

Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) Contract 6-months update. October 2025



Introduction

GCSWS contract began with Re-Gen on 3rd March 2025 and has now been operational for 7 months. This briefing note provides an update to contract performance and observations from the officer visit on 22nd September 2025.

Performance of the contract to date

The operation of the transfer station (separate contractor, Thalia Ltd), haulage of material and processing of the recycling at the MRF has been smooth and in line with contract expectations. Relationship with the contractor is good.

- Regular collections of recycling at the Waterbeach Transfer Station (managed and operated by Thalia) are occurring with no back log accumulating.
- Processing of recycling at the MRF is occurring as per expectations.
- Monthly reports of the amounts collected, composition information and confirmation of re-processors is provided on time for GCSWS to meet national Waste Data Flow requirements
- Material is being sorted and recovered to a high standard, and the plant continues to extract and send for sale 96% material it sorts as required under the contract.
- Operations continue to be compliant with Northern Ireland Environment Agency requirements. See Appendix C for latest inspection record.
- There have been no health and safety or welfare related issues including any RIDDOR reportable incidents. (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.)
- There is now the ability to recycle additional items, these being cardboard Pringles™ tubes (with inner foil lining) and toothpaste tubes. (GCSWS website is being updated to notify residents)

[What goes in which bin - Greater Cambridge Shared Waste](#)

- There has been no disruption of service due to any operational issue (e.g breakdown/ maintenance needed). Re-Gen have arrangement with multiple

other MRF (Scotland/Northern Ireland and Ireland and Wales) should contingency arrangements been needed.

Site Visit – 22 September 2025

A site visit was conducted on 22nd September with Peterborough City Council (who also use Re-Gen's facilities to sort their recycling), the RECAP Partnership Manager and the Contract Compliance Officer.

The purpose of the visit was to:

1. See the MRF at Newry in operation, first hand
2. See the quality of the sorted recycling
3. See how the composition analysis was undertaken
4. Meet key staff involved in the running of the site and our contract
5. Check overall contract compliance
6. Visit a storage location used by Re-Gen at (Warrenpoint. This is where non-recyclable black bin waste from other organisations – but not GCSWS – is taken. We wanted to visit the Warrenpoint site because of recent contact by concerned residents. For absolute clarity, none of the material that Re-Gen collects from GCSWS is taken to Warrenpoint.

Findings from the site visit

1. Newry Site Operation

Officers were able to see all aspects of the sorting process covering the separation of various materials. The site is large and the level of investment in equipment, and careful configuration of the plant to extract maximum value of the material, was clear. The care and due diligence in the physical running and maintenance of the plant to ensure resilience and continuity of operation was also evident and reassuring to see.

2. Quality of recycling

The plant is designed to separate the materials to a high degree thereby ensuring maximum quality and value. We could see the extra technology and processes/steps they had put in place to achieve this.

3. Composition Analysis

This aspect is important as it gives us insight into what our residents are putting into their blue bins and how much “non recycling” (contamination) there is. This also informs the income and cost associated with the contract. We can use this information to further educate residents. We were able to see a sample of GCSWS recycling and watch this being recorded and analysed to our satisfaction.

4. Staff on site

Officers met with one of the Directors, Head of Commercial Developments, MRF Operational Manager and Customer Relations Manager all of whom were very knowledgeable and able to answer our questions. We also got to see the staff working in the MRF on the sorting lines.

5. Overall contract compliance

Officers had no concerns about Re-Gen’s operational compliance with the contract. The Director was happy to share copies of recent Northern Ireland Environment Agency regulatory visits. This is in appendix C.

6. Warrenpoint

Warrenpoint is 10 miles from Newry. Re-Gen operations at Warrenpoint Harbour are unrelated to the processing of recycling at Newry MRF. Waste stored at this site relates to a separate general waste processing contract. No GCSWS recycling or rejected recycling is stored at or shipped to or from Warrenpoint.

Despite this, they were happy to show us the town and the harbour site as they are aware that concerns of Warrenpoint residents have been raised to councillors, officers and the media in Cambridgeshire – even though the operations at Warrenpoint are completely un-related to the GCSWS contract.

Officers drove through the town and passed the houses of residents that live directly opposite the harbour. No offensive sight or odour could be seen or detected. Officers were also taken directly into the harbour to see where the waste was stored. Odour could not be detected until we were parked directly alongside the waste. Waste was completely contained, and odour mitigation measures were in place as required.

Destination of sorted materials for onward recycling

Below is the map that was shared at the beginning of the contract to illustrate the destinations. These are still current. There are now two additional locations of South Wales and Cheshire, represented by black dots on the map. The table below shows what percentage of Material went to which location in September 2025.



Destination- September 2025	% of material
London	29%
Belgium	26%
Scotland	22%
Netherlands	9%
Sweden	9%
Ireland	2%
Held at MRF pending shipment	2%
Cheshire	1%

Wales	1%
Northern Ireland	1%
Spain	1%

Value of Recycling Materials

The commodity prices being reached over the last 6 months are largely above the typical values of the market indices (Let's Recycle benchmark) which is testament to the high standard of sorting achieved and quality of the products.

Material	Income Above/matched/Below Average market price
Mixed paper	Above
Cardboard	Matched
Mixed plastic	Below
Plastic film	Above
Aluminium cans	Above
Steel cans	Above
Glass	Above

Transport and carbon emissions

There have been 678 loads of recycling collected from March to September 2025. Typically, 24 lorries a week. Re-Gen continues to have operational presence on the UK mainland and collects recycling from 16 other locations in the UK and delivers sorted material back to the UK for recycling. 83% of our collections are done by backhauling, using fleet that is already in England to pick up our recycling from Waterbeach and haul it to the MRF. This makes for efficient use of their fleet capacity and overall reduction on carbon emissions alongside their use of HVO as fuel. Most vehicles used as part of the contract use HVO. They ensure that every



week they achieve their target of at least a 5% reduction in transport emissions through the use of HVO across the fleet of trucks that collect our material.

Alternative Re-Gen facilities.

The potential of a new Regen facility being established on the UK mainland was not related to the award of contract. GCSWS contract award to Re-Gen was solely based on using the facility in Newry. However, at the beginning of the year, Re-Gen were optimistic that they might be able to secure a location in the UK. We understand that it remains Re-Gen's mid to long term strategic goal to acquire a UK mainland MRF, but it should be recognised that contracts such as this are complex in nature and therefore it can take time to negotiate terms and conditions before reaching agreements. As a result, timelines such as that suggested by Re-Gen earlier this year have changed, and no further indication of revised timelines can be given at this time. Once we have a further update, we will ensure stakeholders are informed.

Conclusion

GCSWS has no concerns about the operation of the contract with Re-Gen or how the company is handling Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Councils' recycling. Additional information about the recycling we collect, and some wider MRF industry insight is included in Appendices. It is important to once again emphasise that no recycling from GCSWS is taken to Re-Gen's Warrenpoint facility.



Appendices

Appendix A- Recycling collected in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

Appendix B - MRF Operators' challenges and wider context.

Appendix C- Environment Agency NI certificates.

Appendix D Photos and video link of the MRF

Appendix A- Recycling collected in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire

Table 1 Shows what percentage of the recycling placed into blue bins is correct and incorrect (contamination). This is based on recycling collected from residents and businesses.

Re-Gen have reported they are pleased with the quality of the materials we are presenting to them. The level of contamination is on the same level as reports from our previous contractor. Our contamination rates place us in the best performing range. On-going education of collection crews and residents is key to keeping the contamination rate down.

- Average national contamination rate: 10–25%
- Best-performing areas: <10%
- Worst-performing areas: >30%

Month- 2025	Amount of correct recycling %	Amount of incorrect recycling- contamination %	Amount of correct recycling Tonnes	Amount of incorrect recycling contamination- Tonnes
March	91%	9%	1839	179
April	90%	10%	1929	209
May	90%	10%	2076	221
June	90%	9%	1917	204
July	89%	11%	2124	263
August	89%	10%	1725	203
Total to date	89%	11%	11,613	1,281

For context the below table below shows the levels of contamination seen in recycling bins since 2019, which largely ranges between 6-10% and levels remain consistent with this.

Table 2 Domestic and Commercial contamination of recycling combined by Month Sep2019-August 2024

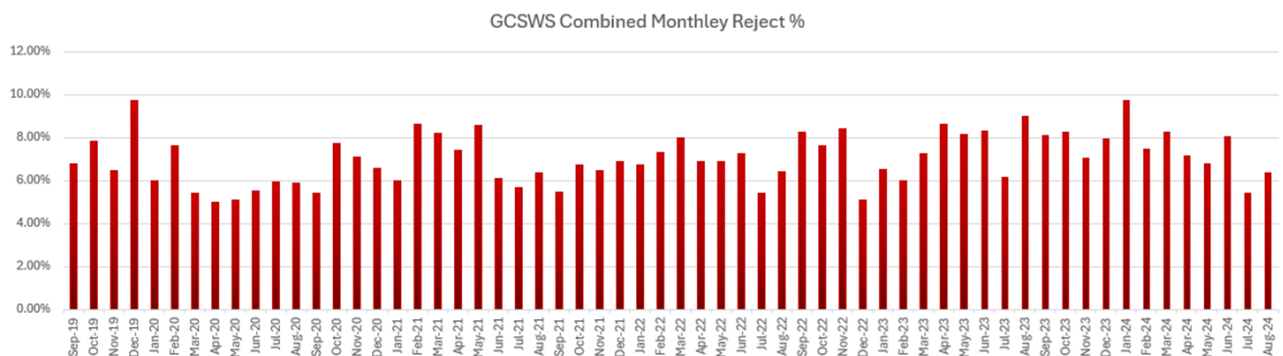


Table 3 Typical composition of recycling placed into Recycling bins

Grey Items are not officially acceptable materials. The most common items incorrectly placed into the recycling bins are food (organic) and textiles. It is expected that the introduction of separate food waste collections will help reduce food waste in the recycling bins.

Material	Percentage in recycling
Mixed Paper	27%
Cardboard	24%
Glass	23%
Mixed Plastic Bottles	6%
Mixed Plastic	4%

Steel Cans	1.1%
Plastic Film	1.1%
Aluminium Cans	1.1%
Electrical items	1.1%
Non-can metals	2.1%
Nappies	1.1%
Wood	1.1%
Textiles	1.1%
Organics	1.1%
Other Contamination	2.1%
Fines (items under 55mm small that fall though screening/sorting)	4.1%

Appendix B - MRF Operators' challenges and wider context.

Insights from MRF forums and working groups have indicated the challenges faced by MRF operators in handling the impact of Simpler Recycling changes and Extended Producer Responsibility. This will require upgrading or changing facilities which ultimately have an impact on UK processing capacity.

GCSWS are fortunate to have found a contractor who is committed to improving plant performance and efficiency but the below shows the challenges for the future with existing and potential new plants.

Key points are:

- Upgrades are going to be challenging for ALL MRF operators
- Improvements to plants are best done incrementally and not once
- Upgrades can take from a few weeks to up to a year. Supply chain bottle neck is to be expected.
- Sole facility providers have a need to rely on others for contingency
- Multi- site operators will need to mitigate impact across all their contracts
- There could be reduction in national MRF processing capacity of 20% over the next 3-5 years.

In addition, there is slow capital expenditure investment activity due to:

- Uncertainty of future material composition and volumes due to the collection and packaging reforms brought in by the Simpler Recycling regulations regime
- Slow LA decision making of their collection's changes, which has associated impact on MRF contracts. This stifles confidence in return on investment
- Adapting/upgrading facilitates being demand led
- Inclusion of film and wrapping collections from 2027.

Appendix C Compliance Assessment Report from NI EA.

May 2025. Shows compliance as required.

CAR2 Compliance Assessment Report 2 for Licensed Waste Management Facilities		Report ID: 250529100256	
The Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997		Site inspection report Pg 1 of 2	
Name of site	Name of Operator/Licence holder	WML Number	
ReGen Waste Ltd		WML 38/10	
Name of officers	Date	Time	
Nuala O Prey George Gilmore	29/05/2025	In: 10:02 Out: 10:06	
Council Area		Weather Conditions	
Newry, Mourne and Down		Wet, Cloudy	
Type of site	Non-Hazardous Transfer Municipal	Type of inspection	Scheduled Monitoring
Site operational Status	Receiving Waste	Site life Status	Operational
Site areas / Phase Inspected Partial			
Inspection Results NI= Not inspected NA= Not applicable 0= Compliant 1-3 Non-compliant			
1	0	Specified Operations	14 0 Fires on site
2	0	Permitted Waste types	15 0 Waste acceptance and control Procedures
3	NI	Permitted Waste Quantities	16 0 Waste quantity measurement system
4	0	Hours of Operation	17 0 Storage of specified waste
5	0	Staffing and Supervision	18 N/A Monitoring and control of gases/ vapours/aerosol
6	0	Availability / understanding of licence / Working Plan	19 0 Monitoring/ control of dusts / fibres/ particulates
7	0	Attendance of Technically Competent Person	20 0 Monitoring and control of odours
8	0	Maintenance of Financial Provision	21 0 Control of noise
9	0	Engineered site containment / drainage system	22 0 Control of pest infestations
10	0	Site Identification Board	23 0 Control of litter
11	0	Site Security	24 NI Security and availability of records
12	0	Control of mud and debris	25 NI Site diary
13	0	Potentially polluting leaks and spillages	
Comments An updated working plan for has been received following the grant of planning permission (LA07/2024/0291/F) for the extension to the mixed dry recycling facility and is currently under review. NIEA are awaiting evidence of appropriate planning approval for the external storage bays.			
Actions Site diary to be sent for the past fortnight upon receipt of CAR.			
Letter Request		Continuation sheet	
Officer's Signature		Operator / licence holder signature Name & position	

	
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Appendix D- Images of the MRF at Newry

Visitors are not permitted to take photos of the site but below are publicly available images of the plant that was visited.

A good BBC video clip is in on You Tube:

https://youtu.be/t_vGt5-jwkA?si=yhsA9ZAhRhL5c1DX



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Waste Policy Officer October 2025