

Food Waste Collections

PLACE Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday 2nd September 2024

Background to Food Waste Collections

Food waste and climate change

Globally, food production is responsible for 30% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, half of this coming from land conversion to agriculture and the rest from production itself. Though there is uncertainty about the precise figures, around one third of all food is wasted. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization reports that if global food waste was a country, it would be the third largest GHG emitting country in the world.

According to the Waste and Resource Action Programme (NGO and advisors to Government on waste and recycling), the UK's avoidable food waste in 2011 gave rise to at least 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents per year (an amount of GHGs with a similar warming potential to carbon dioxide, commonly written as CO₂e), out of a UK total of around 500 million tonnes. Approximately three quarters of these emissions arise in the UK and the remainder from overseas. Unavoidable food waste is responsible for at least a further 0.25 million tonnes of CO₂e. These figures do not take into account the food that is wasted on the farm where we do not currently have reliable data.

To highlight the impact on the environment, by taking food waste to an AD plant rather than to landfill, there's a huge carbon saving to be made. Every tonne of food waste that is sent to an AD plant creates less than 10 kilogrammes of CO₂ equivalent. Every tonne of food waste sent to landfill creates 650 kilogrammes of CO₂.

For every tonne of waste sent to energy from waste, each tonne of municipal solid waste incinerated typically releases between 700 and 1700 kilogrammes of CO₂. This includes emissions of both fossil CO₂ (e.g. from burning plastics) and biogenic CO₂ (e.g. from burning wood, paper and food), as the waste sent to energy from waste facilities is invariably pre-mixed prior to incineration.

Legislation

The duty of local authorities to collect and dispose of household waste is set out in Section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Environment Act 2021 was enacted into UK Law in November 2021. This made several changes to the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and mandated that all local authorities in England provide a separate, weekly food waste recycling service to all households via the 'Simpler Recycling' legislation that became law in May 2024.

The scope of the food waste to be collected under the Environment Act 2021 includes 'all household food material that has become a waste, whether processed, partially processed or unprocessed, intended to be, or reasonably expected to be consumed by humans and including any substance, including water, intentionally incorporated into the food during its manufacture, preparation or treatment. This includes food scraps, tea bags, and coffee grounds.

The date by which local authorities must comply with the regulations and implement a separate, weekly food waste recycling service has been confirmed by Government as 31st March 2026. However, Blackburn with Darwen BC has an approved delay to introduce a weekly food waste collection service from 1 June 2026, to coincide with the cessation of the existing residual waste disposal contract with Suez.

The 'Simpler Recycling' legislation also requires businesses to adhere to stricter recycling practices to simplify recycling nationwide. Micro-firms (businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees) will have additional time to update their practices, reflecting the flexibility in commercial collection contracts for non-household municipal premises. By 31st March 2025, non-household municipal premises, including schools, municipal buildings, but excluding micro-firms as detailed above, must implement recycling practices for **all** recyclable waste streams including food waste collections, except garden waste and plastic film. By 31st March 2027, micro-firms (businesses with fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees) must recycle all recyclable waste streams, except garden waste, but including food waste. Additionally, the collection of plastic film from all properties will begin by 31st March 2027.

Domestic Food Waste Collections and Current Collection Services in BwDBC

Currently, all households in Blackburn with Darwen are provided with separate bin collections for non-recyclable waste (burgundy bin), and for the recycling of paper and card (blue bin) and glass, cans, and plastic bottles (grey bin). Households can also choose to recycle garden waste using the chargeable green waste service (brown bin). The introduction of a food waste collection service will result in all households receiving an additional outside bin for the separation of food waste.

The Council undertakes statistical study via a waste compositional analysis of its residual waste and recycling collection bin contents every 2 years, so has a statistical knowledge of what is being disposed of across the borough.

To provide some indication of the tonnages of food waste produced by households within Blackburn with Darwen, our residents create over 14,000 tonnes of food waste each year. Food waste amounts to over 40% of the contents of the burgundy bin, with half of that food waste either still in date or edible. This information is from the waste analyses which the Council has undertaken every two years and has done for the past six years. The percentage of food waste in the burgundy bin has remained constant at 40% (most other councils are around 25%), this is despite communications campaigns around reducing food waste being undertaken by the Council. The tonnage information has been identified via the waste analysis we

undertake every 2 years across the borough, which identifies the type of waste disposed of across varying waste types.

Evidence from councils that have already introduced food waste collection services across their borough shows that around a third of households participate in the food waste collection service. If Blackburn with Darwen mirror the participation rates achieved in other boroughs, we would expect to collect approximately 4,600 tonnes of food waste per annum from households in Blackburn with Darwen.

The council has for the last 2 years, pushed responsible food waste management across it's waste and recycling calendars, the Christmas waste and recycling leaflet and also various Council media platforms. This will continue for the foreseeable future.

New Burdens Funding

As a new statutory service, New Burdens Funding has been committed by the previous Government to be made available to local authorities, helping to contribute to the implementation and running costs of the service. However, New Burdens Funding will not be provided for any costs incurred due to the impact the introduction of separate food waste collections has on existing residual energy from waste collection contracts, which is why Blackburn with Darwen BC has an approved Ministerial delay for implementation, which is termed a Transitional Arrangement.

The specific Transitional Arrangement for a particular authority has been stipulated in the commencement regulations and the date, being the end of this Transitional Arrangement will be the date by which separate, weekly food waste collections need to be in place, which for Blackburn with Darwen BC is the 1st June 2026. However, as the Government position is that collecting food waste for treatment by anaerobic digestion (AD) remains the preferred outcome, Government will contact local authorities with a Transitional Arrangement on an annual basis to discuss whether food waste collections can be introduced sooner than contract expiry dates.

DEFRA stated that subject to Ministerial and Cabinet Collective Agreement, local authorities will receive New Burdens Funding to cover: -

- Capital costs for the procurement of new vehicles and containers.
- Ongoing funding to cover the ongoing costs incurred by local authorities to run services, subject to future spending reviews.

DEFRA have confirmed that £295m has been allocated across all local authorities to cover one-off capital funding for vehicles and containers, to be distributed via a funding formula, with payments confirmed to Councils in January 2024 being provided through Section 31 grants.

Letters were sent to local authority Chief Executives in England in January 2024 to confirm their allocated funding on a non-ring-fenced basis. The funding has been calculated in collaboration with the Waste and Resources Action Programme

(WRAP). It has been modelled using a bottom-up modelling approach that has involved creating modules for common service areas, typically operated within each council area. The key modules are kerbside, flatted/communal and remote rural properties. The modules each contain standard groupings to account for variations within each council area to reflect the different cost profiles for each housing stock type.

The cost values are scaled by the numbers of properties reported in each council area to provide a unique cost allocation for each council. The model accounts for several variables including rurality, levels of deprivation, number of kerbside and flatted properties, configuration of flatted properties, food waste yields, vehicle and container unit costs, and average collection round sizes.

Blackburn with Darwen has been allocated and received capital funding of £1,157,421 from DEFRA, comprised of the following breakdown: -

Kitchen Caddies (plus spares)	Kerbside Caddies (plus spares)	Communal wheeled bins (plus spares)	Vehicles (plus spares)	Total Funding
£132,930	£293,181	15,210	£176,100	£1,157,421

Anticipated cost to Council

Kitchen Caddies (plus spares)	Kerbside Caddies (plus spares)	Communal wheeled bins (plus spares)	Vehicles (plus spares)	Total Funding
£132,840	£330,460	£16,400	£849,000	£1,328,700

Shortfall of £171,279 was agreed that it would be covered by funding from the Council's Capital Fund if needed.

Blackburn with Darwen BC has had a Food Waste report approved by the Council's Executive Board at the beginning of July 2024, regarding the introduction of the service, the procurement of equipment and vehicles, plus funding approval for any shortfall in capital needed to set up the boroughwide domestic collection service.

The decision regarding New Burdens Revenue funding is expected to be announced for autumn 2024 by Government.

As there are several procurement exercises to be undertaken regarding the potential ongoing revenue costs, which includes for the end treatment and destination of the food waste once collected, it is not easy to predict an overall cost for the service. Treatment and destination costs aside, the new service is expected to cost the Council as below each year:-

Caddies and Bins £105,000

Liners £70,000

Vehicles	£381,000
Staffing	£759,000
Total	£1,114,000

At present, the Council pays £150.01 per tonne for the disposal of residual waste.

The present cost of food waste anaerobic digestion per tonne is £0, yes, zero £s.

Food Waste Collections – Service Delivery

In terms of how the food waste collection service will operate from the resident's perspective; residents will be provided with a food waste caddy (5 litres), food waste caddy liners and a larger food waste bin (23 litres). Residents will place a food caddy liner in the food caddy, the caddy should ideally be placed in the kitchen as a reminder to recycle all food leftovers and peelings. Once the food caddy is full, the caddy liner should be tied by the resident and transferred to the larger food waste bin.

The larger food waste bin would likely be stored outside the property by the residents, the bin has a self-locking lid, to stop animals accessing the food waste. The food waste bin would be placed at the front of the property on collection day by the residents. The in-house collection teams will take the food waste bin to the collection vehicle and the contents of the food waste bin tipped into the vehicle, with the bin then returned to where it was collected from.

A roll of food caddy liners will be provided free of charge to residents prior to the start of the food waste collection service. Residents can request a new roll of liners when required by simply tying an unused liner around the handle of the food waste bin when leaving the bin out for collection and when the bin is emptied, a new roll of liners will be left at the property.

Currently, an assisted collection service is available to anyone who needs additional help with their collections, either on a temporary or permanent basis. When implemented, waste food collections will be added to this existing service if required, although food waste collections are expected to take place from the front of properties, with the food waste bins only 25 litres in size.

The collection vehicle when full, would transfer the food waste load to a suitable site for either transfer onward or processing. This new food waste recycling service will need to be tendered.

A full communications plan will be needed for the introduction of the food waste collection service, with funding from the Transitional revenue funding from Government expected to cover this. Liaison with the Councils' PR and Communications team will be undertaken to identify the best available strategy for the implementation of the scheme, based on the funding available.

Current issues and risks

The risks of the introduction of food waste collections can be summarised from the following: -

- Recruitment delays as 23 staff would be needed at the same time for the boroughwide commencement of the service.
- Delays from producers in providing kitchen caddies, food waste bins, delivery of these items and collection vehicles, as all councils in England will require the same or similar items at the same time, thus seeing long lead times for delivery to the Council, as well as potentially inflated costs in a sellers' market. Procurement of these items will be necessary.
- The lack of suitable AD plants locally available. Suez has Planning permission for an AD plant at their Lower Eccleshill Road Darwen site, but it is unlikely to be operational for 2026 and is speculated to be open in 2028. A tendering exercise will be needed for a suitable service supplier to be available from June 2026.
- The capital funding made available by Defra is not sufficient for the costs of the service, with the kitchen caddies, kitchen bins and vehicles likely to cost circa £171,000 more than the available funding received by the Council. This figure may change as and when all English councils require the items of equipment and vehicles.
- We do not yet know what level of Transitional Revenue, New Burdens Funding will be made available to the council for the delivery of the service.
- Side waste will no longer be taken due to residents having potentially 40% more space in their burgundy bins.
- To learn lessons, an early trial collection service could help offset any introduction of the service.