

Calls to end ‘ridiculous’ arrangement of sending Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire’s recycling to Northern Ireland.

Renewed calls have been made to end a “ridiculous” agreement to send recycling waste 400 miles away for sorting.

Waste from the **Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council** *** areas have been [transported to Newry](#) in Northern Ireland since March 2025.

(RG Note – Fenlands waste is processed at Waterbeach Recycling Centre)



Susie Williams, a member of the public, asked Cambridgeshire County Council how likely it is that a recycling centre could be built in Cambridgeshire and when this could happen.

She said: “The trucks generate considerable amounts of carbon emissions and particulates, which is not really acceptable for two councils who are aiming to become net zero.”

Cllr Ros Hathorn, chair of the county council’s environment and green investment committee, said that the

waste market and providers “do not serve the East of England particularly well” and don’t have “sufficient capacity” to take their recycling.

When the [contract with Re-Gen was signed](#), the company suggested it wanted to open a mainland mechanical recycling facility (MRF) but this has yet to happen.

Cllr Hathorn (Lib Dem, Histon and Impington) said the waste partnership of local authorities, Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP), is starting to look at other solutions.

She said: “It is not as straightforward as just building an industrial unit, putting some kit in there and switching it on – it’s a long, expensive process.

It requires a licence from the Environment Agency, which is not straightforward to get. “It needs to get planning permission and, as a new facility would create significant traffic in its area, there is likely to be objections to it.

”Cllr Hathorn said that the upcoming local government reorganisation “has slowed down the prospects of any big project being started in the near future”.

The council was asked to approve a new strategy document for RECAP and Cllr Darren Green was “very encouraged” to see it recommended recycling take place locally.

The Green Party councillor said: “I think this council must do everything it can to change this. Other counties can process their blue bin recycling locally – why can’t Cambridgeshire?”

Cllr Mike Black (Lab, Arbury) said that “everyone can see that this looks ridiculous”. He called it an example of market failure and “privatisation not working”.

The Labour councillor said: “I don’t like hearing local government review as an excuse for doing nothing or delaying things.”