

News release

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UK driver shortage halts recycling collections

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has been forced to suspend collections of household recycling bins due to a national shortage of truck drivers.

Householders in the borough are being asked not to put out green-lidded recycling bins and green boxes to allow crews to catch up with a backlog of missed collections. Black bins for non-recyclable material, food waste caddies and garden waste bins are currently being collected as normal.

Like many other waste service providers, the council’s contractor, Urbaser, has been struggling with a shortage of drivers in recent months. Shortages have been most severe in crews dedicated to recycling rounds.

Urbaser says it needs a to suspend recycling collections for a further two weeks to catch up. The council expects full service to be resumed from Monday 12 July and has issued the following advice which applies to green-lidded bin and box collections only:

* Residents with outstanding recycling collections from last week (14-18 June) should leave their bins out. These collections should be completed by Saturday 26 June
* Recycling collections due this week (21-25 June) and for the next two weeks (28 June-9 July) have been suspended

Black bins (non-recyclable material), food caddies and garden waste will continue to be collected on the scheduled days. During this period, residents due a black bin collection may also put out their green bins and boxes. The waste will be combined and used to generate electricity.

Recycling banks for paper, cans, plastic and glass are also available across the borough.

Haulage organisations have attributed the national shortage of heavy goods drivers to a combination of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. It’s affecting a number of councils across the country as well as national supermarkets and delivery firms.

Like other parts of the UK, Tonbridge and Malling has also seen big increases in the amount of waste being produced by households during lockdown. Large numbers of people are still working from home and a surge in online shopping has seen the volume of cardboard and other material being collected up by an average of 30 per cent. The increases have meant trucks fill up quicker and have to make more frequent trips to empty their loads, leading to delays in completing rounds.

Javier Peiro, Managing Director, Urbaser Ltd, said:

‘We would like to apologise to residents for this disruption to their recycling service and reiterate that we remain committed to recommencing collections as soon as possible. A significant upturn in waste and recycling volumes, combined with a national driver shortage exacerbated by the lack of driver training and testing during the pandemic, means that we are struggling to address the current shortfall. However, we are taking positive steps to address the issue and this brief suspension of the service will help us to consolidate our resources and resume recycling collections.’

Cllr Robin Betts, the council’s cabinet lead on waste and recycling, said:

‘We recognise the frustration that residents feel when their bins are not collected. Unfortunately, in recent weeks the shortage of drivers both nationally and in our borough has become acute and a brief suspension is the best way to get things back on track. I’d like to apologise for the inconvenience this is causing and assure everyone that we are working hard behind the scenes with Urbaser to overcome this short-term issue and ensure residents get the service they expect.’

End

Notes

1. Collection changes: During the catch-up period, some food and other waste may be mixed with non-recyclable material to ensure rounds are completed quickly. The combined waste will be used to generate electricity and will not go to landfill.
2. The national HGV driver shortage has been widely reported – examples below:

# Shortage of HGV drivers places business recovery at risk, finds Logistics UK report

# <https://logistics.org.uk/media/press-releases/2021/may/shortage-of-hgv-drivers-places-business-recovery-a>

# Warnings of delays to home deliveries and supermarket shortages as HGV driver shortages bite

<https://internetretailing.net/operations-and-logistics/operations-and-logistics/warnings-of-delays-to-home-deliveries-and-supermarket-shortages-as-hgv-driver-shortages-bite-23330>

**Brexit: Lorry driver shortage could mean higher prices in shops**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-57354636>

# Tesco admits exposure to HGV driver shortage as hauliers warn of supply crisis

<https://news.sky.com/story/tesco-admits-exposure-to-hgv-driver-shortage-as-hauliers-warn-of-supply-crisis-12335508>

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