

Coronavirus – Garden Waste collections suspended

Summary

- **In response to staffing pressures related to Coronavirus, SWP will be suspending Garden Waste collections from Monday until further notice. This is so that resources can be focused on core services such as collecting recycling, refuse and clinical waste.**
- **Garden Waste subscriptions will be extended to reflect the disruption - if collections are disrupted until the end of April 2020, subscriptions will run until end April 2021.**
- **All parties are working hard to limit impacts, but there is the potential for disruption to other collections services in the coming days and weeks.**
- **This information is being promoted through the SWP's usual communications channels, including somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus and @somersetwaste on Twitter and Facebook**

SWP's waste collect contractor is seeing staffing levels fall as a result of the developing Coronavirus situation as people self-isolate in line government guidance. This has an unavoidable impact on the ability to deliver services and several areas have seen a suspension of garden waste collections towards the end of this week.

These pressures are likely to increase in the coming days. In light of this, and to protect more important services such as recycling, refuse and clinical collections; SWP has decided to suspend ALL garden waste collections from Monday, 23 March.

Around 50,000 people pay for garden waste collections and the suspension comes at a time when subscriptions are being renewed. To make sure customers don't lose out, SWP is extending all subscriptions to take account of the disruption, however long it lasts.

So, if disruption continues until the end of April 2020, annual subscriptions will last until the end of April 2021.

SWP will be encouraging people to properly sort their recycling before presenting it for collection. This helps speed up collections, meaning rounds can be completed quicker and staff deployed to help elsewhere.

We are speaking to partners and contractors on a daily basis and working hard to limit the impact that the current situation is having on services.

So far, other services have continued largely as normal, but they too could be hit in the coming weeks, depending on how staffing numbers are affected.

Please be aware of the government guidance on how people with symptoms of the Coronavirus should dispose of their personal waste such as tissues and disposable cleaning cloths.

The guidance is for those diagnosed with the infection and people in households with someone showing symptoms that may be caused by coronavirus - a new, continuous cough and/or high temperature. This guidance is available on a dedicated SWP webpage www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus

Other current service impacts as a result of Coronavirus:

- Suspension of new requests for bins, recycling boxes and food waste caddies – teams will endeavour to deliver those already ordered, but no new requests will be accepted for the time being.
- Suspension of collection of bulky waste from inside properties – a service that tends to be used by older people and involves staff entering people’s homes. The standard bulky waste collection service continues at present.
- Pausing of the Slim My Waste, Feed My Face campaign, which has been successfully encouraging food waste recycling across the county - this is in anticipation of increased pressure on support staff and services. A decision on delivering the campaign to the remaining areas of Sedgemoor and West Somerset will be taken at a later date.
- Suspension of assistance in removing waste from vehicles at the County’s 16 Recycling centres – in light of Government guidance around social distancing, staff at the centres will temporarily not be able to help people carry weighty or awkward items. We would ask the public to bear this in mind when using the centres in the coming weeks. Each site has allocated a drop-off area for bulky items which members of the public may use if they feel unable to deposit these in recycling bins. People are reminded to separate their recycling from their rubbish before bringing it to any site and make sure they follow the guidance on any rubbish potentially affected with Coronavirus.
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