

RMAS Management Committee

Briefing Note: 14th April 2019

PPE

Mask Shortages: One of the RMAS members contacted Scottish Government re shortage of masks but this is still outstanding. Face masks are in very low supply for critical operations which require operators to wear face masks, specifically for waste processing operations where there is dust in the air and on picking lines. This is for specific work where masks are used as part of the daily PPE requirements. Another RMAS member who is reviewing their PPE requirements needs face masks, specifically FFP3 masks for use at their Anaerobic Digestion Facility. FFP3 face masks are used for respiratory protection for asbestos work, and respiratory protection against viruses and mold spores.

Health & Safety Further Considerations

Clarification is sought on the RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) reporting of Covid-19 for the Sector <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/riddor-reporting-coronavirus.htm> and when and how it should be applied.

Furlough and Business Uncertainty Short/Medium Term Planning

Companies are still in a state of great uncertainty and this is likely to continue as primary customers and clients also face increasing significant challenges as the 'lock down' continues. The commercial customer base is continuing to fall, costs are continuing to rise, including those associated with haulage and disposal.

Our current understanding is that there will be a planned and staged approach taken to relax the lock down measures. It will therefore be critical for the Sector to know what other Supplier Relief (assistance and financial support) may be available in the short to medium term to support companies to maintain their on-going operations and sustain their longer term viability.

The inflexibility of the existing Furlough scheme is still proving to be problematic. We understand that Furlough is currently available to businesses for a 3 month period from the 1st March 2020, with the website opening on the 20th April. It would be helpful to know if there is going to be an extension to the Furlough scheme, and if there is going to be greater flexibility within the existing scheme or extended scheme for key workers.

There are some incidents being reported of staff requesting furlough when this is not available to them because there is sufficient work. Further information that clearly communicates how and when furlough operates would be helpful.

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Operational

Local Authority Collections

The industry view is that the local authority sector is likely to continue with limited commercial sector support - this is likely to increase the incidence and risk of household recyclate collections being temporarily stopped.

RMAS members with existing local authority contracts are at the moment 'more resilient'. If councils reduce separate collections however this will adversely affect these members.

RMAS members could provide direct support to Local Authorities in a number of ways including supporting statutory and non-statutory services, including collecting residual, recyclate, or garden waste, providing bulky uplift service support and via the provision of skips to households.

Seeking clarification as to how and what support can be provided.

Trade Waste Collections

Urgent SEPA regulatory position statement required to allow the mixing of residual and recyclate in trade waste collection systems due to the non-viability of these separate collections. Initial RMAS paper outlining industry concern sent to SEPA on Friday 10th April 2020.

This is required due to a combination of factors including:

- On-going staff shortages.
- Transport and collection constraints in rural locations and on collection rounds generally, due to the decreasing numbers of commercial customers.
- Trying to maintain a service for customers under difficult trading conditions.
- Non-viability of sharing with other commercial operators due to reputational and commercial issues likely to arise post crisis.
- Financial disadvantage of landfill disposal.

RMAS to collate the extent of this occurrence across the membership.

Local Authorities are currently able to make service level decisions such as temporarily suspending recyclate collections due to staffing and logistical constraints, with the same flexibility not afforded to the commercial sector.

Waste Behaviour Trends

Instability in recycling markets. The ability to move the majority of recyclates is becoming increasingly difficult with the exception of cardboard, the value of which is increasing due to the move from retail to online purchasing, and the associated increased demand.

There is currently increased EfW capacity for residual waste due to the significant reductions in C&I wastes.

Communications Key Messages

Recycling Centre re-opening needs a serious and robust national communications plan, and specific guidance doc. Merseyside are using slogan 'waste can wait' at the moment. Industry believes that additional support from Police or Security firm presence would be required in the initial stages to support employees. In addition there will need to be a co-ordinated approach with the whole supply chain; for example with hauliers, reprocesors, disposal facilities, etc. to meet the increased demand when the sites re-open, may be a requirement for a 'match-making' facility for this as well.

Critical for the Sector to know what other Supplier Relief (assistance and financial support) may be available in the short to medium term to support companies to maintain their on-going operations and sustain their longer term viability.

Further information that clearly communicates how and when furlough operates for staff would also be helpful.

