

DMR CONTAMINATION FAQ'S

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

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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 with 2020 averaging at 22.4%. Contamination levels got as high as 29% in November - that's a significant amount of 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.

Small amounts of contamination can be removed during the sorting process, however this comes at an additional cost to the Council.

How bad is the issue?

In 2018/19 the contamination rate sat at around 12 to 15%. The average rate of contamination in 2020 was 22.4%, peaking at 29% in November. When we exceed a level of 20%, we incur additional costs to dispose of contamination. This not only has a financial implication for the Council, but it also can ruin the hard work of those who recycle correctly and contributes to climate change by sending valuable resources for disposal.

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, with many now home working as well as home-schooling. The closure of Recycling Centres and suspension of Special Bulky Uplifts from April to June, are also believed to have contributed to the initial rise in contamination. However, both services have been running as usual since June.

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 from July to December were estimated at around £50,000 – 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 each year.

It is also important that we acknowledge the environmental consequence of disposing of recycle. By landfilling or incinerating good recycling, you take away the chance for that material to be made into 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 recycle 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 is the "Stick to the Six" campaign?

The Stick to the Six Campaign has been devised to not only provide simplified information, but also to communicate the issue of contamination, and the consequences that come with it. We as a Team want to be upfront about the challenges we face, especially the costs which ultimately impact on the public purse.

With doorstep interventions put on hold due to COVID restrictions, it was decided to create an information postcard to be sent directly to householders. Due to the costs involved in mailing all of our 70,000 blue bin users, we used recycling tonnage information from 2019 to identify the poorest performing collection routes (in terms of volume of recycle to general waste). From this, 22,826 properties were chosen to receive the postcard which will be posted out w/c 15 March.

From 19 March, the online and social media part of the campaign will commence with information scheduled to be posted regularly over the next 8 weeks. It is hoped that by May, we will be able to conduct doorstep interventions in conjunction with a consultancy partner. Interventions will involve bin monitoring and staff engaging with householders directly to talk about the blue bin service and how to use it correctly to encourage positive behavioural change.

What should I be putting in the blue bin?

Paper

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

Cardboard

- Cardboard packaging and food sleeves
- Toilet and kitchen roll tubes
- Greetings cards

Cartons

- Food and drinks cartons (e.g. Tetra Pak)

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 waste 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.

Why do different Councils accept different materials for recycling?

When recycling services were first introduced across Scotland, each local authority was given funding to set up a service that best suited their area. Services were influenced by factors such as the size, population and housing type (high or low density), proximity to reprocessors who could receive and sort collected materials as well as collection methods available.

To address the different services and fair access to reprocessing facilities, the Scottish Government set up the Household Waste and Recycling Charter. The Charter aims to align recycling services across Scotland so every council is recycling in the same way, producing better quality recycle and making recycling less complicated for residents. It also seeks to keep valuable materials in Scotland by improving access to resources for manufacturing new products.

Perth & Kinross Council have signed up to the Household Waste and Recycling Charter and are currently considering ways to align recycling services. Within the review, the Council is also looking at more items like films and flexible packaging (pet and baby food pouches, crisp wrappers, bread bags etc).

What are producers doing to use packaging which can be recycled?

Retailers and big household brands are looking at how to reduce the impact of packaging on the environment. Many supermarkets already operate in-store recycling for many types of plastic film and polythene. For information on which store in Perth and Kinross offer this service, visit www.pkc.gov.uk/plasticfilm.

To find out more information on what the Scottish Government is planning to tackle packaging waste, visit www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/our-work/extended-producer-responsibility.

For information on the collaborative working of over 160 European companies, associations and organisations representing the packaging industry, visit <https://ceflex.eu/>.

What is “deposit return” and how will this affect recycling?

In response to the Extended Producer Responsibility, the Scottish Government have agreed to roll out a Deposit Return Scheme to make it easier to recycle bottles and cans, including all drinks sold in PET plastic, metal and glass.

Scotland’s Deposit Return Scheme has been designed to make it easy for us all to do the right thing. People pay a small deposit of 20p when they buy a drink in a single-use container and then get the deposit back when they return the empty bottle or can.

The Scheme is due to go live on 1 July 2022. Applications are currently open for businesses and organisations to register as a return point. More information can be found at <https://depositreturnscheme.zerowastescotland.org.uk/>.

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.