

DMR CONTAMINATION FAQ'S

The following FAQs have been put together to give a bit more information and background on our action against contamination in our blue dry mixed recycling bins.

- [What is the problem with the blue bin collection?](#)
- [What is contamination?](#)
- [How bad is the issue?](#)
- [Why has this occurred?](#)
- [What happens if we don't address the issue?](#)
- [Why will this cost the Council more money?](#)
- [What should I be putting in the blue bin?](#)
- [What are the items I cannot put in the blue bin?](#)
- [How do I get rid of items I thought were recyclable in the blue bin?](#)
- [I can't fit all my waste in my kerbside bins, what should I do?](#)
- [Where can I find information on what happens to the recycling in my blue bins?](#)

What is the problem with the blue bin collection?

Since lockdown last March, the contamination found in blue kerbside recycling bins has steadily risen to its highest ever level. For the month of November, contamination sat at an average of 29%. That's nearly a third of all the material collected in blue bins being the wrong items.

What is contamination?

Contamination is classed as the wrong material in the wrong bin. Contamination can also be spread if wet or soiled materials are placed in a bin alongside dry mixed recycling, for example liquid from a can containing juice can pour out and destroy clean paper or cardboard.

How bad is the issue?

In 2018/19 the contamination rate sat at around 12 to 15%. The average rate of contamination for November this year is significantly higher at 29%. Some weeks in August and November have seen rates peak at 34%, the highest levels recorded by PKC.

Issues with contamination exist across every area of Perth and Kinross in both individual and communal bins.

Why has this occurred?

It is believed that the initial rise in contamination could be accredited to more people being at home working and home-schooling or possibly because our Recycling Centres were closed from mid-March to 4 June.

However, Recycling Centres are fully open and operating normal business hours and children have gone back to school, yet we are still seeing an increase in contamination rate.

What happens if we don't address the issue?

If we continue to send heavily contaminated loads to our reprocessor, they may reject these before starting the sorting process. If a load is rejected, all the material must be disposed of at the expense of the Council. In addition, as stipulated in the contract between the Council and SUEZ (the reprocessor), loss of income to SUEZ due to a rejected load must also be compensated.

The penalties will cost an estimated £70,000 before the end of the year – money which has not been budgeted for, so will be in addition to the £5.5million the Council already pays to dispose of and treat waste and recycling.

It is also important that we acknowledge the environmental consequence of landfilling recyclate. By landfilling or incinerating good recycling, you take away the chance for that material to be made in to something new. Recycling uses significantly less energy than extracting raw materials to make items from scratch and does not deplete the Earth's precious limited resources.

Why will this cost the Council more money?

As a Council, we do not own any sorting infrastructure, therefore we contract this work out. Our existing contractor for the processing/sorting of our blue bin recyclate is SUEZ. Within the contract with SUEZ, we are allowed a degree of contamination (we know no one is perfect), however when we exceed this threshold the material is too contaminated to be sorted so must be disposed of. The cost of disposal must be covered by the Council. In addition, it is also stipulated that we must compensate SUEZ for the loss of income by not having items to sort and sell.

What should I be putting in the blue bin?

Paper

- Newspaper, magazines and junk mail
- Office paper, shredded paper and envelopes
- Directories, catalogues and books
- Non-metallic gift wrap

Cardboard

- Food and drinks cartons (e.g. Tetra Pak)
- Cardboard packaging and food sleeves
- Toilet and kitchen roll tubes
- Greetings cards

Tins and cans

- Food and drinks cans
- Pet food tins
- Aerosol cans
- Biscuit and sweet tins
- Metal jar lids

Plastic bottles and containers

- Tubs, trays and punnets
- Yoghurt pots
- Shampoo and detergent bottles
- Plastic drinks and sauce bottles

- Plastic bottle tops

What are the items I cannot put in the blue bin?

- Plastic bags
- Polythene
- Plastic film
- Crisp or sweet packets
- Foil
- Food or food contaminated packaging
- Nappies
- Clothes
- Shoes
- Glass

How do I get rid of items I thought were recyclable in the blue bin?

If you are on the three bin service, you can recycle your food waste in your brown bin. You do not need a Garden Waste Permit if you are only using your brown bin for food waste recycling.

Many plastic bags and plastic film can be recycled at local supermarkets. Visit www.pkc.gov.uk/plasticfilm for more information.

Items such as foil, glass, shoes and textiles can be recycled at Recycling Centres or Points – find your nearest location and what you can recycle there at www.pkc.gov.uk/wheretorecycle.

Any other should be placed in your green bin or taken to your local Recycling Centre and disposed of as non-recyclable waste.

I can't fit all my waste in my kerbside bins, what should I do?

Households can have up to two blue and two brown bins for recycling. To apply for a second recycling bin visit www.pkc.gov.uk/secondbins.

If you are struggling with your green bin capacity, you may be entitled to a second bin for non-recyclable waste. To see the criteria and apply, visit www.pkc.gov.uk/secondbins.

Excess household waste and recycling can be taken to a Recycling Centre and disposed of free of charge. If you would like advice on minimising your waste, please visit www.pkc.gov.uk/slimyourbin.

Where can I find information on what happens to the recycling in my blue bins?

You can see images or watch a video on the journey your blue bin material takes at www.pkc.gov.uk/drymixedrecycling.