

Report for: **Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement PDG**

Date of Meeting:	15 September 2025
Subject:	Bin-It 123 – The future and the potential to add additional recycling streams
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Josh Wright, Cabinet Member for Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement
Responsible Officer:	Darren Beer, Operations Manager – Street Scene and Open Spaces Matthew Page, Head of People, Performance and Waste
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All – District Wide
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

This report considers the following:

- The paper builds upon a previous report presented to the Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement PDG in December 2024 where Members were presented various options to consider regarding potential extra service provision. This paper sets out potential future recycling collections that are being considered for implementation and how these best be considered in terms of their operational and cost implication, especially alongside the current depot reconfiguration which needs completing by June 2026.
- The paper reviews the progress made to date by Bin-It 123 and considers the key elements of the next strategic phase that are necessary to maximise recycling rates as well as increase resident engagement and support.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. To review the contents of this report.**
- 2. Make recommendations for Cabinet to approve the below strategy regarding reinvigorating resident awareness and participation with the Bin-It 123 scheme, as well as consider which potential additional recycling collections that would be a priority for the Council.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A report was presented earlier this year with recommendations to both the Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement (SDCI) PDG and Cabinet on the feasibility of various potential recycling initiatives which included a trial of collecting unusable metal pots and pans in the District. This was completed and subsequently recommended by both the SDCI PDG and Cabinet to implement future collections across the District, which will commence this Autumn.
- 1.2 In July 2021 a trial of three weekly waste collections was completed in both rural and urban areas of the District. This proved that three weekly waste collections were feasible, but also that education and communication were vital to helping secure resident engagement and support.
- 1.3 The decision to progress to three weekly waste collections was taken to commence from October 2022. This decision had the provision that additional side waste be collected for a substantive transitional period to allow residents time to become accustomed to the new scheme.
- 1.4 Following the election of the current administration in May 2023, the decision was taken to cease the collection of ‘side waste’ from waste collections in February 2024. This involved; targeted communications to raise awareness of the importance of recycling, using social media to explain the purpose and benefit of our collections and organising site tours for all Parish and Town representatives.
- 1.5 Between 01 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, Mid Devon were in the top 5% nationally for our recycling rate and lowest residual tonnage per household. Mid Devon was recognised by OFLOG for being one of the most improved recycling councils in the country and the council was shortlisted for the prestigious national LGC award in Environmental Services in June 2025.

2.0 Challenges and external influences

- 2.1 As with many of Mid Devon’s national counterparts, there is a need to encourage residents to pay closer attention to recycling. The Council’s

recycling rate dropped in the first quarter of this year from 59.78% to 58.41% compared to the same period last year. The Council is also considering further additional recycling collections alongside the redevelopment of the Carlu depot as it seeks to comply with national Environment Agency regulations.

- 2.2 In addition, the new extended producer responsibility for packaging scheme (pEPR) links funding arrangements with being efficient and effective. The significance of recycling to securing greater future funding makes this objective all the more important. This has come into place for the 2025-26 financial year. At present, Mid Devon has been informed (July 2025) that the anticipated payment value the Council is due to receive is £1.38 million, up from the previous estimate received in November 2024, which was the minimum guaranteed payment of £927k. This was as a result of the Council challenging the original local authority grouping in which Mid Devon was placed, which resulted in the Council being placed in a different grouping including other national authority comparators who have similar net efficient costs associated with collection of household packaging waste.
- 2.3 Although detail is currently light, the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) is a mechanism for managing the financial cost of reducing carbon emissions between different sectors of the economy. From January 2028, the ETS will be extended to include emissions from the incineration of waste and councils could face significant additional costs arising from this extension.
- 2.4 Regardless of the detail of any new scheme the direction of travel is clear. Local authorities will be financially rewarded for recycling more (while being efficient and effective), with additional costs for processing its residual waste.
- 2.5 There is a need to further review recycling and refuse collections in order to meet our Devon target of a 60% recycling rate by 2025 and the National target of 65% by 2035. Current and future budget provision will need to be considered when thinking through future proposals and how they are delivered.
- 2.6 A key consideration for this paper therefore is what activity and which priorities, both around the strategy to reinvigorate Bin-It 123 but also to increase recycling activity, are the most important.

3.0 Depot Reconfiguration

- 3.1 A Cabinet decision was approved in July 2025 to reconfigure the Carlu depot to ensure that it complies with new Environment Agency regulations due to come into practice in June 2026. After obtaining the necessary planning application, which has now been submitted, an application will be made to vary our site permit, so the collections can be aligned with the new site set up and arrangements.

- 3.2 This application will also include potential new recycling collections that the Council are wishing to trial and potentially implement, including disposable nappies and soft plastics (flexibles). A key purpose of this paper is to capture the future appetite and priorities regarding additional recycling collections and ensure the new site permit allows this activity to be implemented.
- 3.3 In terms of timescales the Council is due to receive the decision on the planning application by the end of 2025 and, if successful in obtaining this permission, will then apply for the new site permit in January 2026. The Council would then be in a position to start piloting new recycling activity in the first quarter of the 2026-27 financial year.

4.0 Reinvigorating focus on Bin-It 123 to increase recycling

There are three key elements to our strategic focus to reinvigorate residents with the importance of recycling; focused communication, enforcement reinforced by robust education and proactive incentivising of residents to increase their own recycling.

4.1 Communication strategy

- 4.1.1 It is vital that there is a clear narrative for residents on the importance of increasing our recycling. In addition to the environment objective of reducing our carbon footprint and meeting our net zero commitment, increased recycling secures further funding for the Council that can be reinvested into our public services (every 100 tonnes of recycling for the District per annum, equates to an additional 2.63kg of recycling per household per annum). Each resident has the opportunity to help benefit their neighbours and community by increasing their own recycling rate.
- 4.1.2 This message is important to secure resident buy in and support for our activities and with further recycling activity, which will be introduced in the future (e.g. collection of non-usable metal pots and pans), the Council will take each opportunity to remind residents of the opportunities that arise from increasing our District recycling rate.
- 4.1.3 The proactive communication steps taken to positively engage residents has been a key component of the Council's implementation of Bin-It 123 and achieving improved recycling rates. In addition to being a key component of reinvigorating the Bin-It 123 strategy outlined above, it will also be important to outline additional recycling activity introduced in the future and how residents both best access and support this new activity.
- 4.1.4 This communication will also give an opportunity to emphasise and reiterate key principles and practice around how our recycling rate can be further increased by residents. This will benefit both our local environment, reduce our carbon footprint but bring more income into the Council which will benefit our key public facing services.

4.2 Enforcement reinforced by robust education

- 4.2.1 The District Officers have an important role to play in helping enforce compliance from residents with Bin-It 123. There has been an increase in surveillance of known District hot spots and the Council is committed to utilising applicable legislation against those households that are consistently not complying with the Bin-It 123 scheme. The importance of environmental enforcement has been raised with Mid Devon by our national colleagues who have asked the service to outline to them both the steps that we already have taken and those we plan to take in the future.
- 4.2.2 A proactive and willing approach to enforce compliance with Bin-It 123 needs to be complimented by robust education. In recent months the Council has employed a team of temporary Recycling Advisers to offer practical advice and guidance to residents on how to increase their recycling. In addition to looking to make this resource a permanent feature of our service, the advice given to residents will stress that compliance with Bin-It 123 is the minimum standard the Council is asking for from residents.

4.3 Proactive incentivising of residents to increase recycling

- 4.3.1 A key component of the strategy around eliminating additional side waste collections was to incentivise and explain to residents the importance of recycling as much material as possible. This included site tours for Parish and Town representatives to explain the waste and recycling pathway but also circulate regular updates to show how different areas of the District were complying with Bin-It 123.
- 4.3.2 Additional steps the service now wish to take include highlighting good practice from residents in areas of the District as well as celebrating excellence in performance and strong individual contributions from households. Ideas include creating a network of community recycling champions to share best practice as well as rewarding occasional examples of excellent resident contribution.

5.0 The Art of the Possible; Future Recycling Collections

There is a natural desire to explore adding additional recycling collections to the permanent recycling collection. Key considerations to make when exploring these themes are the potential impact that an additional recycling collection would have on the overall recycling rate for the District as well as the potential commercial value of products that we may collect and then have to dispose.

5.1 Recycling and collection of nappies

- 5.1.1 A trial collecting disposable nappies was agreed by Cabinet to take place in the District at the January 2025 Cabinet. It subsequently transpired that the depot permit required amending to allow disposable nappies to be collected in the recycling.

- 5.1.2 As previously reported, priority with regards to nappies in the Waste Hierarchy is given first to reuse then recycling and finally disposal. Therefore, reusable nappies should be promoted as the first avenue for parents when thinking about the environment. There are schemes and advice available including Recycle Devon, which explores the use of real nappies over disposable nappies and signposts residents to the different types, how to wash them and also offer a free trial.
- 5.1.3 NappiCycle have pioneered a process allowing them to recover the material from used nappies. It uses friction washing to break down used nappies and absorbent hygiene products (AHPs) into clean reusable products. In Wales, the recycled nappies are then being used in asphalt for road surfacing, composite deck boards, and other secondary products.
- 5.1.4 This service can currently be provided to all Welsh Local Authorities. Trials are currently taking place in England.
- 5.1.5 The Council's discussions with NappiCycle to pilot a trial would include collecting nappies and AHPs from around 200 eligible properties by the team. They will then be collected from the depot by a contractor from NappiCycle and taken to the Welsh plant for recycling. The cost of the trial will be approximately £4.5K, which includes gate fees, transport to Wales, vehicles, staffing, fuel and materials.
- 5.1.6 Once complete, a full analysis will be presented to Members for consideration, which will include a cost and benefits exercise. Initial information suggests it will cost around £280k per annum to roll this scheme out fully into the District (should it be so desired following the pilot). This would offset approximately 1,000 tonnes of nappies and AHPs from the residual waste stream from around 3,500 properties. This equates to around 4 million nappies collected per year.

5.2 Recycling and collection of flexible plastics

- 5.2.1 Government have mandated the collection of soft plastics (flexibles) by all local authorities from March 2027. There is no current detail on how this is going to be achieved and whether new burdens will pay for this.
- 5.2.2 Currently soft plastics can be taken to supermarkets in the District, which is supported by the FlexCollect scheme. The UK Plastics Pact Roadmap for 2025 includes the following takeaways for the supply chain; as far as possible, flexible plastic packaging needs to be designed to be recycled using existing infrastructure, collecting flexible plastic packaging in the longer term needs to happen directly from households in order to capture the maximum amount of material. The timing of this future collection is dependent on the outcome of ongoing Government consultation.

- 5.2.3 There is an existing network of collection points at supermarkets with a plan for the number of collection points to increase, with all adopting a consistent approach to accepting all types of bags and wrapping. Citizens wish to be able to recycle, with 26% currently willing to use supermarket collection points. Future work will be undertaken to understand and implement the best methods to collect (from kerbside) soft flexible plastic packaging.
- 5.2.4 Significant investment will also be required regarding the flexible plastic packaging and recycling infrastructure. Further end markets outside of food packaging will be required to make this work with collaboration across the whole value chain being needed to make this work.
- 5.2.3 As previously highlighted, points for future consideration would include how the product will be collected along with the potential volume of the material. The configuration of the current fleet of recycling vehicles would only allow it to be collected in one of the existing stillages, such as the one used for paper or it would need to be collected with plastic and cans, then manually separated by additional depot staff.

5.3 Recycling and collection of coffee pods

- 5.3.1 As has previously been reported, focus for the Podback scheme was via posted returns of coffee pods, supermarkets and high street coffee shops (pick up and drop off) and the use of Household Waste Recycling Centres as disposal points, which are currently being supported by Podback. One supermarket chain has begun rolling the scheme out across all its 350 stores, including Tiverton. Podback have said they have collected 10 million pods from the supermarket so far in 2025, equating to 197 tonnes. Another supermarket chain has partnered with Podback to provide convenient ways to recycle their used coffee pods in over 600 of its stores and there are talks of expanding this to other supermarkets.
- 5.3.2 Podback has installed 200 drop-off points at Household Waste and Recycling Centres across the UK, now serving 30% of UK households. These allow residents to bring pods in any container and deposit them loose into designated bins.
- 5.3.3 Podback have also said that, plastic and aluminium pods are recycled in the UK. The coffee grounds are transformed by anaerobic digestion into renewable energy and soil improver, with the aluminium and plastic from the used pods being used in the manufacture of products such as drinks cans, building products and industrial packaging.
- 5.3.4 A pilot would not be able to be completed until after the roll out of collecting pots and pans due to the limited storage space on the waste and recycling vehicles, as one option would be to utilise the same stillage as that for collecting textiles, small WEEE and now pots and pans. Collecting using the existing fleet would minimise costs. The service with Podback is designed to be cost neutral and no income would be received, but the scheme would

divert coffee pods from being disposed in the waste stream and marginally increase recycling rates.

5.4 Promoting other recyclables

- 5.4.1 Following some background work completed by one of the Members, the Street Scene service will update the MDDC website to include details where residents can take their used medicinal blister packs to be recycled, both empty and with tablets. This includes empty blister packs being returned to all Superdrug stores that have a pharmacy and to some Boots stores including Tiverton.
- 5.4.2 Toothpaste tubes can now be recycled as manufacturers have moved towards plastic only tubes rather than layered plastic and foil tubes as previously used as packaging (this involves a simple check that it says 'recyclable' on the tube).
- 5.4.3 Not everyone is aware that many bathroom and kitchen products can also be recycled including the cardboard toilet roll tubes, shampoo bottles, shaving bottles and cleaning bottles, which will be included in future communication plans.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and prioritise potential future recycling streams to be explored once the site permit has been obtained for the future site reconfiguration. Consideration needs to be given to which streams will help further increase our recycling rate and analysis on costs, as well as the all-important reinvigoration of Bin-It 123 and accompanying strategy.
- 6.2 The contents of this report need to be carefully considered alongside the numerous government initiatives e.g. pEPR, ETS, Simpler Recycling, Environment Agency regulations, food waste funding, etc, that need to be implemented. However, building on the significant progress made by the service to ensure it continues to be one of the highest performing national authorities remains a key Council priority objective.
- 6.3 As an authority Mid Devon looks to promote the Waste Hierarchy and strongly encourage residents to review what they then do themselves with regards to waste at home around reduce and then reuse before recycling.

Financial Implications

It should be noted that an increase in recycling tonnages for each material will increase our recycling credits for that material. This increase also has an effect on the income received from each product at this current time. At present this is difficult to determine due to the constant variations in market values.

Legal Implications

Under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act, Waste Collection Authorities may by means of notice specify how householders present their waste for collection. There will legal requirements to adhere to legislation around Simpler Recycling.

Risk Assessment

In the event that any future changes are trialled (or mandated by government) a register of risks would need to be compiled in advance of those proposed service changes. There are potential risks, including impacts on; carbon emissions, the carbon footprint, operational costs and other resources required (from containers to personnel).

Impact on Climate Change

An increase in recycling would further enable the Council to reduce its carbon footprint and hit its carbon net zero commitment. Recycling is one of the most 'mainstream' concepts of addressing overarching sustainability goals, therefore it is vital to make sure that the council is maximising the effectiveness of both its scheme design, but also its operational implementation.

Equalities Impact Assessment

The service will continue to provide assisted collections according to the current policy; considerations for residents residing in HMOs, flats and properties with no outside space will be included in any proposed project plan. The service would review the lessons learnt and best practice from recent changes along with a review of other councils who have successfully implemented strategic changes to their waste collections operations. Consideration will need to be sought regarding a potential bin levy and the impact for those in receipt of Council Tax Reductions

Relationship to Corporate Plan

This report identifies with the Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement section of the Corporate Plan for 2024-2028, and in particular 5.2 – *We will increase our recycling services, enabling our communities to achieve even higher levels of recycling.* Supporting and enabling customers to recycle and reduce residual waste contributes to Mid Devon District Councils' commitment to the Devon Climate Emergency.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Date: 2.9.25

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 2.9.25

Chief Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 2.9.25

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 29/08/2025

Cabinet member notified: (yes)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Darren Beer, Operations Manager – Street Scene and Open Spaces

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Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers:

5.1 [Nappies - Recycle Devon](#)

5.1 [Local Authorities – NappiCycle](#)

5.2.1 [Household collections — Flexible Plastic Fund](#)

5.2.2 [Creating-a-circular-economy-for-flexible-plastic-packaging-Roadmap-2025-v2May21_0.pdf](#)

5.3.1 [Podback](#)

5.4.1 [Recycling medicine packaging and blister packs: everything you need to know | Recycle Now](#)

5.4.1 [Waste & Recycling | Environmental, Social, & Governance | Superdrug](#)