

HWRC Reopening FAQs

Why did you shut?

In line with the rest of the country, Oxfordshire's seven Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) have been shut to waste delivered by the public since 24 March 2020, following government's direction that everyone should stay home due to the coronavirus pandemic. The public were given clear instruction to only leave home for essential travel and visiting the recycling centres was not within the four categories listed for this.

Oxfordshire's waste collection authorities have maintained regular kerbside collections of general waste, recycling and food. Garden waste collections have continued or restarted in all authorities and bulky waste collections have been re-established across most of the county.

Can I now come to site?

Yes, changes to government advice were issued on 5 May and sites are reopening on 18 May 2020. Travel to HWRCs is now allowed to deposit essential waste that cannot be stored at home or if stored would cause harm to human health. We ask that you respect these guidelines and only travel to site if absolutely essential.

In line with guidance from government and public health, there are new site rules to comply with social distancing and procedures to help keep residents and site staff safe. These measures mean that we are expecting queues and delays in accessing sites.

There may be local traffic restrictions around each site in order to prevent queues blocking the network. Please check details for the site you are intending to visit on the website www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/recyclingcentres. Information may change regularly as we adapt to changing circumstances, so we recommend that you check before each visit.

What do you mean by 'essential waste'?

Government guidance states that waste should only be brought site if it is essential to do so. By this they mean that waste cannot be stored at home or would cause harm to human health if it is stored. This will be different for each resident dependent upon their individual circumstances and the waste that they need to dispose of so there is not a definitive list.

Sites will be accepting all waste types. We ask residents to make their own judgement about whether it is essential that they bring their waste to site. Site staff will not be challenging residents on their decision.

We ask all residents to remember that there are likely to be large numbers of people wanting to visit sites and this is likely to result in long queues. If you can store your waste at home without risk of harm to human health, we ask that you continue to do so.

I am self isolating or shielding, can I come to site?

If you or a member of your household are self isolating after displaying symptoms, please **DO NOT** come to site and follow government advice to reduce the spread of the virus.

If you are in a vulnerable group and shielding, then a trip to the HWRC will be at your own risk. We would advise that you follow government advice for your personal protection.

Which sites are open and what are the site opening hours?

All sites will be open Monday – Sunday, 8am – 4pm. Thursday late night opening is suspended for the current time. Any cars still queuing at 4pm will be turned away in order to allow site staff the time to thoroughly clean the site.

How will you be managing queues?

We have worked closely with the police and highways network management on arrangements to try to ensure that there is space for queuing that does not block the highway. Each site has different arrangements and we ask that you follow site signage and traffic marshal directions.

If queues build up on the highway sites may temporarily close and police may disperse queues. In this circumstance you are asked to store your waste or come back another time to deposit your waste.

How are you keeping us safe on site?

Site staff are carrying out a regular cleaning regime of handrails and other areas commonly touched. Sites are closing 1 hr early each day to allow a thorough deep clean of all areas. Social distancing will be adhered to on site with the aid of new site rules (detailed below).

Site staff have been given the option of wearing facemasks and additional PPE, and some have chosen to do so. This is not mandatory (unless Government advice changes) and we support the decision made by each individual staff member.

What are the new site rules?

- **Keep 2m apart from site staff and other site users:** to aid this we have cordoned off every other car parking space
- **Only 1 person allowed out of the vehicle at any time, unless help is needed to unload heavy items:** less people moving around on site helps everyone to maintain the appropriate social distance.
- **Site staff are unable to help unload vehicles:** Site staff will be on hand to answer questions and direct residents, but in order to maintain 2m social distancing they will not be able to help unload vehicles. If you cannot safely manage the item by yourself, please bring along a member of your household to help, or request a bulky waste collection from your district council.
- **Trailers are not allowed on site at the current time:** Trailers allow a greater capacity of material to be brought to site meaning more time will be required to unload the vehicle and more time will be spent on site. They also take up more space in any queues. In line with Government guidance that

visits should be for essential waste only, trailers are currently not permitted. This will be regularly reviewed and restrictions may be lifted.

- **Hire vans are not allowed on site at the current time:** Hire vans require site staff to physically check the hire paperwork and this is not compatible with social distancing.
- **Contactless payment only:** DIY waste charges will be made in line with the charging scheme, but payment will be taken via contactless means only in order to reduce unnecessary contact. Receipts will still be available for all transactions. For details of the charging scheme please see www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/chargeablewaste

Usual site rules can be found online at

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/waste-and-recycling/household-waste/household-waste-recycling-centres/visiting-recycling-centres>

Why are the queues so long?

In order to maintain social distancing and protect residents and site staff we have cordoned off every other parking space, effectively reducing site capacity by half. In order to reduce queues, we ask that residents only bring essential waste that cannot be stored at home or if stored would cause harm to human health to the HWRCs. All other waste should be deposited in your kerbside bins or kept until social distancing is eased.

We have worked closely with the police and highways network management on arrangements to try to ensure that any queues for HWRCs do not block the highway. However, if queues start to cause problems, sites may temporarily close and police may disperse queues. In this circumstance you are asked to store your waste or come back another time to deposit your waste.

While we realise that queues are frustrating, residents are reminded that flytipping is illegal and can result in a fine up to £50,000 and 12 months imprisonment (or an unlimited fine and 5 years imprisonment if sent to the crown court).

Like many others we have been heartened by the support and respect shown to Oxfordshire's waste collection services. We ask during these difficult times that the same level of courtesy and respect is shown to our site teams. Residents are reminded that all sites have CCTV and site teams are issued with bodycams. There will be zero tolerance of abuse and threatening behaviour to site teams and anyone found to do so may be banned from our sites.

I do not want to queue, what are the other options?

If you do not wish to queue there are several other options:

- Store your waste at home
- Consider if your items could be repaired or passed on. The waste wizard www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard can help you find local repairers or charity shops able to take your item. Alternatively, you could try Freecycle, Gumtree or eBay to see if anyone else could make use of your items. Please be aware local businesses may have limited opening hours or other

restrictions due to the pandemic, and you should always follow social distancing guidelines to ensure your safety.

- Use your kerbside collection service (see www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard for details of what can be accepted)
- Book a bulky waste collection from your district council
[Cherwell District Council](#)
[Oxford City Council](#)
[South Oxfordshire District Council](#)
[Vale of White Horse District Council](#)
[West Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- If you wish to dispose of a large appliance, a take back/recycling service is often offered by the retailer when they deliver your new product.
- Hire a skip or contact a local private waste management company – please ensure you ask to see their waste carriers licence and ask for a receipt so that you can ensure they are reputable and your waste will not be flytipped. If it is and can be traced back to you – you risk a fine of up to £5000.

What can I bring to site?

Sites are accepting all usual types of waste (see www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard for details of what can be accepted).

Personal waste (such as used tissues) and disposable cleaning cloths should be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely and kept separate from other waste. This should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in your usual external household waste bin or the general waste bin at the HWRCs.

It is believed that the virus is unable to survive outside of the body for more than 72 hours. Storing any infected waste for that length of time before disposal helps to protect others.

Recycling, food, and all other types of waste can be placed in the correct bin at the kerbside or HWRC as normal, no special arrangements are needed.

Why are the site staff not helping me to unload my vehicle?

It is important that we protect site staff and residents by following government guidance to maintain social distancing and avoid unnecessary contact. For site staff to help unload vehicles they would need to get to within 2m of residents and would be regularly touching a wide variety of items. We therefore ask residents to only deposit essential waste that cannot be stored at home or if stored would cause harm to human health, and if they cannot manage this themselves safely to bring a member of their household with them to assist.

Are there any rules around approaching site staff?

If you have a question please ask a member of staff. When approaching them please ensure you remain at least 2m away in order to protect you both.

Why can I only pay for DIY waste by contactless methods?

In line with social distancing, reducing contact and preventing the spread of the virus we have stopped accepting cash payments. Receipts will still be available and if you do not wish to accept a paper receipt you can ask for this to be sent via text or email.

Is there a limit on the number of trips I can make a day in my own car?

No, although travel to HWRCs is now allowed to deposit essential waste that cannot be stored at home or if stored would cause harm to human health. We ask that you respect these guidelines and only travel to site if absolutely essential.

We are expecting queues and delays in accessing sites.

Is there a limit to the amount of people that can be around a waste container at a time?

Site staff and residents are expected to follow social distancing advice and remain 2m apart. Each site is arranged differently and on some sites this will mean that only 1 person can access a container at any one time. Site staff are available to direct residents and if you have any questions please ask (from 2m away).

Why can't I bring a hire van/trailer to site?

- Trailers allow a greater capacity of material to be brought to site meaning more time will be required to unload the vehicle and more time will be spent on site. They also take up more space in any queues. In line with Government guidance that visits should be for essential waste only, trailers are currently not permitted. This will be regularly reviewed and restrictions may be lifted.
- Hire vans require site staff to physically check the hire paperwork and this is not compatible with social distancing.

Someone coughed on site, why did you let them in?

National advice has been clear that if you, or a member of your household, has any symptoms then you should self isolate. We are not able to check residents before they enter site to determine if they have any symptoms, but we would strongly urge all residents to be socially responsible and not risk spreading the virus by ignoring this advice.

My neighbours have some waste, and I want to bring it in my van on their behalf

Travel to HWRCs is now allowed to deposit essential waste that cannot be stored at home or if stored would cause harm to human health. We ask that you respect these guidelines and only travel to site if absolutely essential.

The HWRCs were shut for over 7 weeks. Will I get a discount on my council tax bill?

We have no plans to issue any tax rebates. Residents are welcome to raise this issue with the county councillor of their constituency if they wish.