

8th April 2015

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your latest e-mail, and for the update regarding Mr Clark's article. I note that this piece has now been taken down, for which I am grateful.

I turn now to your e-mail of 19th March, and the question of whether "rejects" primarily consist of non-recyclable material as I contend. The information you provided was as follows:

From Eastleigh Borough Council;

"...If our collection vehicle contains too much non-recyclable waste it will be rejected and diverted to landfill ..."

From North Hertfordshire District Council;

"If recycling containers/bins are put out for collection containing incorrect items, they will not be emptied. This is to prevent the rejection of the whole vehicle load when it is taken to recycling centres"

And according to a Wigan waste officer, when discussing contamination of blue recycling bins that are meant for cardboard and paper, if any other items are found in a wagon's 22 tonne load, it is rejected. He confirmed that once the load is rejected it is put through as residual waste meaning all efforts to recycle are lost. He said that in a two month period 14 wagons of recycling were rejected at a cost of £25,000.

I would observe that it is only in the case of Wigan MBC that the evidence indicates that any entire loads have been turned away; in both Eastleigh and North Herts, you highlight only that measures have been implemented to prevent such an occurrence.

In the case of Wigan, the total tonnage of material rejected last year was 2,578 tonnes. You have provided evidence that 308 tonnes (12%) of this was from the paper and card stream, and argue plausibly that this will be largely recyclable material. I have previously agreed that on occasion, whole loads are rejected. The reprocessors' standards are particularly stringent for material that is being sold as pre-sorted, as Wigan's separated paper and card would be - it might well be rejected if contamination exceeds 3%. However, for any authority (such as Wigan) that collects the majority of its recycling (glass, metals, plastics) mixed in a single bin, the great majority of rejects will arise quite naturally and expectedly from the sorting process at the MRF. There, much higher levels of contamination (5-20%) are routinely accepted into the facility, and just as routinely rejected through the design of the sorting process. In the case of Wigan, we can conclude that 88% of rejects arise from the co-mingled material it collects.

Therefore, in the one case where you have been able to identify evidence of whole loads being rejected, it remains the case that the vast majority of rejects arise in the way I have stated is the norm. As I have previously argued, it is misleading to characterise rejects principally in terms of whole loads; and if the Express's concern is to reduce the level of rejects, it should be campaigning for more source separation, not more co-mingling of material into single bins.

I would be grateful if you would reconsider your position in the light of the arguments above.

Best wishes

Peter Jones