

Scotland's waste workers keep the nation recycling

 21 May 2020

Further information for Scotland's commercial recyclers and waste managers launched at managingourwaste.scot/wastemanagement

- **Scotland thanks everyone working to keep as many waste services running as possible**

Scotland's environment watchdog, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), and partners, have today launched an information hub to support Scotland's recyclers and waste managers in these difficult times – as part of Scotland's campaign to help manage waste during the current COVID-19 restrictions. Hosted on a dedicated section of managingourwaste.scot the resources provide information and signpost to the most up-to-date guidance on a range of topics, including support for businesses, environmental regulations, temporary regulatory positions and health and safety.

The Scottish Government, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) recognise the important role waste workers play on the frontline, helping communities, public services and essential businesses functioning – and have put their support towards the new information hub.

Environment and Climate Change Secretary Roseanna Cunningham said:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented global crisis which has fundamentally changed every aspect of our lives, and could continue to do so for some time to come. I met with industry representatives to hear first-hand about key issues, the impact of measures taken to date and ongoing challenges and I know both the public and private waste sectors have played a key role in maintaining essential services and protecting our environment.

"It is critical that the waste and recycling sectors – just like every other area of our society – has clear and up-to-date communication about the information and guidance to support available to them through this difficult time, and I'm confident this new campaign and hub will provide just that."

Support for the waste management sector

SEPA has been clear from the beginning of the COVID-19 restriction period that businesses should make their best endeavours to meet environmental obligations and continue recycling services for as long as possible. The agency is clear that businesses who are trying their hardest to do the right thing will be supported and helped.

Jennifer Shearer, Head of Enforcement at SEPA, said:

"Now more than ever, Scots are recognising the importance of local services like recycling and the responsibility we all play in managing our waste. And we should be truly grateful to everyone working in the waste industry to keep as many services running as possible.

"We recognise that waste managers are trying to operate in extraordinary circumstances, trying to look after the health of their own workforces and dealing with supply-chain and other challenges. If you are unable to fully meet your compliance obligations, prioritise conditions which directly protect the environment over those of an administrative nature. Our strong message is that you should contact SEPA, work closely with us and document the choices and actions you take."

Scottish Government and UK Government have also introduced a range of schemes and measures to support businesses, with details available through the information hub.

SEPA cracking down on illegal behaviour

There is also a warning to those who are seeking to use the opportunity of disruption to services to their criminal advantage, and a plea to businesses to help SEPA to tackle unscrupulous companies and individuals by reporting suspicious behaviour and making sure they only deal with legitimate waste companies.

Shearer warned: "Despite the global pandemic and more restricted collections by some local councils, the majority of household waste and recycling collections are continuing as normal. However, we know that in some cases there are services and operators that are affected, and we know that illegal activity places further stress on those that clean it up and take custom away from legitimate business. We will take tough action where necessary."

ENDS

Notes to editors

Signs of possible illegal activity to watch out for include:

- Out-of-hours activity at night, over weekends and during bank holidays;
- Smoke caused by constant burning;
- An increase in the number of lorries or vans entering a site;
- Increasing quantities of waste stockpiled on site;
- Odours caused by rotting waste;
- Water pollution.

Links for further information