

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 half-year 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 overall.

Fenland's customers are still actively recycling and presented more than 3,875 tonnes of good quality materials. This is a drop in good quality recycling of 272 tonnes from last year.

This material generates recycling credits from the County Council for diverting waste from landfill.

The County Council pays Fenland £56.19 for each tonne of material that they save landfill tax of £102.10 on. In the six months from September to February recycling credit income from blue bins resulted in £218,102 of income. The cost of processing this material was £96,495, resulting in a **net income of £74,683**. This is down on previous years because of changes in the value of paper and other materials.

Table 1. Target Materials Comparison September 2023 to February 2024 (Tonnes)

		Sept - Feb 2023	Sept - Feb 2023	Sept - Feb 2024	Sept - Feb 2024	Change
Target Materials	Aluminium Cans/Non Magnetic	2.01%	96.14	2.22%	104.87	8.74
	Steel Cans/Magnetic	2.89%	138.06	2.63%	124.02	- 14.04
	Glass 10-50mm	29.53%	1,410.82	23.35%	1,102.59	- 308.23
	HDPE - Coloured	0.31%	14.79	0.26%	12.14	- 2.64
	HDPE - Natural	1.65%	78.97	1.88%	88.66	9.69
	PET - Clear	2.55%	121.73	2.99%	141.39	19.66
	PET - Coloured	0.13%	6.34	0.21%	9.73	3.39
	Pots,Tubs,Trays/Mixed Plastic	3.70%	176.85	3.93%	185.68	8.83
	Plastic Bags/ Film	1.89%	90.05	1.58%	74.42	- 15.62
	News & Pams	13.59%	649.33	11.25%	531.09	- 118.24
	Cardboard OCC	11.00%	525.32	12.31%	580.97	55.65
	Mixed Paper Inc. Office etc.	17.11%	817.27	18.91%	892.66	75.39
	Tetrapak/foiled Lined	0.49%	23.19	0.58%	27.59	4.40
Total:	86.85%	4,148.75	82.10%	3,875.81	- 272.94	

With the total amount of recycling dropping, Target Materials have also dropped overall in the past year. We know that this reflects the trends nationally with the cost-of-living impacts 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, plastic bottles, tubs pots and trays along with cardboard.

Table 2. Non-target Recycling Materials Comparison September 2023 to February 2024 (Tonnes)

		Sept - Feb 2023	Sept - Feb 2023	Sept - Feb 2024	Sept - Feb 2024	Change
Non-Target Materials	WEEE	0.37%	17.70	0.57%	26.91	9.20
	Hard Plastics	0.57%	27.10	0.76%	35.87	8.77
	Metals	0.79%	37.56	0.90%	42.32	4.76
	Plastic Laminates/ Waxed Paper	0.38%	18.09	0.45%	21.38	3.29
	Wet Paper	1.41%	67.28	3.77%	177.83	110.55
	Waste bags/industrial film	0.04%	1.92	0.20%	9.40	7.48
	Black Plastic Waste Sacks	0.50%	23.67	0.55%	25.92	2.25
	Total:	4.05%	193.40	7.19%	339.62	146.22

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 Comparison September 2023 to February 2024 (Tonnes)

		Sept - Feb 2023	Sept - Feb 2023	Sept - Feb 2024	Sept - Feb 2024	Change
Non-Recyclables	Food	6.53%	311.86	6.65%	313.91	2.05
	General Waste	0.00%	-	0.00%	-	-
	Green/Garden Waste	0.22%	10.65	0.36%	17.21	6.56
	Oil/pesticide containers	0.00%	0.22	0.05%	2.39	2.16
	Other Hazardous Waste	0.01%	0.47	0.01%	0.47	0.00
	Pyrex & ceramics	0.11%	5.23	0.27%	12.63	7.40
	Sand and Building materials	0.14%	6.48	0.11%	5.05	- 1.43
	Sanitary Waste	0.75%	35.76	0.84%	39.46	3.70
	Textiles	0.99%	47.08	1.46%	68.85	21.77
	Wood	0.24%	11.43	0.73%	34.52	23.08
	Others	0.12%	5.82	0.23%	11.09	5.27
	Total:	9.10%	434.84	10.71%	505.57	70.73

Against a backdrop of several years where contamination was dropping or remaining low, Fenland's level has risen overall recently.

The increases in textiles and wood contamination are concerning.

The increases in 'food' waste contamination have abated this year. 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 water and other services. This remains an issue that requires our continued focus.

To target this, the crews have been focussing on checking blue bins. September to February they have rejected 3,922 contaminated blue bins. Each of these customers has received a letter.

We continue to focus on delivering our positive campaign, and supervisors have inspected 3,711 blue bins and delivered educational materials. Of these, 179 were found to contain incorrect materials.

From mid-March the teams will be delivering the Summer Calendar to all 45,000 properties.

Customers will also receive an insert with their Council Tax bill focussed on improving recycling.