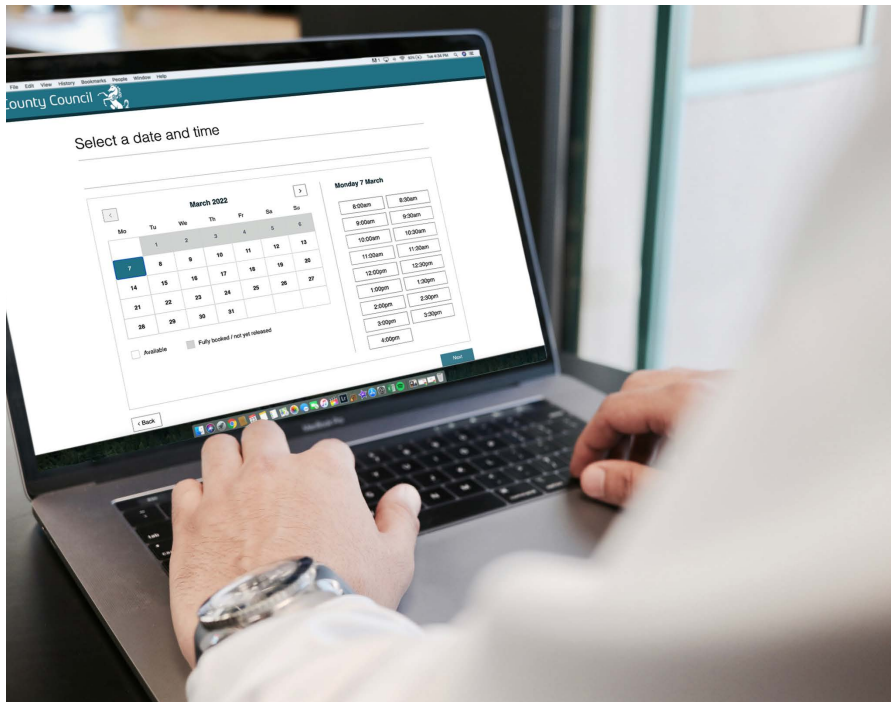


## Contractor feedback

KCC asked two site contractors for feedback, which was overwhelmingly positive. They feel the reduced queues provide significant benefit to customers and operation of the sites, as well as easing congestion which was often previously experienced outside sites. It is also easier for service vehicles to access sites instead of queuing and blocking roads.

Staff feel they are now better able to assist customers with the flow of arrivals. Contractors also mentioned that further development to allow electronic 'checking-in' of customers would be advantageous and this has now been implemented.

# How does the booking system work?



## Opportunities for the future

Although the booking system has already brought numerous benefits, it also presents many opportunities for the future.

The booking system may enable cross-border use of Kent's HWRCs to be explored, as the change in policy could be more easily managed.

We can now review other HWRC operational policies such as trailer size, pedestrian and bicycle access, as the system allows demand and safety to be better managed across the HWRCs.

There is also opportunity to streamline other services and policies such as the integration of the booking system and the vehicle voucher policy with the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system, resulting in quicker access.

Knowing more about our customers helps us adapt to their needs and plan where future sites could be located to meet need.

The improved communication with customers also allows us to promote ways to reduce, re-use and recycle waste, such as promoting local charities that will take particular items.

The booking system is available on KCC's website at [www.kent.gov.uk/hwrcbook](http://www.kent.gov.uk/hwrcbook) where customers can book visits at any of the 18 HWRCs.

For customers who do not have internet access and/or an email address, bookings can be made by calling KCC's Contact Centre. Just 3% of bookings are made by phone.

The booking system has been refined and improved in response to customer feedback and the online process now takes on average less than two minutes to complete and is available to use 24/7. The biggest change that was made in response to customer feedback was the introduction of on the day booking slots, which are now available at all the HWRCs.

KCC uses Booking Lab to provide the following:

- More than 64,000 slots per week
- The ability to book a slot on the day
- The ability to make booking(s) online or via the telephone
- Unlimited bookings (since December 2020)
- Bookings can be made a month in advance
- Bookings can be amended or cancelled, freeing up slots for other customers
- Emailed confirmation and reminder of booking
- Customers can view and choose available slots before entering vehicle details

# Consultation with local residents

KCC held a public consultation between 19 August and 30 September 2021 to ask for views on continuing the booking system for its 18 HWRCs. In total, 10,705 responses were received which was one of the biggest responses to a KCC consultation in history.

On the main question of 'How positive or negative would you feel about using a booking system in the future?' the results were:

4,033 (38%) extremely positive

1,119 (11%) quite positive

654 (6%) neither positive nor negative

15 (0%) don't know

1,448 (14%) quite negative

3,330 (31%) extremely negative

On the question of how easy it was to use the online booking system the results were:

5,149 (54%) extremely easy

2,486 (26%) quite easy

1,298 (13%) neither easy nor difficult

417 (4%) quite difficult

247 (3%) extremely difficult

More detail was explored with those who held negative views of the booking system to see what changes might be made to the system to meet concerns. The principle reason (1,852 respondents, 39%) given by those who had a negative view was that they 'want to go on the same day'.

Over 6,000 respondents (61%) stated that the one improvement they would make to the booking system would be to 'allow on the day bookings'.

Since the consultation, on the day booking has been rolled out to all the HWRCs.

## Promotion of the consultation

A dedicated web page ([www.kent.gov.uk/wasteconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/wasteconsultation)) was created on KCC's engagement website to provide consultation

information and access to the online questionnaire.

The consultation was also promoted through:

- Social media
- Posters and postcards in libraries and gateways
- Postcards delivered in residential areas close to HWRCs
- Banners and A1 signs at each HWRC
- Press release issued to local media
- Emails to those who had registered with KCC's engagement website
- An article in KCC's e-newsletter
- Roadside signage
- Direct communication with key stakeholders

**Booking to visit a Household Waste Recycling Centre**

**Have your say!**  
We are keen to hear your views on the future use of a booking system to access KCC Household Waste Recycling Centres

Consultation open from 19 August to 30 September 2021  
[kent.gov.uk/wasteconsultation](http://kent.gov.uk/wasteconsultation)

Kent County Council  
kent.gov.uk