



PART A REPORT

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

Date: 25th April 2023

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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 residual waste treatment services; Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) services; food and green waste treatment services; and marketing of recyclates.

This report focuses on activity that has taken place between January and March 2023.

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 residual waste treatment services; Household Reuse and Recycling Centre (HRRC) services; food and green waste treatment services; and marketing of recyclates.

1. THE SOUTH LONDON WASTE PARTNERSHIP WEBSITE

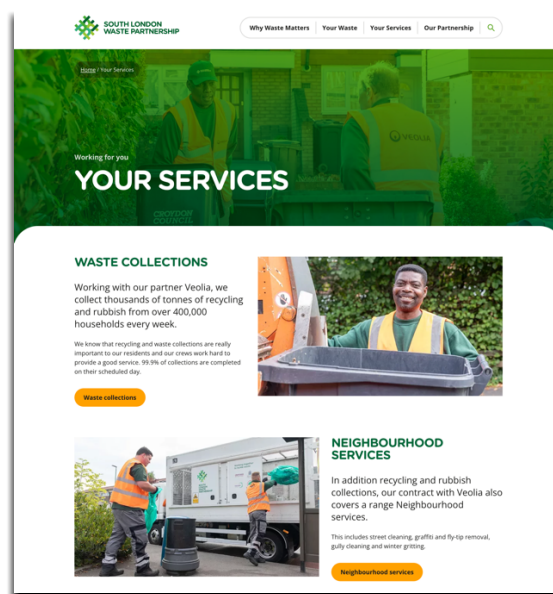
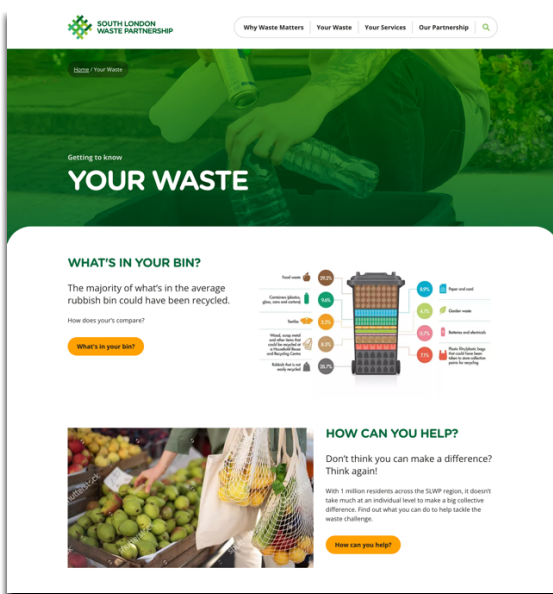
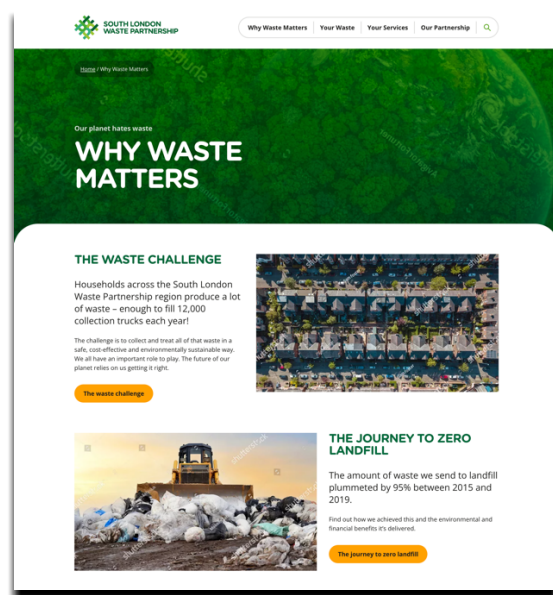
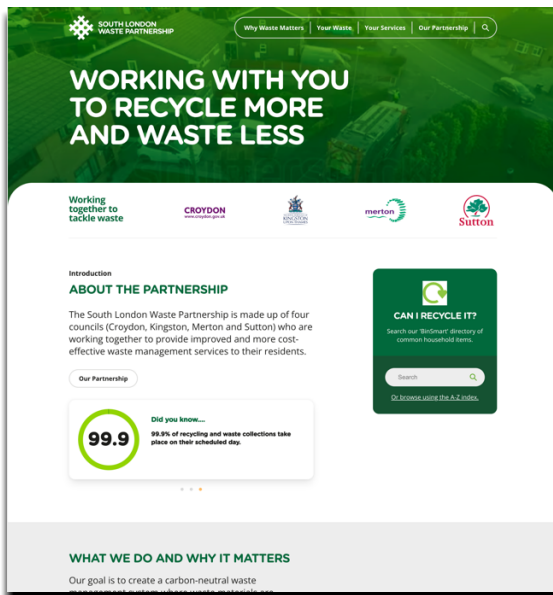
1.1 The construction of the new South London Waste Partnership website is now complete. The site is in the final stages of user testing and will go live imminently. The Partnership has worked with Huxley Digital on the design of the site. Huxley is a specialist in developing accessible websites for public sector clients and is a certified Crown Commercial Service Supplier.

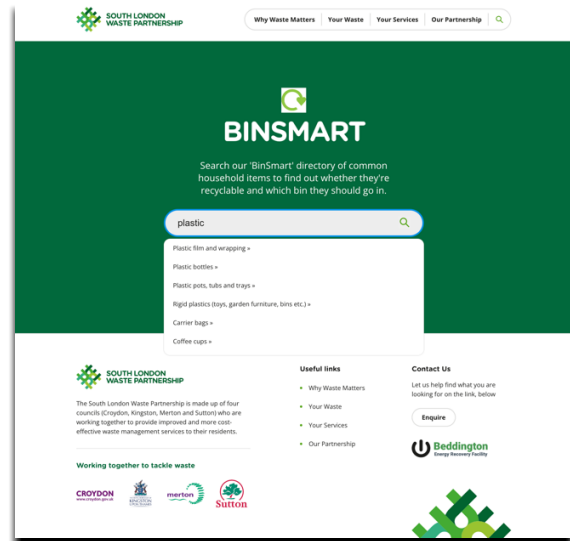
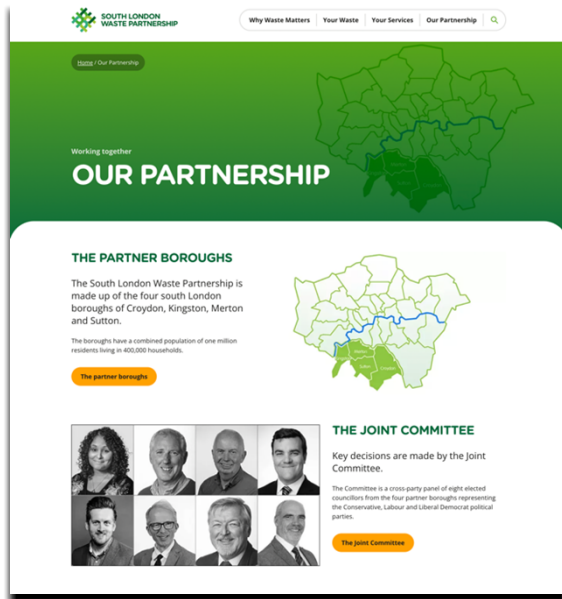
1.2 The new SLWP website (www.slwp.org.uk):

- Will meet the latest accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA)
- Has been built on a responsive design, so works equally well on desktop, mobile and held-held devices

- Is hosted on a secure, fully-managed (24/7) and scalable hosting platform
- Has an updated design and refreshed content, to reflect the current responsibilities and priorities of the Partnership
- Includes an advanced search engine ('BinSmart') that allows residents to search or browse a directory of common household items and get advice on how to recycle or dispose of these items correctly. In time, this BinSart tool could replace the 'A-Z directories of recycling' that currently feature on each of the four partner boroughs' websites and become the go-to resource for residents wanting in-depth information about what they can and can't recycle and how to responsibly dispose of items that are not collected from the kerbside.

1.3 Below is a selection of screengrabs from the new website:





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.
- 2.4 Promotion of Community Reuse Shops – A short video promoting the Community Reuse Shops at Fishers Farm and Kimpton Park Way HRRCs has been produced by the Veolia Communication Team and shared with the borough communications teams. The video will be shown to Members at the Committee meeting.

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 to vary the facility’s environmental permit. If approved by the EA, the variation will allow the facility to treat 10% more waste. The SLWP boroughs submitted a joint response to the consultation objecting to Viridor’s application. The consultation closed on 23 December 2022.
- 3.4 The EA has confirmed that they received more than 500 responses to the consultation. The EA is working through each of these responses to review the feedback given and assessing the technical documents submitted by Viridor. In January the EA confirmed that *if* they were ‘minded to issue’ then the next stage of consultation would not take place before mid-March 2023 and that consultation would last 6 weeks. On 24 March the SLWP received a further update from the EA stating that the next stage of the process would not take place until April. The SLWP remains in regular contact with the EA on this matter and will update the partner boroughs once further details are confirmed.
- 3.5 Emissions – the environmental performance of the Beddington ERF is reported to this Committee in the Contract Management Report. Viridor uploads Emissions Monitoring Reports to the Beddington ERF Virtual Visitor Centre (www.beddingtonerf.info) twice per month.
- 3.6 The SLWP Communications Advisor continues 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.
- 3.7 Gas bottle awareness campaign – January saw the launch of phase 2 of Viridor’s ‘Leave it Out!’ gas cannister campaign. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness that gas cannisters (and large nitrous oxide bottles in particular) should not be placed in rubbish bins or street litter bins. A more detailed summary of the campaign objectives was provided to the Committee in December 2022.
- 3.8 Phase 2 of the campaign saw adverts appear across the tram network (see below).
- 3.9 In March 2023, Viridor welcomed Sky News as part of the Leave it Out! campaign to support them in the filming on a special report

investigating the challenges and dangers of recreational nitrous oxide use.



Campaign artwork on the tram network



Sky News report into the challenges and dangers of recreational Nox use

3.10 On 27 March, the Government announced that possessing nitrous oxide is to be made a criminal offence for the first time. There will also be tighter controls on retailers to prevent the supply of nitrous oxide for misuse. The announcement was made by Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) on Sky News and was covered across all the main news channels. In their follow-up coverage, Sky News used footage from their visit to the Beddington ERF.

3.11 Westminster Roundtable Event on nitrous oxide mis-use – the roundtable event originally planned for January 2023 (but postponed due to train strikes) has been rearranged for 25 April 2023. SLWP representatives will attend the event 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, street scene and waste treatment facilities. Local MPs will be asked to support a campaign to ban the retail sales of nitrous oxide and to ensure the new legislation being put forward by Government (see 3.12) is passed into law as quickly as possible.

3.12 Site visits – Viridor have welcomed the following groups to visit the Beddington ERF in recent months:

- Beddington Community Liaison Group
- Kingston Academy School
- Sustainable Merton
- Chartered Institute of Waste Management

3.13 The following future dates have been agreed with Viridor as 'open days', which individuals can book on to and visit the site, including a tour of the facility itself (max 10 people per visit):

- Tuesday 20 June: 10:00am - 12:30pm
- Wednesday 23 August: 10:00am - 12:30pm
- Friday 8 September: 10:00am - 12:30pm
- Saturday 9 September: 10:00am - 12:30pm
- Thursday 30 November: 10:00am - 12:30pm

These dates will be publicised on the Beddington ERF website, SLWP website and via borough social media channels.

3.14 Beddington Community Benefit Fund – In February Viridor announced that it had distributed almost half a million pounds of funding (£498,207) to local groups since the Beddington Community Benefit Fund was established five years ago. The announcement attracted local and trade media coverage.

3.15 Recent beneficiaries include Maggies at the Royal Marsden in Sutton (a centre that provides practical and emotional support for anyone living with cancer), Startup Croydon (an inclusive business hub and charity) and Christina Peak (a local Beddington artist running a community-based mural project).

3.16 Any project, charity or organisation within a 2km radius of the Beddington ERF site boundary can apply for grants of up to £30,000 and projects anywhere within the four SLWP boroughs are eligible for up to £5,000. More details on eligibility criteria and an application form can be found at:
www.viridor.co.uk/about-us/our-communities/beddington-community/

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 – Following on the from success of the 2022 campaign (which attracted more than 3,000 new subscriptions) the 2023 garden waste collection service promotion campaign will go live in April.

- Letters (similar to the ones below) will be sent to c.20,000 carefully targeted households (using a combination of LOAC demographic data, lapsed subscribers and roads where a high proportion of properties subscribe)



The direct-mail campaign will be supported by a targeted digital advertising campaign. This year, the digital assets used in recent years (see below) will be A/B tested against a new asset for 2023: a short promotional video showing how easy it is to use the garden waste recycling service rather than taking garden waste to the HRRC, which can be messy and time consuming. This new asset is designed to blend into the standard Facebook and Instagram newsfeeds and appear more 'organic'. The promotional film will be shown to Members at the Committee meeting.



Targets for the 2023 campaign are to:

- Increase garden waste subscriptions across the four SLWP boroughs by ~1,000, to reach 71,000 active subscribers within the calendar year
- Achieve a 5% conversion rate from targeted letters

4.3 Food waste recycling participation campaign (2022) results – the results of participation monitoring conducted during autumn 2023 have revealed that the food waste recycling participation campaign that was delivered to 50,000 targeted households in October 2022 is likely to have increased participation in food waste recycling by around 10%.

- 4.4 50,000 properties were targeted with a three-pronged intervention on their collection day:
- Free roll of 12 biodegradable liners posted through the door
 - Information leaflet providing details on how to recycle food waste, how to order replacement containers and the benefits of food waste recycling
 - A 'No food waste' sticker on the lid of the general rubbish bin



- 4.5 As part of the campaign, three phases of participation monitoring were conducted across two collection rounds in Sutton; one control round (SKREC9 Tuesday) and one round that had been included in the targeted campaign (SKREC5 Monday). Sutton rounds were chosen because rounds in Croydon, Kingston and Merton had already been monitored as part of the campaign in 2021.

- 4.6 Participation monitoring:
- Phase 1 – prior to the campaign (baseline)
 - Phase 2 – three weeks after interventions (halfway through supply of free biodegradable liners that had been delivered as part of the campaign)
 - Phase 3 – six weeks after interventions (supply of free biodegradable liners used up)

- 4.7 The participation monitoring showed that by phase 3, food waste recycling participation had increased by 10.32% in the target round compared to an increase of 1.69% in the control round.

- 4.8 3,076 food waste caddies were requested by properties in the campaign target areas, compared to 1,220 during the same period the previous year (a 152% increase).

- 4.9 The increase in container requests and results of the participation monitoring provide further evidence that the food waste recycling participation campaign is delivering a good return on investment. Planning is underway to run a similar campaign in summer 2023.

- 4.10 Food waste minimisation campaign - Recycling food waste is preferable to throwing it away, but not producing it in the first place is the best outcome.
- 4.11 To encourage residents to think more about reducing their food waste, 15,000 properties that had previously been targeted (in 2021) as part of the food waste recycling participation campaign described above received a sticker on their food waste caddy containing food waste tips and directing them to the Love Food Hate Waste website.



- 4.12 Evaluating the impact of this campaign is more challenging as it would require a detailed waste composition analysis of the properties targeted as part of the campaign. However, food waste tonnages for the SLWP as a whole have dipped slightly, which may indicate that residents are becoming more aware of food waste and taking actions to prevent it.
- 4.13 Increasing food waste recycling participation (i.e. put-out rate) combined with reducing food waste tonnages would be the ideal scenario for the boroughs, from both an environmental and financial perspective.
- 4.14 Veolia Year 7 (2023/24) Communications Plan – Work to draft and agree the Communications Action Plan for 2023/24 (Year 7) has been taking place since December, led by Veolia and supported by the SLWP Communications Advisor. The SLWP Borough Communications Leads have been closely involved, including two workshops to review and discuss the plan at various stages of its development.
- 4.15 The plan is now close to being finalised. A total of £236,000 will be invested on the following priorities:
- Collection crew communications – contamination and excess waste education and awareness process (tags, letters and door knocking)
 - Street scene project targeting four hot-spots in each borough
 - Food waste recycling participation campaign

- Flats recycling package for managing agents
- Garden waste collection service renewals and promotion
- Annual service newsletter and 2024 collection calendars
- Borough-specific projects
- School engagement and community events (including MRF tours)
- PR and social media support (pro-active and re-active)

4.16 Borough-specific support – the following support has been provided to the SLWP boroughs on more localised projects:

- Croydon - Online / telephone surveys and residents focus groups to help co-design the new waste collection and street cleaning service that will need to be commissioned for 2025
- Kingston - Member workshops to review findings of the co-design resident consultation project (waste collections service for 2025 onwards) and identify Member priorities.
Support for the transition of responsibility for garden waste renewals and promotion from Kingston Council to Veolia
- Merton - Communications support for the introduction of a new time-banded collection service for flats above shops
- Sutton - Member workshops to review findings of the co-design resident consultation project (waste collections and street cleansing services for 2025 onwards) and identify Member priorities.
Sutton High Street event to support the launch of the Great British Spring Clean

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.