

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	13
Report No	CP/29/25

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 6 November 2025

**Report Title:** Waste Management Update

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - Place

## 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides information on both the Fort William and Portree Waste Transfer Stations and the Service change project in Lochaber. In addition, the report provides updates on the shredder procurement and the £500k Highland Re-use and Repair Fund.

## 2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **note**:-

- i. the progress that has been made to both Fort William and Portree Waste Transfer Stations and the role the new infrastructure plays in delivering improved services and meeting the Council's statutory obligation;
- ii. the position on the introduction of Industrial Waste Shredders; and
- iii. the timescale for launching the Highland Re-use & Repair Fund

## 3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – The Highland Council secured significant capital investment finance from the Scottish Government's Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF). The £7.1m award is supporting a range of improvements to the Council's waste and recycling performance. The award included the provision of funding for a significant extension to the existing Portree Waste Transfer Station.

The future Waste Strategy will consider the financial implications connected to the introduction of national waste policies.

3.2 **Legal** - The Council's relevant legal obligations for waste collections are from the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Furthermore, proposals within Scotland's Circular Economy and Waste Route Map to 2030 provide additional statutory responsibilities on Local Authorities.

- 3.3 **Risk** - There are a number of ongoing risks connected to National policies that will require to be carefully considered and managed, of particular importance is the Household Waste Recycling Charter and the UK emissions trading scheme.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - The safety of staff undertaking waste management duties is a statutory obligation for local authorities. The effective management of waste is essential to the health and safety of all householders and other service users.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

## **4 Impacts**

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

## **5 Fort William Waste Transfer Station**

- 5.1 Waste management operations commenced at the newly constructed Waste Transfer facility on Monday 22 September 2025 enabling the rollout of new service collections to proceed effectively in Lochaber.
- 5.2 The waste transfer station has been prepared to receive, aggregate and dispatch recyclable materials, and also non-recyclable materials, to contracted processors.
- 5.3 The transfer station has been constructed through The Highland Council's Capital Investment Plan. This infrastructure will support the Scottish Government-provided Recycling Improvement Fund investments in new bins and collection services and will assist the Council to significantly enhance the extent and quality of recyclable materials collected in Lochaber compared to current arrangements.

## **6 Lochaber Service Change**

- 6.1 Lochaber was the last operational area scheduled in the Waste Service Change programme of improvements to receive their new grey non-recyclable waste bins and transition to twin stream recycling.
- 6.2 The bin deliveries were completed on schedule by the middle of October and included:-
- approximately 11,000 new grey non-recyclable waste bins;
  - 4,700 caddies for the new food waste collections for households; and
  - new recycling bins for 700 business customers

- 6.3 The weekly food waste collections started on 22 September for households in Fort William, Coal, Corpach and Banavie who are now able to separate their food waste for recycling. Early tonnage indications show that the number of properties participating in the new service is high.
- 6.4 The new twin stream recycling collections have also begun with paper/card now being collected in blue 240 litre bins and mixed plastic and metal containers being collected in green 240L bins – both of these material streams are now being bulked up at the new Fort William Waste transfer Station.
- 6.5 To help improve the performance and fuel efficiency of the collection vehicles, specialist software has been utilised to map new bin collection routes in Lochaber. Optimising collection routes also helps to meet the demand of the growth of housing developments with the existing operational resources and fleet. The new bin collection routes started on 1 September and were routed to tip non-recyclable waste, twin stream recycling and food waste at the new Waste Transfer Station in Fort William. As a result, approximately 10,000 households and businesses required a change to their bin collection day.
- 6.6 A comprehensive communications and engagement plan was delivered to support householders and business through the transition to the new waste and recycling collection services. The public have responded extremely well to the changes to their waste and recycling collections, and their cooperation has been hugely beneficial through the transition period.

## **7 Portree Waste Transfer Station**

- 7.1 Construction work on the new unit has been concluded. Prior to occupation of the building, a report is being prepared by The Highland Council's consulting engineers for submission to the Planning Authority, as per the planning decision notice, to validate and verify the completion of all site and construction remedial measures to ensure the facility is suitable for use. Once the Planning Authority receives and reviews the report, and provides its written approval, the facility will be operationally occupied.
- 7.2 The building at Portree has been constructed within the grounds of the current operational waste transfer site. Existing personnel will manage operations across the site and through the new facility. The new unit has been prepared specifically to receive, aggregate and dispatch recyclable materials to contracted processors.
- 7.3 The new recycling reception building at Portree supports the Council's, and the nation's, circular economy ambition and facilitates service collection changes financed by the Scottish Government-funded Recycling Improvement Fund. The objectives, ultimately, are to improve both the quantity and quality of recycling within our area.

## **8 Shredder Procurement**

- 8.1 The Council has awarded the contract for the provision of two Shredders, including their maintenance, to Molson Equipment Limited (MEL). Following finalisation of the documents with MEL the first of the Shredders will be delivered during late autumn 2025. It is intended that the first site to operate will be the Seater Waste Transfer Station as transport distances are higher at this site. The second Shredder will then be delivered to the Longman Waste Transfer Station shortly after, following some internal layout changes to accommodate the revised operation and to maximise operational efficiencies.
- 8.2 The procured Shredders will reduce revenue costs and maximise haulage efficiencies associated with bulky waste and waste upholstered domestic seating containing Persistent Organic Pollutants.

## **9 Highland Re-use and Repair Fund – Reduce Waste**

- 9.1 The Community Regeneration Fund team have finalised the application form and guidance for the Highland Reuse and Repair Fund, with a view to launching the fund by November 2025. This coincides with the successful and necessary recruitment of a Project Officer for a one-year secondment to assist in delivering both the Highland Reuse & Repair Fund and the Highland Nature Restoration Fund.
- 9.2 Applicants will be required to meet at least one of the following priority themes:-
- **Community-led Waste Reduction**  
Empowering communities to extend the life of materials through reuse, repair, and upcycling.
  - **Skills for Sustainable Living**  
Supporting workshops and initiatives that teach repair, mending, and creative reuse skills - building local capacity and reducing household costs.
- 9.3 Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, with several decision-making deadlines to be scheduled throughout the year. Applicants will be able to apply for a maximum of £50,000 per project. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of funding in relation to waste reduction will be a key component of the fund. Applicants will be expected to outline how they will measure outcomes such as the volume of materials reused, number of items repaired, reduction in waste, and number of individuals upskilled.

## **10 Future Waste Strategy**

- 10.1 The Waste Management Service has commenced work on detailing a Waste Strategy for the 5-year period, April 2026 to March 2031. The aims of the strategy document will be to maximise reuse and recycling, with a focus on reducing and decarbonising non-recycling waste.

10.2 The Strategy document will also consider and ensure readiness for the introduction of future challenging National Waste Policies. Of particular importance is:-

- Circular Economy strategy and targets;
- Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility;
- Deposit Return Scheme;
- Household Recycling Code of Practice;
- Digital Waste Tracking; and
- Emissions Trading Scheme

10.3 A completed Waste Strategy document will be brought to a future Communities and Place Committee for approval.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 3 October 2025

Author: Alan McKinnie, Strategic Lead - Waste Strategy & Operations

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None