



# The food waste truck challenge

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James Brennan, Managing Director at TPPL, discusses food waste truck procurement and the dangers of leaving it too late.

Household recycling rates in England increased from 11% in the 2000-01 financial year to 42% in 2021-22. However, in recent years household recycling rates have plateaued at around 42%-44%. In a welcome move to address this, the last Government repealed EU-derived waste collection requirements by proposing a simplified set of requirements through the Environment Act 2021, later known as the Simpler Recycling reform.

Under the new legislation, from March 2026, local authorities in England must arrange a weekly collection of food waste for recycling or composting from households. The Government's preference is for food waste to be collected for treatment by anaerobic digestion, which presents the best environmental outcome for the treatment of unavoidable food waste due to the generation of biofuel and digestate. This digestate can be spread on land, ensuring nutrients are recycled, creating a more circular economy.

To successfully introduce a weekly food waste collection service, local authorities have been supported by the Government with new funding to prepare themselves for mobilisation. Funding has been based on a modelled estimate of costs and savings for local authorities resulting from the new proposals. This includes capital costs, which will fund new vehicles and containers, as well as initial transition costs.

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) has been influential in supporting research and analysis of requirements ahead of allocation and disbursement of the capital funding to local

authorities. Additionally, WRAP has been engaging with bin, caddie, and vehicle manufacturers to simplify the approach to market and identify any potential supply chain issues. Part of the market engagement included work with the recognized public buying organisations (PBOs), such as TPPL, NEPO, CCS, ESPO, YPO, etc., to create clear guidance on the procurement process and options available for local authorities when approaching the market.

## **250 local authorities need to source over 1,500 food waste vehicles for March 2026.**

Part of the research conducted by WRAP was modelling on estimated vehicle, caddie, waste container, and associated item requirements by local authorities. For vehicles alone, it is predicted that more than 250 local authorities need to source over 1,500 food waste vehicles across the UK in preparation for the March 2026 go-live.

As you will appreciate, this is not an insignificant number of vehicles required during a relatively short period of time, compared to usual market conditions. Undoubtedly, this significant demand will place strains on the supply chain; therefore, from a TPPL perspective, and with no sales pattern intended, our advice to contracting authorities remains consistent: if you haven't already approached the market, develop your strategy to procure and go to market at the

very earliest opportunity.

For the purchase of bespoke-built vehicles in the 7.5 to 12-tonne categories, we are beginning to see lead times stretch out from anywhere between six and, in certain instances, more than 12 months from order, depending on the vehicle chassis and accompanying body requirements. Factor in typical strategy development and pre-procurement work required before approaching the market, and it's evident that those yet to procure may find it challenging to obtain vehicles in time.

As a provider of procurement solutions and services, we have assisted many authorities to navigate the procurement process. However, it is nowhere near the number quoted within the research. From the conversations we have had with other PBOs through periodic WRAP engagement sessions, neither have our competitors. To date, the authorities supported by TPPL have procured more than 250 food waste vehicles, and we are certainly seeing the effect this is having on vehicle lead times.

As a company, TPPL takes pride in the speed and efficiency with which we get authorities to market. We have a team of specialists who assist with technical specifications and trained procurement professionals to support authorities when they access our range of compliant solutions.

I am sure there will be bumps along the road to mobilising what is a new collection service for many authorities. However, challenges must be met with motivation given the significant benefits this change will have to support the journey to a cleaner and more sustainable planet.