

More than 13,000 people fail to keep recycling appointments in West Lothian

More than 13,000 people booked slots at West Lothian's recycling centres but never turned up with their rubbish.

Despite the cut in hours introduced last October and the introduction of the booking system there's been no loss of customers with 191,000 bookings made between October and April.

Councillors heard that officers are finalising proposals to install automatic number plate recognition at CRC sites to speed up the access for drivers.

The Environment and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, (PDSP) was told "Officers continue to remind customers of the importance of cancelling their booking if they do not intend to utilise it."

In April last year, the Council Executive agreed to reduce the opening hours across the council's five Community Recycling Centres (CRC) from 280 hours per week to 144 hours per week.

The changes were to deliver budget savings of £336,000 per year and came into effect from 2 October 2023.

Controversially it cut opening times to one day a week and weekends in Broxburn and Linlithgow.

The first six months showed bookings across the five sites

totalled 191,395 from 2 October to 30 April. During that time 219,000 half hour slots were available. A total of 13,601 bookings were “no shows”.

David Maule the Interim Waste Operations manager told the PDSP that, given the level of bookings, complaints had been few and far between.

In his report he said: “A total of 221 CRC enquiries were raised from October 2023 to April 2024 in relation to CRC sites, 41 complaints and 180 enquiries.”

Complaints about the reduced operating hours topped the list but had tailed off by the end of April. Other subjects which brought the most queries concerned van and trailer access and booking questions.

A project is currently under way to install automated number plate recognition cameras (ANPR) at the CRCs. ANPR cameras would be integrated with the traffic barriers and the booking system to fully automate the entry and exit system to the CRC's.

This will improve customer service- visitors will not have to wait for a site staff member to manually check their vehicle registration to match it with a valid booking on arrival. It will also replaces labour intensive check in system currently in place, freeing up operatives for other site management tasks

Mr Maule's report promised ongoing review of the sites: “The operation of the booking system is also kept under review. There have been no service disruptions to the system since it went live.

“There have been some customer requests for the ability to enhance booking slot visibility across all five sites on the booking web page. Initial feedback from the software suppliers is that this is likely to lead to slower performance of the

booking system.

“Regular feedback from customers will continue to be gathered and discussed with software developers to determine whether system improvements are feasible.”

Conservative councillor Alison Adamson asked: “Has there been any attempt to follow up on no shows? There’s a lot of anecdotal evidence of people booking a slot ‘ just in case’.”

She added to the praise she said she had heard at a recent community council for the way the new system was operating, and how helpful staff at the CRC sites are.

Mr Maule said the level of no shows was running at 7% which is similar to other councils which operate similar schemes. “It’s not unusual, but we want to try to reduce it. It is a work in progress.”

Councillor Diane Calder had asked if Broxburn hours could be extended and added “I do feel the site hours are a bit restrictive in Broxburn and I think if we could extend we might not have as many no shows.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter