



PART A REPORT

Report to: South London Waste Partnership (SLWP) Joint Committee

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Report title: **Communications and engagement update**

Summary

This paper provides an update to Members of the South London Waste Partnership Joint Committee on communications and stakeholder engagement activities relating to the Partnership's Phase A (transport & residual waste management, HRRC services and marketing of recyclates) and Phase B (residual waste treatment) contracts.

This report focuses on activity that has taken place between October and December 2022.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of this report and comment on any aspects of communications and engagement activities relating to the Phase A and Phase B contracts.

1. THE SOUTH LONDON WASTE PARTNERSHIP WEBSITE

- 1.1 An update on progress for the design of the new SLWP website was provided to the Committee in September 2022. Work to add content to the new site is ongoing.

2. HOUSEHOLD REUSE AND RECYCLING CENTRES (HRRCs)

- 2.1 This contract is operated by Veolia on behalf of the Partnership boroughs.
- 2.2 Site user satisfaction - Site user satisfaction surveys continue to be conducted at the six HRRC sites on a rolling basis.

- 2.3 A summary of the findings from these surveys is reported to this Committee in the Contract Management Reports, and uploaded to the SLWP website. Some changes have been made to the latest 'satisfaction dashboard' to improve the general layout and include results from the questions added to the survey in 2022 (relating to online booking systems, fair use policies, community re-use shops and the garden waste collection service).
- 2.4 Toy give-away event - On 15 December 2022, Veolia held a free toy give-away event at the Factory Lane Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) in Croydon. The toys had been donated to the Community Reuse Shops at HRRC sites across the SLWP region. Veolia worked with local voluntary organisations to raise awareness of the event and issued a press release, which resulted in local press coverage.
- 2.5 The event was a success with many local families visiting the site and walking away with high quality toys that may otherwise have been thrown away. Veolia worked with local charities including Croydon Voluntary Action and the Coulsdon Manor Rotary Club to ensure any toys that were not claimed on the day still found good homes. The SLWP would like to thank Veolia staff who work on the HRRC contract for their efforts and enthusiasm in planning and delivering this event.
- 2.6 Promotion of Community Reuse Shops - At the last meeting of the SLWP Joint Committee, Members requested that more is done to promote the Community Reuse Shops at Kimpton Park Way (Sutton) and Fishers Farm (Croydon).
- 2.7 The SLWP Communications Advisor has been working with the Veolia communications team on a short promotional film to explain how the two Reuse Shops work and how residents from across the SLWP region can donate items for the reuse shops at their local HRRC. Filming took place on 16 December 2022 and the film will be ready to share via council communication channels in early 2023.

3. BEDDINGTON ENERGY RECOVERY FACILITY (ERF)

- 3.1 The Residual Waste Treatment Contract was awarded to Viridor in 2012. In order to fulfil the contract, Viridor has constructed a £205m state-of-the-art Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) in Beddington, Sutton. Household waste from the four Partner boroughs that either cannot be recycled or has not been sorted for recycling is treated at the facility and used to generate electricity.
- 3.2 The SLWP Communications Advisor continues to work closely with Viridor to:
- Ensure Viridor are meeting their contractual requirements with regards to communications and stakeholder engagement around the operation of the Beddington ERF

- Ensure local people understand why it is we need an ERF and provide reassurance around the safety of modern, well-run facilities such as this
 - Ensure the Partnership understands the views of local people with regards to waste treatment and ERF technologies in particular.
- 3.3 Permit variation application – On 10 November 2022, the Environment Agency (EA) launched a public consultation on an application by Viridor (operator of the Beddington ERF) to vary the facility’s environmental permit. If approved by the EA, the variation will allow the facility to treat 10% more waste.
- 3.4 The SLWP boroughs submitted a joint response to the consultation objecting to Viridor’s application. The joint SLWP response was published on the SLWP website ([South London Boroughs object to Viridor’s application to treat more waste at the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility](#)) and shared with trade and local media outlets, resulting in widespread press coverage. Residents were encouraged to visit the EA consultation website, read Viridor’s supporting documentation and express their views.
- 3.5 The SLWP Communications Advisor attended a special meeting on 24th November 2022, hosted by Viridor at the Beddington ERF, of the Beddington Community Liaison Group. The meeting was an opportunity for senior Viridor representatives to discuss their permit variation application in more detail with members of the group and for the group to ask questions.
- 3.6 The EA consultation ended on 23 December 2022 (6-week consultation period). More than 300 responses were submitted. The EA will take these consultation responses into consideration as part of their determination of the permit variation application. If they decide to grant the variation they will explain how they made their decision and how they have addressed the concerns that were raised. The EA says they will only issue a permit if they believe that harm to the environment, people and wildlife will be minimised and that the operator has the ability to meet the conditions of the permit.
- 3.7 If, following the first consultation process, the EA reaches the decision to issue the permit variation, they will then enter into a second phase of consultation called ‘Minded to issue’ consultation. Should this be required, the consultation process will follow the same pattern and timescale as the initial consultation.
- 3.8 Emissions – the environmental performance of the Beddington ERF is reported to this Committee in the Contract Management Report. Viridor continues to upload Emissions Monitoring Reports to the Beddington ERF Virtual Visitor Centre (www.beddingtonerf.info) twice per month.

3.9 The SLWP Communications Advisor will continue to work with Viridor to ensure local residents have access to timely and comprehensive information about the environmental performance of the facility via the Virtual Visitor Centre.

3.10 Gas bottle awareness campaign – in recent months, Viridor has reported a significant increase in the number of large nitrous oxide gas bottles arriving at the Beddington ERF, mixed in with general household waste. Intended for use in the catering industry, nitrous oxide (commonly known as laughing gas) is increasingly being used for recreational purposes. The gas is inhaled from a balloon and stored in canisters. Until recently these tended to be single-use canisters the size of a bullet, which could pass through the ERF without incident. In recent months however, it has become clear that people are increasingly buying and disposing of much larger canisters, approximately the size of a 2-litre water bottle (pictured, right). It is these ‘super-sized’ canisters that are causing operational challenges to the ERF.



3.11 Viridor is successfully intercepting hundreds of these gas bottles each month, but some go undetected and pass through the treatment process, which involves the waste being burnt, in strictly controlled conditions, at temperatures of 850°C. The pressurised gas bottles can explode in the intense heat, resulting in a sudden change in oxygen levels within the furnace, which in turn leads to a short-term spike in combustion-related emissions such as Volatile Organic Compounds and Carbon Monoxide.

3.12 The SLWP is supporting Viridor with their campaign to raise awareness of this issue amongst residents and business owners across the SLWP region. Viridor launched a public information campaign in November, with press adverts appearing in newspapers across the four SLWP boroughs. Further phases of the campaign will be rolled out in the first half of 2023, including advertising across the tram network and a targeted social media campaign.



- 3.13 Viridor’s gas bottle public information campaign will help raise awareness of the issue, but the most effective solution would be to stop the problem at its source. In January 2023 the Chair of the SLWP Joint Committee along with SLWP Officers will attend a round-table event at Westminster, hosted by Viridor. Also in attendance will be local MPs and representatives from the British Compressed Gas Association and ReSolve (the substance abuse charity). The round table event will be an opportunity to discuss the rapidly growing issue of recreational nitrous oxide use and the impact it is having on public health and waste treatment facilities. Local MPs will be asked to support a campaign to ban the retail sales of nitrous oxide, to ensure it can only be purchase only for legitimate use in the future.

4. Collections and street cleansing

- 4.1 Communication and engagement activities relating to recycling & waste collections and street cleansing are not formally under the remit of this Joint Committee. Nevertheless, this short summary of recent activity is provided to Members in order to provide a more complete picture of SLWP communication and engagement efforts.
- 4.2 Garden waste collection service promotion – the 2022 garden waste collection service promotional campaign is now complete and the following results were achieved:
- Targeted promotional letters sent: 89,543
 - Cost of letter campaign: £52,420
 - New subscribers: 3,006
 - Conversion rate: 3.36%
 - Total subscription income: £218,025 (SLWP share: c.£109,012)
 - Return on investment: £4.16 per £1 spent
- 4.3 This is a good return on investment for the campaign, particularly given that the campaign was delivered at a time when the ‘cost of living crisis’ was high on the national news agenda. Detailed analysis of the conversion rates will enable the SLWP boroughs and Veolia to target the campaign even more effectively in future years.

- 4.4 Food waste minimisation and recycling – a major food waste minimisation and recycling participation campaign was delivered successfully in partnership with the Veolia Education and Outreach in the autumn 2022.
- 4.5 Phase 1 (minimisation) September 2022 – a sticker containing food storage tips and signposting residents to the ‘Love Food Hate Waste’ website was applied to the lids of the outdoor food waste caddies of 15,000 households. All of these properties had been targeted over the last two years as part of the highly successful recycling participation campaign. This minimisation campaign will encourage them to take another step up the waste hierarchy and start wasting less food in the first place.
- 4.6 Phase 2 (recycling participation) October 2022 – 50,000 properties on collection rounds that produce relatively low food waste recycling tonnages were targeted with the following interventions:
- ‘No food waste’ sticker on the lid of the general waste bin
 - Leaflet put through the door with information on how to recycle food waste and the environmental benefit of doing so
 - A free roll of 12 food waste caddy lines
- 4.7 The results of this campaign (participation rate and food waste recycling tonnages) are currently being assessed and will be reported back to the next meeting of this Committee.
- 4.8 2023 collection calendars and annual recycling newsletters – copies of the 2023 collection calendars (86 versions in total) were provided to the boroughs in November to be uploaded to council websites and made available (via a postcode search tool) to residents.
- 4.9 Annual recycling newsletters were created for each borough, printed and distributed to every household across the SLWP region in December 2022. The newsletters contained information on:
- The results of phase 1 of the waste composition analysis in each borough – giving residents a sneak peek inside the ‘average’ rubbish bin in their borough and asking how theirs’ compares
 - A quick reference recycling and waste collection service guide
 - Hints and tips for reducing waste at Christmas
 - Changes to collections over the Christmas and New Year Period
- 4.10 Digital copies of the four newsletters can be found appended to this report.
- 4.11 Carbon reduction (plastics) campaign – the SLWP is planning to launch a carbon awareness campaign in the first quarter of 2023. The campaign will raise awareness of the carbon impact of putting plastic

items in the residual waste bin. It will inform residents that 'Not all waste is equal' when it comes to carbon impact and encourage them to use their household collection service to its full potential to recycle plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays from around the home.

- 4.12 Intelligence gathered from the recent waste composition analysis project will be used to target households across the SLWP region where there is likely to be more plastic waste in the residual waste stream.
- 4.13 Veolia contract extension decision - During October and November 2022, the SLWP boroughs each made their decisions about whether or not to extend the Environmental Services ('Phase C, Lot 1') contract with Veolia (which incorporates waste collections and street cleansing). The officer recommendation in each of the four boroughs was not to extend and the four borough Committees agreed that recommendation.
- 4.14 Given the high profile, resident-facing nature of the services involved, it was important that the messaging was managed carefully. This was achieved through careful planning and the cooperation of the four SLWP boroughs and Veolia.
- 4.15 Working with residents to design services of the future – to support the four SLWP boroughs in recommissioning their waste collection and street cleansing services post-2025, the SLWP is coordinating a programme of resident co-design consultation exercises. This forward-looking exercise (asking residents what they want their services to look like in the future) will complement the more reflective triennial SLWP resident survey and will help the boroughs design service specifications that meet local needs.
- 4.16 The co-design project consists of three key elements:
- an online survey (one per borough) that is open to all;
 - a closed telephone survey conducted with a representative group of 1,600 residents (400 per borough) and
 - a series of eight focus groups (two per borough) providing an opportunity to explore issues raised in the surveys in more detail.

- Each of the surveys was adapted to reflect the priorities of the different boroughs. Each borough promoted the consultation in their respective areas, with some choosing to run pop-up roadshow events and hold online meetings.
- 4.17

The project is approaching its conclusion and all four boroughs will have received their Findings Reports in the coming weeks.

5. Legal impacts and implications

- 5.1 None

6. Communications

- 6.1 This report has been drafted by the Partnership's Communications Advisor, who works closely with the four SLWP boroughs and the partnership's commercial partners to ensure communications and engagements activities support the themes agreed in the SLWP Communications Strategy 2020-2022.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to:
- Note the contents of this report and comment on any aspects of communications and engagement activities relating to the Phase A and Phase B contracts.