



Silent night: operators prefer the quieter conditions on the roads outside the traditional working hours

RECYCLING

Self-service at the night-time MRF

Out-of-hours tipping is becoming an increasingly popular service for London's 24/7 waste industry, says **TARA DONAGHY**

While much of London sleeps, the waste industry continues to go about the business of collecting, tipping and sorting the capital's vast amounts of wastes, servicing the need for waste management at any time. Driving this is the demand for night-time municipal waste collections and out-of-hours construction and maintenance sites wishing to unload rather than store waste until the next working day.

They, and others who choose to tip at night or in the early hours, appreciate the convenience of the quieter London roads, the absence of the congestion charge and the environmental advantages of a more efficient process.

The McGrath Group has taken this onboard and has extended its working hours to accommodate demand and alleviate the challenge of using the capital's roads to transport waste during traditional working hours. The amount of waste transported around London during the day leads to an environmental cost of increased congestion, carbon emissions, noise and accidents.

The company's east London MRFs in Hackney and Barking are open 24 hours a day, including weekends and bank holidays. These facilities are becoming a more attractive prop-

osition for waste collection companies which themselves are under pressure to make out-of-hours collections.

London's waste collection companies realise the benefits of night-time collections and deliveries, and are seeing demand from their customers to transport waste out-of-hours. Workforces are embracing the flexibility that comes with shifts being available day and night, and many operators prefer the quieter conditions on the streets at night because they make collections easier and speed up delivery times.

McGrath is one of the few waste management companies in London that is open out-of-hours. The process is facilitated by fully automated weighbridges that allow drivers



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to check in themselves and their waste. McGrath operatives are on-site day and night to manage deliveries and the MRFs are active around the clock.

The weighbridges at McGrath's MRF in Barking are fitted with touchscreens that have doubled capacity and speeded-up the process of discharging wastes. Interactive software allows drivers to enter the site using touchscreen terminals accessible from their cabs to book in and declare what they are carrying.

Digital images of the load and vehicle numberplate are inputted along with the weight and content information. The out-of-hours waste tipping process therefore becomes faster, more robust and workable.

The Barking site now operates four self-service bridges that are operational 24/7. Turn-around times average less than 14 minutes, with night-time deliveries typically taking less than 10 minutes.

From an operational point of view, the automation and removal of paperwork will strengthen the audit process and make the whole experience seamlessly digital. Information is recorded into the company's electronic reporting process and is supported by visual documentation. This provides a fully completed Waste Transfer Note which is emailed to the client, along with a monthly summary report showing breakdown by destination and waste hierarchy categories.

McGrath feels this level of data further enhances its reputation for compliance in its waste management and recycling processes. Weight recording is a vital part of legislative compliance and allows the firm to provide comprehensive evidence of the waste's journey from arrival on-site to its final destination.

London's underground network takes advantage of the 24hr opening to tip waste produced by out-of-hours maintenance operations. Materials generated by track developments carried out when the tube is closed from 1am to 5am can be unloaded directly rather than being stored and transported the next day, which helps to reduce transport costs and fuel consumption.

As the amount of recycling produced by London increases, those with the capacity to process it will be in increasing demand. McGrath's zero-to-landfill fully integrated recycling system, which segregates mixed wastes into individual material streams ready for reprocessing into raw materials and new products, is well placed to take advantage of the burgeoning requirement for sustainable solutions to the capital's wastes. ♻️

● Tara Donaghy is business director at McGrath Group