

Meeting:	Decision Session - Executive
Meeting date:	7 October 2025
Report of:	Dave Atkinson, Director of Environment and Regulatory Services
Portfolio of:	Councillor Kent, Executive Member for the Environment and Climate Emergency

Decision Report: Household waste recycling centre (HWRC) operations

Subject of Report

1. To consider future options for the operating of the city's Household Waste Recycling Centre's (HWRC).
2. In recent years, traffic build up and congestion has significantly increased causing disruption to local businesses and organisations around James Street and York
3. There are pressing safety concerns for road users and pedestrians, with drivers becoming frustrated in long queues. In addition, congestion is causing disruption to CYC operations entering and leaving the Eco Depot.

Benefits and Challenges

4. By introducing an accessible booking system, residents of York will be able to plan their visit to Hazel Court HWRC without the need to wait in long queues. Key to this is the configuration and flexibility of the system to ensure all residents are able to use, but the usage is managed through the day in order to reduce the impact on traffic on James Street and Hazel Court.

5. Moving to a booking system will reduce traffic congestion on Hazel Court and James Street, meaning a controlled and safer highway for road users and pedestrians.
6. Government do not recommend either way on having HWRC booking systems, however they do state that booking systems should not be obstructive. By Towthorpe remaining on a free to attend basis, York will have two HWRC sites that operate meaning residents have flexibility.

Policy Basis for Decision

7. **Environment** - The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there is at least one HWRC in the city and available for residents to dispose of household waste. There are currently two HWRC sites where waste and recyclable materials are separated and sent for processing and where possible recycled.
8. The Council's transport strategy is to reduce vehicle movements and congestion across the city. A booking system would provide the flexibility to limit the number of vehicles able to visit Hazel Court HWRC at certain times in the day reducing congestion and exhaust emissions.
9. **Affordability** – HWRC sites are free to visit and dispose of domestic household waste or recycling. Only commercial operators are charged for disposing of waste. Having hybrid operating across two sites would mean that residents have accessible options to dispose of household waste.

Financial Strategy Implications

10. The cost of operating a booking system is up to £15k per year and an annual cost estimated to be around £5k per year for a reciprocal arrangement with NYC, if NYC implementation a registration system that restricts usage of their HWRCs to residents only.
11. North Yorkshire Council (NYC) are proposing their HWRC's will only be available to NYC residents only which will be considered at

their Executive meeting later in 2025. Should CYC and NYC agree a reciprocal arrangement, this could cost CYC circa £5k per year.

12. Longer term options to relocate the City Centre HWRC are being explored. This would represent a significant capital investment if an appropriate site can be identified (circa £5m - £10m). This would be the subject of a future paper.

Recommendation and Reasons

13. The Executive Member is recommended to:

- I. Approve the introduction of a accessible, flexible online booking system for Hazel Court HWRC only. Initially for 12 months and monitor traffic congestion, and success through customer satisfaction. This will also require an option for residents to phone and book a slot to ensure we offer an accessible service to all.

Reason: To reduce the traffic congestion on Hazel Court and James Street, mitigate risks to all types of road users and allow local businesses to operate business as usual.

- II. Agree that Towthorpe HWRC will operate without a booking system in place and remain as an open to attend.

Reason: So there are no obstructions in place and residents remain to have a flexible site they are able to access ad-hoc.

- III. To note, a number of options will be considered during the transition to a booking system that will give residents that opportunity to dispose of limited streams (e.g. garden waste, wood) at local sites

Reason: To ensure residents are able to manage their household waste in during the transition.

- IV. To note that longer term options for Household Waste Recycling Centres in York are being explored.

Background

14. City of York Council has aims through the “Let’s talk less rubbish” regional strategy to minimise material going into waste streams and to offer opportunities to reuse and recycle materials. The Council has worked hard to drive these aims forward and the HWRC network has been a critical component in realising these outcomes.
15. The Council have two HWRC sites. Hazel Court; located close to the city centre (opened 2006) and Towthorpe; located on the outskirts of the city towards the west (opened 1993 license transferred to Yorwaste 2000).
16. Both sites are closed on a Wednesday in line with North Yorkshire. Towthorpe has been closed on a Wednesday since 2013 and Hazel Court has been closed on a Wednesday since May 2024 with an associated cost saving of £70k.
17. Hazel Court site is the busier of the two sites, with most residents opting to visit this site to dispose of their refuse and recyclable items. Annex A shows an approximate split in resident numbers in relation to nearest HWRC location.
18. Hazel Court also accepts commercial operators who are charged to use the facility. According to ANPR data commercial operators contribute to 5% of the visits to Hazel Court, which generates income. Towthorpe does not have a weighbridge and cannot therefore charge for commercial waste. As a result, it cannot currently accept commercial operators.
19. Both sites operate on a time free to attend basis i.e. no booking appointment required.
20. The number of visits to both HWRC’s have increased in the last 3 years (Annex D), however Hazel Court HWRC material tonnages have marginally fallen in the last 3 years (Annex C). This indicates residents are visiting more often but with less materials.
21. There are several commercial businesses on James Street and Hazel Court. In recent years several large businesses have opened premises, namely Screwfix, Jewsons, Cemex and Lidl.

These businesses are bringing welcome trade to the city, however this contributes to the traffic on the junction of James Street and Hazel Court.

22. The congestion, as well as affecting local businesses, is also impacting on CYC services delivered from Hazel Court.
23. Given the central location of the Hazel Court HWRC, it is not a location that attracts visitors from out of area. Analysis across September 2025 suggest only 2.2% of visitors are from out of area. Towthorpe HWRC is near the boundary with North Yorkshire and attracts a slightly higher number of out of areas visits (3.6%). Annex E shows the data collected for this period.
24. In the last 12 months, the Councils web and communications team have displayed information and pro-active messaging through various channels to encourage residents to check traffic congestion before travelling to HWRC's, as well as encouraging residents to consider visiting Towthorpe HWRC instead of Hazel Court HWRC or visiting at quieter times of the day. However, the traffic congestion around Hazel Court has remained.
25. Residents to the south-west of the city visit the HWRC at Tadcaster which is a North Yorkshire Council (NYC) operated HWRC. The number of York residents visiting NYC HWRC's is unknown.
26. Later in 2025, North Yorkshire Council (NYC) Executive will be receiving a paper on HWRC operation and this may lead to NYC restricting the usage of their HWRC network to NYC residents only. This could encourage more use of the Council's HWRCs by out of area residents. If this is put in place, NYC and CYC will work together to ensure residents on the boundary of NYC can still use the NYC HWRCs.
27. In the longer term, options for the provision of the HWRC network in York are being explored. This would likely be the identification of a site that would better serve York's growing population. This will be the subject of a future report.

Consultation Analysis

28. Officers have received multiple forms of communication from local business owners and residents expressing their concerns at the traffic congestions.
29. Business owners on Hazel Court and James Street claim to have had their trade impacted as customers are unable to access their premisses for retail or appointment purposes. Officers and Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency met with businesses based in Hazel Court and the surrounding area in August 2025 to hear their concerns and how the congestion has impacted their businesses.
30. Residents have contacted the Council to express their concern for safety of road users including cyclists and pedestrians. Those car users who are not visiting the HWRC, often become frustrated and make dangerous manoeuvres in the highway.
31. Place Scrutiny Committee acknowledged the need to improve safety for all road users and supported recommendations within this report. The following was noted as part of feedback:
 - I. Consider York Car Club vehicles and how they would be able to visit HWRC's should a registration system be used given these may not be registered to a York address.
 - II. Business or company car vehicles for residents and how they would be able to visit HWRC's should a registration system be used given these may not be registered to a York address.
 - III. Ensure family or friends visiting residents in York would be able to visit HWRC's on residents behalf should a registration system be used given these may not be registered to a York address.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

32. The HWRC has the capacity to receive the demand that is currently been seen through the course of the day, i.e. the congestion isn't preventing residents from disposing of household waste, but they are being required to queue. This is exacerbating traffic issues at the junction of Hazel Court and James Street, which then has a knock-on effect along James Street in both directions. Access to commercial businesses has been affected, as well as operational vehicles from the CYC eco depot and public transport. As a consequence, the environment for all road users at the junction is becoming less safe.
33. The solution to the issue is to put in place a mechanism to even out the demand through the course of the day, particularly where the data is showing peaks. There are a number of mitigations that have been explored to achieve this.

i) Divert commercial visitors to Towthorpe HWRC

The data shows that only 5% of visitors to the Hazel Court HWRC are commercial visitors. This mitigation would likely reduce demand, but not to a level where the congestion around Hazel Court and James Street is impacted. This may also creating more journey miles within the administrative area, which is contrary to the Council's ambitions around the Local Transport Strategy.

A weigh bridge would need to be installed for commercial customers. This would come at a cost to the Council.

ii) Implement a registration system that will restrict usage of the Hazel Court HWRC to residents only

The Council operates Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) at both HWRC sites, however, a system would need to be implemented that would allow a resident to register number plates to their residence with an intervention at the HWRC if the visitor is a non-resident (or hasn't registered). This could slow down the process of accessing the site.

Although this could be a future consideration, the evidence suggests that the majority of visitors are York residents (97.8%),

so this mitigation is likely not to have an impact of traffic and congestion

iii) Implement a booking system

The implementation of an online booking system would enable the management of demand to the HWRC by offering a number of slots to book every half an hour. The purpose of this is to manage traffic around the Hazel Court HWRC, so it is suggested a trial there only and not Towthorpe using the booking system operated during Covid would be appropriate. Longer term if this is successful, the procurement of an external booking system can be explored.

The system can be configured to be flexible in terms of management of demand.

Central government do not state a preference on booking systems but do say booking systems should not obstructive <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/household-waste-recycling-centres-diy-waste-disposal-charges-and-booking-systems/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-government-response#call-for-evidence-on-booking-systems-at-household-waste-recycling-centres> If both sites were on booking systems then this could be viewed as obstructive. There are concerns that internal departments would not have the resource currently due to the ongoing CRM project that is a corporate priority.

Work will be done to ensure that offer is accessible.

iv) Status quo

Health and safety risks to road users and pedestrians at the James Street/Hazel court junction. The traffic congestion will remain, leading to further complaints from local businesses, and continued inefficiencies to CYC operations. In addition, reputational risk to the Council.

Organisational Impact and Implications

34. The implications are as follows.

- **Financial:** The proposal is to utilise an existing booking system contract already in place with the Council. Operating the booking system is expected to incur costs of up to £15,000 per year. The cost of implementation will be met from waste budget.
- **Human Resources (HR):** There are no HR implications contained within this report.
- **Legal:** CYC Legal Services shall provide legal support in relation to any future procurement of booking systems (or other matters). All CYC public contracts are subject to the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Further advice and support should be sought from CYC Legal Services, Procurement and other related departments (such as CYC Information Governance).
- **Procurement:** There are no immediate procurement implications to be covered in this report. The intention is to utilise a pre-existing booking system contract held by the council. However, it must be noted, this contract is due to expire August 2026 and will be re-procured with the relevant teams. The project team will need to ensure all requirements have been captured in the longer-term contract, should this be the long-term solution for HWRC. If any additional services or works are required as an outcome or future intentions change, all works and/or services must be procured via a compliant, open, transparent, and fair process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Procurement Act 2023. Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team
- **Health and Wellbeing:** No Public Health implications.
- **Environment and Climate action:** The Council must provide at least one HWRC for the city, with any option there will still be two HWRC's for residents to attend. HWRC's are a critical component in ensuring recycling aims are met and increased where possible aligning to our regional strategy.
- **Affordability:** The cost of travelling further to another site due to traffic issues at Hazel Court, will have a negative impact on those with low incomes who may be restricted in how they can dispose of waste, which in turn may impact on their living conditions at home. The recommendations in this

report will have a positive impact on residents' ability to access the service closer to their home.

- ***Equalities and Human Rights:*** We have considered that any system we implement needs to be as accessible as possible and a therefore full EIA will be completed ahead of implementation in order to mitigate any negative impacts on those with protected characteristics.
- ***Data Protection and Privacy:*** The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.
- ***Communications:*** The HWRC Operating Executive Report carries important communications implications, particularly around the introduction of a booking system at Hazel Court. Clear public messaging is essential to explain the trial's purpose — reducing congestion and improving safety — while emphasising accessibility through both online and phone booking options. Stakeholder engagement must address concerns from local businesses and residents, ensuring transparency and responsiveness.
- ***Economy:*** The proposals will have a small beneficial impact on the smooth running of the City's transport network, with benefits to our economy and productivity.
- ***Transport:*** Implementing the proposed booking system at Hazel Court HWRC is highly likely to address the queuing on Hazel Court and James Street. This will improve the operation of bus routes, which have experienced issues at busy time for the HWRC and will support the Council in delivering our Network Management Duty under the Traffic Management Act (2004). The booking system is also likely to improve road safety for all road users including cyclists and pedestrians.

Risks and Mitigations

35. There is a reputational risk if the Council do not act to endeavour to reduce the traffic congestion around Hazel Court. This could also lead to Businesses challenging the Council due to financial loss.

36. There are health and safety concerns for all road users using the James Street and Hazel Court pass through. By exploring options to limit the number of visitors to the HWRC congestion on Hazel Court and James Street can be managed leading to a safer environment for wheelers, walkers, cyclists and motor vehicles.

Wards Impacted

37. All Wards are in scope of this decision.

Contact details

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Background papers

None

Annexes

Annex A - Resident split in relation to HWRC location

Annex B – HWRC Heat Map

Annex C – HWRC Material Tonnages (3 years)

Annex D – HWRC average visits per day, per site (3 years)

Annex E – HWRC September 2025 resident visits