

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Waste and Recycling Committee

Date: 8 October 2025

Subject: Review of the Household Waste Recycling Centre Van Permit Scheme and the use of Adswood Household Waste Recycling Centre

Report of: Paul Morgan, Head of Commercial Services, Waste and Resources Team

Purpose of Report

The report seeks approval for two amendments to the terms and conditions of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Van Permit System, following operational reviews and feedback. It also addresses the impact of increased cross-border usage of GMCA HWRC's and outlines GMCA's proposed approach to manage this issue. Additionally, the report informs Members about congestion problems at Hurstwood Court HWRC, detailing short-term measures implemented and potential long-term solutions under consideration.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the update;
2. Approve the addition of two new terms and conditions governing the Van Permit system at section 2.0;
3. Approve the approach to managing increases in cross-border visitor numbers at Adswood HWRC at section 3.0; and
4. Note the traffic congestion issues identified at Hurstwood Court HWRC at section 4.0.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The addition of two new terms and conditions simply clarifies that there is no link between HMRC's classification of pick-ups for tax purposes and GMCA's categorisation of the vehicles in relation to their carrying capacity and attractiveness to traders. The pro rating of permits allocations simply adds a fair use aspect to the scheme.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion		
Health		
Resilience and Adaptation		
Housing		
Economy		
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	Potential to reduce vehicles visits and road usage.
Consumption and Production	G	May make waste producers think differently about waste generation.
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		
Further Assessment(s):	N/A	
G Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	R Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
		RR Negative impacts overall.

Risk Management

The addition of two new terms and conditions reflects comments, complaints and data analysis from the usage of the HWRCs network and the Van Permit System. These will reduce the risk of challenge from permit holders.

Legal Considerations

None

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None

Financial Consequences – Capital

None

Number of attachments to the report:

None

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution ?

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

Bee Network Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

The Van Permit System has been in operation for four years and has been reviewed twice. These reviews have considered comments and complaints received from residents, from the experience of operating the system and from the analysis of data arising.

A further issue has come to light (not relating to the Van Permit System) over the last twelve or so months and this relates to an increase of usage of one of the HWRCs following the closure of HWRCs in a neighbouring local authority area.

This report therefore asks Members to consider two amendments to the terms and conditions and operation of the Van Permit System and to review the impact of cross-border usage of Adswood HWRC in Stockport.

2. Household Waste Recycling Centre Access Policy Review

2.1. HMRC Reclassification of Pick-up Trucks as Cars

Under the current HWRC Access Policy, pick-up trucks are restricted in the number of visits they can make to the HWRC network and to which facilities they visit so they are treated differently from cars. This is based upon the additional load carrying capacity of a pick up and the commercial nature of the vehicle. This is administered through the Van Permit System.

In April 2025, His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) reclassified double cab and extended-cab pick-up trucks as cars rather than commercial vehicles for tax purposes.

Following this reclassification GMCA received a small amount of correspondence from residents who drive such vehicles requesting the removal of their vehicles from the permit system on the grounds that HMRC now consider pick-ups as cars.

GMCA has refused these requests. The reason pick-ups (and other vehicles) are included within the permit scheme or excluded altogether is not related to their tax status but rather their ability to carry greater amounts of waste than the average car and their attractiveness to commercial operators who may wish to abuse the HWRC network for the disposal of trade waste.

To address this GMCA is seeking to add a new condition to the Scheme to make it clear there is no link between HMRC's classification and GMCA's inclusion of such vehicles in the

Van Permit Scheme. It is therefore proposed that the terms and conditions of the permit system are updated to include a new clause worded:

GMCA will make the decision on the inclusion of a vehicle or vehicle type within the terms of the van permit system (or the exclusion of a vehicle from the HWRC network) and its decision is final. Any taxation or usage classification assigned to vehicle types by third party organisations (such as His Majesty's Revenue and Customs or the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) will not influence GMCA's decision.

2.2. Pro-rating of Visits for Part Year Applications

Currently the Van Permit System allocates 18 visits to a new permit applicant irrespective of when they receive their permit. This means that an applicant can receive the full allocation of visits even if they are granted the permit in the last month of the permit year.

From the analysis of permit usage data, it seems clear that this has been noticed by residents. We experience an increase in site usage in the last three months of the permit year just at a time when permits have been used for the year and we would expect stable or reduced permit usage – please see Figure 1 below.

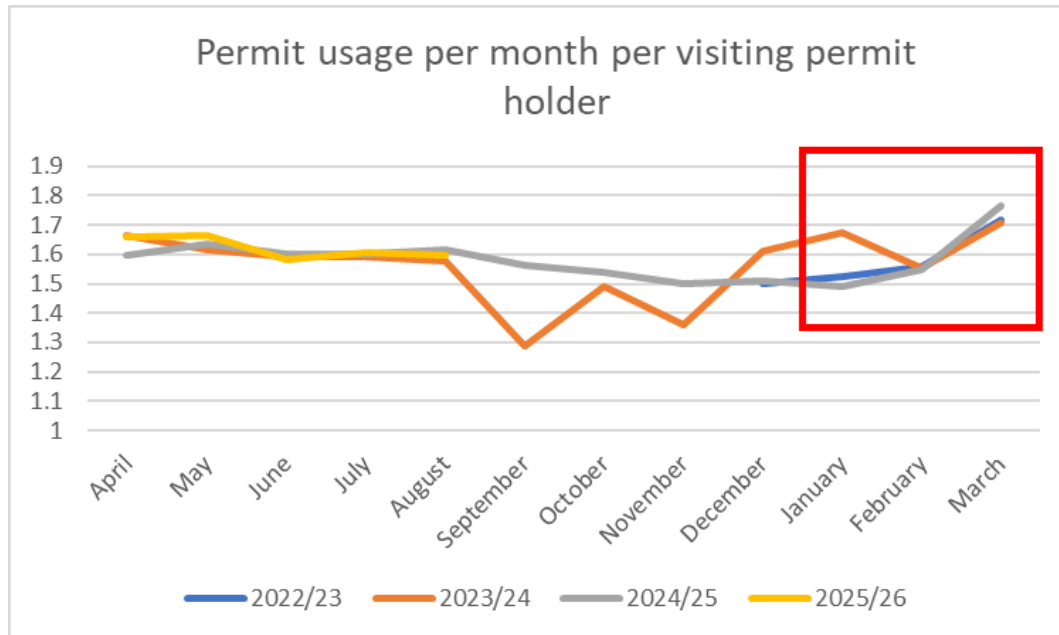


Figure 1: Permit usage on a monthly basis since December 2021

Permit holders have 18 visits per year or one and a half per month pro-rated. It is therefore proposed that a simple modification is made to the system whereby an applicant will receive, for example, 4.5 visits if they receive their permit in January (but rounded up to five). To be clear, any half visit allocation will be rounded up to a whole visit.

It is therefore proposed that the terms and conditions of the permit system are updated to include a new clause worded:

Any application made part way through the Permit Scheme year will be pro-rated so that applicants receive an allocation of 1.5 visits per calendar month (including the month the application was accepted). Where remaining visits include a half visit (for example, if the application was accepted in January, 4.5 visits would be allocated) this will be round up to the nearest whole visit.

3. Cross-border use of GMCA HWRCs

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 gives the duty to Waste Disposal Authorities to provide places within their areas for residents to dispose of household waste financed through that resident's council tax. Therefore, householders are not entitled to use a neighbouring or different authority's HWRC network even if they are closer to their homes (in a small number of cases agreements between neighbouring authorities to allow cross-border tipping with accompanying compensation from the source authority being agreed).

In the spring of 2024, Cheshire East Council (CEC) announced its intention to close three of its HWRCs on an emergency and temporary basis from August 2024 (the temporary nature of the closures was later made permanent). The three HWRCs in question were Middlewich, Poynton and Bollington (around 2004, Wilmslow HWRC closed). Two of these (and historically Wilmslow) – Poynton and Bollington - are fairly close to HWRCs in the south of Greater Manchester so could be seen as the next nearest facilities for residents in the north of Cheshire East.

In preparation for a potential diversion of usage across the border to GM, Suez were asked to put in place monitoring and additional checks at the Meet and Greet stage at Adswold, Bredbury, Sharston (Longley Lane) and Marple (Rose Hill) HWRCs as it was considered these four sites might be impacted the most.

3.1. Impact on Site Usage – Visitor Numbers

Subsequent monitoring of site visitor numbers was undertaken and the results of this are presented in Figure 2 below.

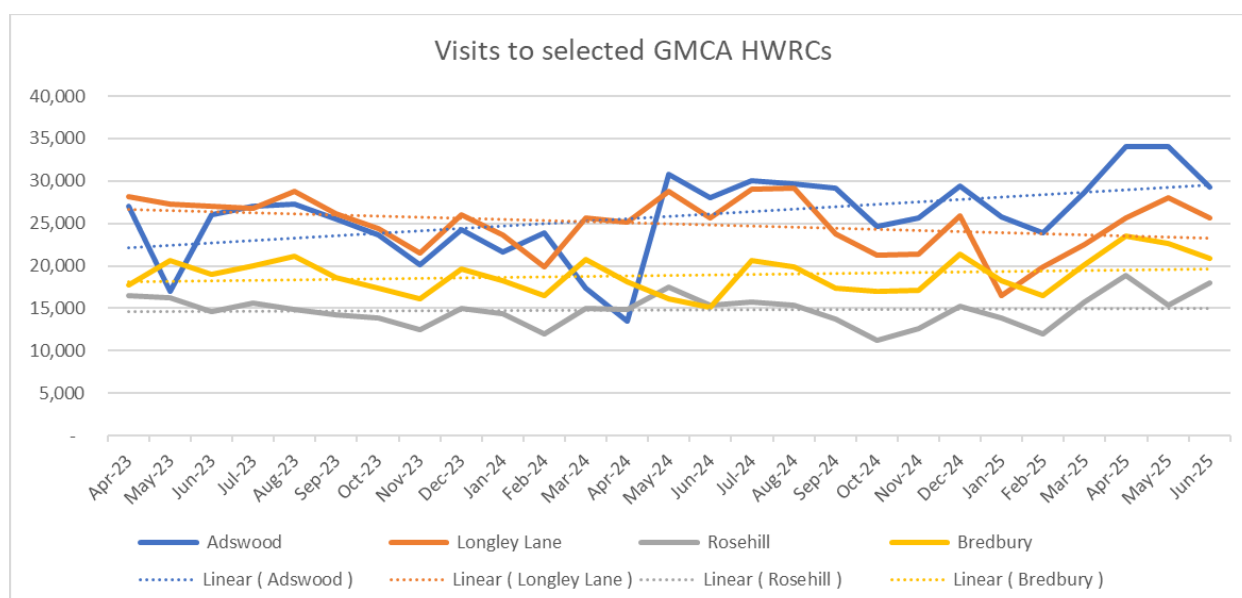


Figure 2: site user numbers for the four HWRCs close to Cheshire East

Contrary to our initial fears, it appears that only the Adswood HWRC is experiencing a material increase in visitor numbers commencing in May 2024 - around the time the closure announcement was made by CEC. From April 2023 to April 2024 the average monthly visitor count was 22,654 but from May 2024 to June 2025 this significantly increased to 28,875 - a 27% increase in usage.

Suez has reported that it has turned visitors away if, when asked, they have given an out-of-area postcode (and onsite Suez does have a list of postcodes that do not fall within GM). However, when challenged once, members of the public have then obtained a compliant postcode to quote at Meet and Greet and are then allowed entry as no further or deeper checks are undertaken (anecdotally it has been reported that this 'tip' has been widely shared on social media).

Additionally, Suez has reported receiving complaints from potential site users who have been turned away. In some case it seems that some of these users had been visiting GM sites for some years unaware that they should not have been.

3.2. Impact on Site Usage – Waste Quantities

With a 27% increase in visitor number one would expect a commensurate increase in waste quantities managed at the Adswood facility. Figure 3 below shows the relationship between the increase in visitor numbers and the quantities of recyclable, compostable and non-recyclable wastes received at Adswood.

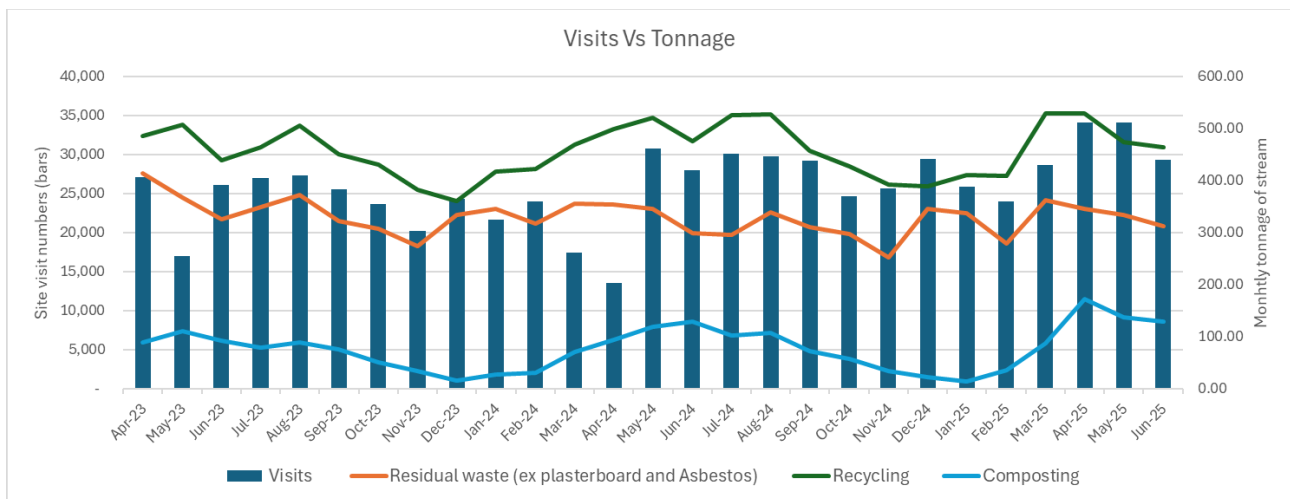


Figure 3: Waste quantities received at Adswood HWRC

The data shows that although there has been a 27% increase in visitor numbers, waste quantities have remained largely unchanged (particularly non-recyclable residual waste). This is unexpected but is on a backdrop of waste tonnages reducing at the other HWRCs.

3.3. Addressing the Cross-border Tipping

In response to the analysis of the data, GMCA developed a high-level options assessment of the means to address the cross-border tipping. The four options considered were:

- Maintain a watching brief continuing the current checks at the Meet & Greet point and monitor usage numbers and visitor behaviour;
- Negotiate a compensation agreement with CEC;
- Require visitors to provide proof of address such as a council tax or utility bill at Meet and Greet; and
- Require visitors to provide a photo ID containing proof of address (such as a driving licence) at Meet and Greet.

Appendix 1 below provides the outcome of the high-level options assessment.

3.4. Recommendation

The impact of the apparent increase of site users from across the border is currently manageable. What is unknown is if the increase is going to be long lasting and sustained and to understand this we do need more data.

To that end it is recommended that we continue to maintain a watching brief with the continuation of address checks at the Meet & Greet point and data gathering.

A further update will be provided to the Committee in due course or when the position changes materially.

4. Congestion Issues at Hurstwood Court HWRC

Hurstwood Court HWRC is located in a small industrial estate adjacent to the A666 in Bolton. It is surrounded by a number of small businesses and the roads have limited parking and the area can experience congestion due to business users parking on both sides of the road which restricts access for users of the industrial estate and HWRC site users. The site is one of the busiest in the network with, for example, over 34,500 visits in July of this year alone.

Several of the local businesses have engaged with GMCA, Suez, Bolton Council as highways authority and the local MP to seek to address this issue. A number of site meetings have taken place with representatives from local businesses outlining the issues and consequences of the congestion and suggesting several possible solutions.

In the short term two particular actions have been taken to reduce the blocking of the highway around the HWRC. These include the addition of a yellow box junction at the site access to ensure the smooth flow of traffic preventing cars stopping at key points. Another action has been to prevent parking close to access points to, again, enhance traffic flow. The impact of these measures on congestion issues is currently being assessed. GMCA has also produced a leaflet for site users encouraging them to use quieter times or consider another nearby site.



Thank you for visiting Raikes Lane (Hurstwood Court) recycling centre today, but did you know this tip is one of the busiest in Greater Manchester?

Visit us at quieter times for a quicker trip:

- Weekdays before 10am and after 4pm or
- Weekends before 11am and after 3pm

Top tips for your trip to the tip!

R4GM Recycle for Greater Manchester | **SUEZ**

We are open everyday except Christmas Day and New Years Day

- 8am-8pm Summer
- 8am-6pm Winter

Over Hulton Sundays and Bank holidays 8am-4pm (Except Wigan)

Did you know you can use any local tip in Greater Manchester.

Have you thought about using one of our other sites?

- Over Hulton recycling centre, Salford Road, BL5 1DG
- Radcliffe recycling centre, Cemetery Road, Bury, M26 4EU

Both are less than 5 miles from Raikes Lane and not as busy.



Scan here and simply enter your postcode to find the sites that are closest to you.

Other longer-term solutions are being considered. One of these is the introduction of a booking system. These are used successfully at HWRCs around the country and are cited as being a good method to spread usage more evenly across opening hours and reducing congestion. The success of such a scheme will depend on the number of visitor slots made available and the way in which the scheme is communicated to raise resident awareness. The advantages, disadvantages, interfaces with other systems (such as the van permit system) and resource requirements are being assessed before any plans are drawn up. An update will be provided to a future meeting of the Committee if plans develop.

Appendix 1 - High level options comparison for addressing cross-border tipping at Adswood HWRC

Option	Option description	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	Maintain a watching brief continuing the current checks at the Meet & Greet point and monitor usage numbers and visitor behaviour	- Does not require additional resources to manage any increased residency checks - Provides time to strengthen the information base	Allows the potential continued use of Adswood by CEC residents
2	Negotiate a compensation agreement with CEC	If successful, would see GM compensated for any additional costs	- CEC has no obligation to enter into discussions - CEC unlikely to offer any financial compensation given its reported financial position - Devising a compensation method likely to be challenging - Would require ongoing monitoring of inputs and demonstration of impacts
3	Require visitors to provide proof of address such as a council tax or utility bill at Meet and Greet	Number of attempts to access site by out-of-area users will decrease over time	- Result in some delays at Meet and Greet - Will require a local communications campaign - Evidence could be shared still allowing some out-of-area users through - Will generate complaints in the short term
4	Require visitors to provide a photo ID containing proof of address (such as a driving licence) at Meet and Greet	- Difficult to share a photo ID with out-of-area users - Number of attempts to access site by out-of-area users will decrease quite quickly	- Potentially a heavy-handed approach given the level of impact - Result in some delays at Meet and Greet - Will require a local communications campaign - Will generate complaints in the short term