

Update: Dorset Council waste collection disruption in Purbeck due to staff shortages

Back in September, we informed our residents that the national HGV driver shortage, coupled with the continuing impact of the pandemic, was impacting our waste collection rounds.

Most kerbside collections across the county are not currently disrupted, but we are aware of continuing problems in Purbeck. Served by the Wareham depot, this area has been hit harder than most due to historic challenges with retaining contracted employees due to its proximity to Poole, which has far more employment opportunities.

Recycling collections have been affected more than others, as we ensure that rubbish and food waste collections are prioritised for hygiene reasons. We are also trying to minimise instances where households have experienced two successive missed/delayed collections.

On top of renewed efforts to recruit more employees, waste services have taken many actions in the last few months to try resolving persistent issues with kerbside collections: -

- Pay rates for Level 3 drivers have been increased for both employees and agency workers
- We are continuing to deploy operatives, including supervisors at other depots, within our own workforce who are willing and able to do overtime in the afternoons and at weekends
- Wareham depot has assistance from the team at Crookhill (Chickerell) to carry out bin deliveries, and an LGV sweeper from Crookhill is regularly sweeping in the Purbeck area
- A new collection round in Crookhill had capacity to take on some Purbeck collections
- We have newly available data to help us balance rounds, with a new programme which will go live early next year. This will enable crews to complete and not carry over waste to the next day, which has a knock-on effect
- Our job adverts have been redesigned and now include all the benefits of working for Dorset Council. We are also planning a new social media campaign (with video) to attract new employees in the new year
- We also offer a friends and family scheme, and now a recruitment and retention scheme for new employees, which has been promoted to all Dorset Council staff and will be publicised to the public soon
- We have streamlined the job application form and are supporting a number of apprenticeships for vehicle maintenance roles.

The national HGV driver shortage does not look like it will be resolved in the immediate future, but central Government are working on solutions and we are optimistic that a solution will be found.

The Council will continue to put out friendly reminders that household recycling centres remain open daily and can be used for any excess waste that would usually be collected at the kerbside.

Cllr Laura Miller, Dorset Council's Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services, said:

"I know many residents are annoyed and frustrated at the continuing problems with bin collections in some areas of Purbeck and I apologise to everyone who has experienced disruption in recent months. This isn't the service we want to deliver.

While the driver shortage is largely out of our control, I want to reassure everyone that we are working hard to explore all possibilities to resolve these ongoing issues using existing resources. We are also ramping up our efforts to fill vacancies and find current employees willing to do some overtime.

In the meantime, on behalf of everyone in Dorset Council's Waste Services team, I want to thank Purbeck residents for their patience and understanding at this challenging time."