

Portfolio Holder Dry Recycling Contract Performance Update

The Thalia contract for the transport, sorting and onward sale of blue bin materials runs from September to August each year.

The tables below show the annual contract performance for Fenland compared to the previous contract year. The contractor supplied data demonstrates changes in customer behaviour where the quality and quantity of recycling is reducing against the trend of improvement seen over previous years.

Fenland's customers are still actively recycling more than 8,000 tonnes of good quality materials, however the amount of good quality recycling has dropped and the levels of contamination have increased.

The biggest issue faced is the increase in containers and bottles that are not being emptied and rinsed prior to recycling and counting towards the food waste contamination. This could be due to public concerns about the increasing costs of services.

Table 1. Target Materials Comparison September to August 2022 and 2023

	Sept - Aug 2022		Sept - Aug 2023		Change		
	Tonnes	%	Tonnes	%	Tonnage	%	
Target Materials	Aluminium Cans	171	2	194	2	23	14
	Steel Cans	247	3	255	3	8	3
	Glass Bottles and Jars	3,033	31	2,656	28	- 377	-12
	Coloured Plastic Bottles (HDPE)	29	0	30	0	1	4
	Clear Plastic Bottles (HDPE)	172	2	165	2	- 7	-4
	Plastic Packaging Clear (PET)	288	3	263	3	- 25	-9
	Plastic Packaging Coloured (PET)	28	0	15	0	- 13	-45
	Plastic Pots, Tubs & Trays	342	4	351	4	8	2
	Plastic Bags	199	2	170	2	- 29	-15
	Cardboard Packaging	1,267	13	1,162	12	- 105	-8
	All Paper	2,837	29	2,778	29	- 59	-2
	Foil Lined Packaging (Tetrapak)	69	1	46	0	- 23	-33
	Total Target Recycling	8,683	90	8,085	86	- 598	-7

With the total amount of recycling dropping, Target Materials have also dropped overall in the past year. This reflects the trends nationally because of the cost-of-living increases and producers reducing the weight of their packaging in preparation for Extended Producer Responsibilities (EPR) payments from 2025. The materials that buck that trend in Fenland are metal cans, which have increased, along with plastic tubs, pots and trays.

Table 2. Non-target Recycling Materials

	Sept - Aug 2022		Sept - Aug 2023		Change		
	Tonnes	%	Tonnes	%	Tonnage	%	
Non-Target Materials	Waste Electrical Equipment	37.2	0.4	60.0	0.6	23	61
	Hard Plastics	66.8	0.7	72.3	0.8	6	8
	Other Metals	80.7	0.8	66.5	0.7	- 14	-18
	Plastic Laminates	34.4	0.4	39.2	0.4	5	14
	Wet Paper	25.9	0.3	128.5	1.4	103	397
	Plastic Film	9.0	0.1	13.4	0.1	4	48
	Black Plastic Waste Sacks	52.1	0.5	55.6	0.6	4	7
	Total Non-Target Recycling	306.1	3.2	435.6	4.6	130	42

Non-target Materials are a barometer of how much care customers are taking with their recycling and focussing on getting it right. The indication from the increases in ‘wish-cycling’, where customers include materials such as electrical items because they consider that they should be recyclable, is that education needs to continue. The wet paper is something that we are investigating to see if there is an issue.

Table 3. Contamination

	Sept - Aug 2022		Sept - Aug 2023		Change	
	Tonnes	%	Tonnes	%	Tonnage	%
Food	475.9	4.9	630.6	6.7	154.7	32
Green/Garden Waste	0.5	0.00	35.3	0.37	34.9	7194
Oil/pesticide containers	0.9	0.01	2.5	0.03	1.6	166
Other Hazardous Waste	0.6	0.01	1.2	0.01	0.6	104
Pyrex & ceramics	8.6	0.09	14.0	0.15	5.4	63
Sand and Building materials	11.0	0.11	8.3	0.09	- 2.7	-24
Sanitary Waste	61.1	0.63	68.8	0.73	7.7	13
Textiles	89.7	0.93	102.4	1.08	12.7	14
Wood	35.3	0.36	37.6	0.40	2.2	6
Others	18.6	0.19	23.3	0.25	4.7	25
Total Non-Recyclables	702.3	7.2	924.0	9.8	222	32

Against a backdrop of several years where contamination was dropping or remaining low, Fenland’s level has risen overall in the past year. The change is primarily food waste, along with small amounts of garden waste.

The ‘food’ is the most concerning. This is not typically food as such, but containers that are contaminated with food waste or liquids, such as a plastic pot with coleslaw in or a bottle with liquid in. This can be heavy, so a small change in customer behaviour registers a significant issue here.

This lack of rinsing of containers could be due to concerns about the increasing costs of services.

This remains an issue that requires our continued focus and will remain a behaviour change target.

As a result, this message is included on the rear of Winter Calendar information delivered to all 45,000 properties in November.

