



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

3rd October 2023

Report of Councillor Patsy Ellis &
Councillor Rhys Baker

Domestic Battery Recycling Service

Report Author

Adrian Ash Interim Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection



adrian.ash@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

This report provides information regarding options for the introduction of a domestic battery recycling service.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Recommends that consideration be given to the options in terms of which provides the most cost efficient and sustainable method.

Decision Information	
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Clean and sustainable environment
Which wards are impacted?	All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 This report contains a number of options and the financial implications of each are detailed accordingly. The financial implications of whichever option is proposed, if supported by Cabinet, will be incorporated into the budget setting proposals for 2024/25.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 Local Authorities are not required to collect used batteries from households. Any legal requirements fall upon the retailers and distributors which is enforced by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS).

Completed by: Graham Watts (Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer)

Health and Safety

- 1.3 A full assessment of the risk and required mitigation, including a safe system of work and appropriate training for operatives would be required. Appropriate containers would need to be procured to ensure the safe collection, storage and transportation of batteries from general household waste.

Consult with Phil Swinton (Delete if not applicable)

Completed by: Phil Swinton

Climate Change

- 1.4 Recycling can help to extract the raw materials from used batteries and support the move towards a circular economy. The options for battery collection set out within the report are not expected to generate additional trips for the Council's waste collection vehicles, therefore not adding to the carbon emissions of operating the vehicle fleet. The outlined Option b) ensures the principle that the 'producer pays', as they are responsible for the collection and onward recycling of the product.

Consult with Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Currently Local Authorities are not required to collect used batteries from households and the Department for Environment & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) consultation (Environment Act 2021) on the separate collection of recyclables does not propose to introduce this.
- 2.2 South Kesteven Council's waste operations as with many local authorities does not directly collect batteries as part of their recycling initiatives. Although, they are accepted at the local household waste recycling centres within the district.
- 2.3 Members raised concerns in respect of the safe recycling of batteries as a result of an incident in March 2023, when a refuse vehicle was forced to empty its smoking and smouldering contents onto the ground in Ingoldsby, Lincolnshire. The source cannot be confirmed but may have been due to a suspected spark caused by the battery within a single use vape.
- 2.4 Retailers and distributor do have responsibilities which means they must offer free collection points ('takeback') of waste or used batteries if they sell or supply 32kg or more of portable batteries per year, (this equates to one pack of 4 AA batteries per day). This requirement is enforced by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS).

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Officers were tasked to look at a number of options in respect of safe battery recycling which also included reviewing the scheme of another local authority who are collecting directly from the householder.

3.2 **South Kesteven District Council**

3.3 **Regulations** – South Kesteven District Council is a waste collection authority and as such does not hold the appropriate Environmental Agency Licence to store batteries at its depot.

3.4 However, Lincolnshire County Council have indicated that they would be willing to set up an arrangement for batteries to be tipped at the Waste Transfer Station or Household Waste Recycling Centre in Grantham, but the types of battery would need to be agreed along with the method and receptacle the batteries are collected in from the householders.

3.5 **Operational Implications** - The refuse fleet is not currently adapted to carry batteries separately. However, it is considered that a suitable container could be sourced and attached without impacting on the vehicle manufacturer's design specification.

3.6 As indicated in 3.4, if a proposed scheme were to be introduced either the Council would need to provide an approved bag / container for householders (this may be an ongoing cost) or the resident would need to present the batteries in a suitable receptacle / bag which was acceptable to the disposal authority. If this taken forward, then guidance will be given regarding the suitability of any bag used by the resident.

3.7 Adding batteries as a separate collection is unlikely to add any significant time in terms of collections from properties or on a round (any possible increased collection time would be dependent on the take up of the scheme and method used for collection).

3.8 **Other Collection Authorities**

3.9 It is understood that Rushcliffe Borough Council's has been running a battery collection scheme for a number of years which has evolved over time. The scheme currently recycles approximately 1 ton of household batteries each month and carries out the operation as follows: (Wow! That is an amazing number)

- Initially Rushcliffe Borough Council provided a battery bag for each resident, this was to raise the profile of recycling batteries and the take up of the scheme. Although, now residents can request replacement bags or use their own bags. This can include AAA, AA, C and D size household batteries as well as button, mobile phone, laptop and rechargeable batteries.
- Residents are told 'Not to Overfill the Bag' and to leave the bag on any colour bin on any collection day.
- The battery bags are collected and stored in a caged box on the vehicle and offloaded at the end of the round for onward transportation and recycling.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 Other Options:

- a) **Status Quo** - Continue as currently, with residents using the take back scheme and household waste recycling centres.

No Additional Cost

- b) **Communications Campaign** - Carry out a managed communications campaign promoting the “take back” scheme through social media, the Council’s website and other communication channels to raise the profile and benefits of recycling batteries safely.

Cost – up to £5,000 depending on the type, timescale and extent of campaign.

- c) **Kerbside Collection** - Implement a kerbside scheme with bags provided for residents use (supply of 4 bags per annum but has an ongoing cost)

Cost £71,800

- d) **Kerbside Collection** - Implement a kerbside scheme with residents providing their own bags.

Cost £13,000

4.2 Summary of Estimated Costs

Item	Initial Cost (bags provided)	Ongoing Costs (exc. inflation bags provided)	Cost (residents' providing own bags)
Retrofitting of 32 vehicles	£8,000		£8,000
Annual letter delivery and supply of WEEE Bags (4) to all households (70,000 @ £0.84) (Ongoing Costs)	£58,800	£58,800	
Comms campaign / ongoing	£5,000		£5,000
Total	£71,800	£58,800	£13,000

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1 Members are invited to consider the following points and recommend a chosen option.

- Local Authorities are not required to collect used batteries from households.
- The collection of batteries shows commitment from the Council for recycling additional items safely.
- The introduction of a battery recycling scheme would not necessarily eliminate incidents of waste collection vehicle conflagration.

- The March 2023 incident is the only recorded one of this type in SKDC.
- There are varying costs for each of the options which the service will need to absorb as detailed in 4.2 should a scheme be implemented.
- Retailers and distributor have responsibilities if they sell or supply 32kg or more of portable batteries per year, in terms of providing free collection points 'takeback scheme'.
- The 'takeback scheme' scheme aligns with producer responsibility as identified in the Environment Act – 'producer pays'.
- There are significant number of retailers within walking, cycling and driving distance within South Kesteven District Council who provide containers for the deposit of batteries - Morrisons, Asda, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Tesco, Lidl, Co-op along with other independent retailers).
- Batteries can also be taken to the local Household Waste Recycling Centres.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1 – Rushcliffe Borough Council – Battery Recycling