

## **Household Waste Recycling Centres to be reopened in County Durham**

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in County Durham will reopen in the next two weeks in line with government guidance.

Last week, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, announced that he would be issuing guidance to councils to begin reopening HWRCs.

Since the announcement, Durham County Council has been working with its contractor, HW Martins, to look at the possibility of safely reopening its main sites and this week received new guidance from central government.

The council has now confirmed that it is planning for all 12 of its main sites to be reopened on Monday 18 May and will also resume its bulky waste goods collections from this day.

However, government guidance has emphasised that residents should only take waste to HWRCs if it cannot be stored safely at home and no alternative disposal options are available.

A number of significant safety measures have been considered in order to be able to reopen the sites in a way that ensures the safety of all staff and residents during the coronavirus outbreak.

Sites are expected to be extremely busy once the HWRCs reopen, so please check social media and the council's website for further updates. The council is currently working to implement traffic management schemes, such as temporary road closures, where necessary for sites that risk blocking main highways and access for key services.

To ensure social distancing, people will be asked to keep two metres apart at all times and a limited number of cars will be allowed on site at a time. This will be determined on a site-by-site basis and residents are being asked to be patient at sites where there are queues. Visitors may also be turned away if sites are too busy.

Changes to the way the sites are used will also be made. For example, no lifting assistance will be available from staff on site, with users being responsible for this, and residents are advised to take a passenger from the household if required. Residents will also be asked to wash their hands before and after their visit.

Vehicles such as vans, pickups, minibuses or vehicles towing trailers, will still be able to use the site with a waste permit. These can be applied for on the council's website. As usual, car users will not need to apply for a permit.

While the main sites will reopen, some services may remain closed initially such as the mobile recycling centre at Frosterley and the trade waste facility and re-use shop at Stainton. The council is working to reopen these as soon as possible.

Bulky waste collections can be booked from 9am on Tuesday 12 May at [www.durham.gov.uk/doitonline](http://www.durham.gov.uk/doitonline) or by calling us on 03000 260 000. Bookings cannot be taken until this date. Items should be placed at your kerbside bin collection point, where your rubbish bins are collected from, ready for collection.

The HWRC sites are expected to be extremely busy once reopened and the council is asking residents to only use the site if necessary and expect queues.

Cllr Brian Stephens, Cabinet member for neighbourhoods and local partnerships, said: "We are pleased to announce that we have plans to re-open all 12 of our HWRCs in the coming weeks, as well as resume our bulky waste goods collections, while also following the government's guidance on being able to operate them safely.

"We want to have the re-opening as close to our normal service as possible which means that a number of significant safety measures will need to be put in place to ensure that all staff and residents can protect themselves, and others, while using the facilities.

"I would like to stress, however, the importance of following government guidance about using these sites. This means asking residents to spread out their visits to HWRCs as much as possible, be patient when using the sites, and to bring materials only if they cannot be safely stored at home."

Further details of the use of sites, such as opening times, will be advised next week closer to the reopening date.

Information regarding the use of facilities will be updated at [www.durham.gov.uk/hwrc](http://www.durham.gov.uk/hwrc)