

1. Introduction

Digital Waste Tracking is replacing paper-based waste record-keeping with a new digital system. From 1 October 2026, all permitted and licensed waste receiving sites in England and Wales must use the new Report Receipt of Waste service to record waste they receive. Scotland and Northern Ireland's mandatory date is 1 January 2027.

The service is now live and open for use ahead of the mandatory date. We strongly encourage members to register and start using the service now, rather than waiting until closer to their respective deadlines.

2. Why Is This Happening?

Waste crime costs the UK economy around £1 billion every year. The current paper-based tracking system is outdated, bureaucratic and makes it difficult for regulators to spot suspicious activity or build cases against rogue operators.

Digital Waste Tracking will give regulators better, more reliable, near real-time data on waste movements. This will help authorities identify and act against illegal waste activity, while also making reporting quicker and less burdensome for legitimate businesses.

This sits alongside other reforms (carrier, broker and dealer reform, and exemptions reform) as part of the government's wider Waste Crime Action Plan.

3. Who Is Affected?

Phase 1 (from 1 October 2026 in England and Wales; 1 January 2027 in Scotland and Northern Ireland):

Any organisation operating a licensed or permitted waste receiving site, including transfer stations, paper mills, incinerators, and composting facilities. This includes

sites where the licence covers waste activities on the same site where the waste is produced.

The only exception is Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), which will not need to record incoming household waste, though commercial waste received at HWRCs in England must be recorded from October 2026. Please check the nation-specific guidance on HWRCs in your nation if you are based elsewhere.

Phase 2 (waste carriers, brokers, dealers and producers):

This is planned to begin from fully mandatory rollout in October 2027, subject to change, with voluntary use opening from spring 2027. If your organisation is a waste carrier, broker or dealer, you are not yet required to use the service, but you should start preparing now (see Section 6 for what to do).

Waste receiving sites should also make sure any collectors, hauliers or transporters they work with are aware of the upcoming changes, even though they are not yet in scope.

4. What Do Waste Receiving Sites Need to Do Now?

1. **Check your software.** If you use waste-specific software, check with your provider whether it is being integrated with Defra's Report Receipt of Waste API. A list of compatible software providers is available on GOV.UK. If you do not have compatible software, it will become mandatory for you to use one. Until you have this software, you can use Defra's temporary spreadsheet template instead, this will be in place until at least October 2027.
2. **Register for a Defra account.** You'll need a Government Gateway or GOV.UK One Login account for your organisation (not a personal account) to register.
3. **Test the service now.** The service is live and open for use. Testing now, ahead of the mandatory deadline, will help you iron out any issues and build confidence before compliance becomes mandatory.
4. To submit data and test the service:
 - a. Your provider will ask you for an API key. This is unique to you.
 - b. You will then input this into your software, ask your provider for guidance on how to do this if you're unsure.
 - c. You will then be able to send data associated with your report receipt of waste account

5. **Know the mandatory use date.** 1 October 2026 for England and Wales. 1 January 2027 for Scotland and Northern Ireland.
6. **Understand the reporting timeline.** Once mandatory, you'll have 2 working days starting the day after receiving the waste to submit your report.
7. **Be aware of the annual service charge.** £26 per year, per organisation, from October 2026. This applies per legal entity, not per site.
8. **Tell your transporters and collectors.** Let any waste carriers, hauliers or brokers you work with know that Digital Waste Tracking is coming, even though they won't be mandated until Phase 2. Early awareness will help the whole chain prepare for this industry-wide change.

5. What Do Controllers, Carriers and Transporters Need to Do Now (Phase 2)?

You are not yet required to use the Report Receipt of Waste service, but you should:

- Stay informed about Digital Waste Tracking, as your inclusion is expected from Phase 2.
- Talk to the waste receiving sites you work with, who may already be testing or preparing for the new service.
- Watch GOV.UK for updates on when voluntary testing opens for your sector (currently expected from spring 2027, with mandatory use planned from autumn 2027, subject to change).
- [Register for the Circular Economy Newsletter](#) where you can find updates that will affect you and your business
- Begin thinking about your own record-keeping and software readiness in good time.

6. Where Can Members Find Out More?

- Main guidance: [gov.uk/guidance/report-receipt-of-waste](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-receipt-of-waste)
- Policy background: [gov.uk/government/publications/digital-waste-tracking-service](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-waste-tracking-service)
- Choosing a software provider: [gov.uk/government/publications/report-receipt-of-waste-choose-a-software-provider](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-receipt-of-waste-choose-a-software-provider)

- **Helpline:** 03000 203 781, Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm (excluding public holidays)
- **Regulator contacts** for waste regulation questions: Environment Agency (England), DAERA (Northern Ireland), SEPA (Scotland), Business Wales (Wales)

7. Frequently Asked Questions

What is Digital Waste Tracking? A new digital system replacing paper-based waste record-keeping, designed to cut waste crime and simplify reporting for legitimate operators.

When does it become mandatory? 1 October 2026 for permitted and licensed waste receiving sites in England and Wales. 1 January 2027 for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Do I need to do anything before it's mandatory? You're strongly encouraged to voluntarily test the service now. This gives you time to check your software, get used to the system and resolve any issues before your mandatory date.

How do I submit my data? Either through waste-specific software connected to Defra's API, or by using Defra's spreadsheet template, which you download and upload through the service. You can use a combination of both.

How much will it cost? An annual service charge of £26 per organisation applies from October 2026. This is not due until then, and applies per organisation, not per site.

How long do I have to report a waste receipt? Two working days from the day after receiving the waste.

What if I don't have compatible software? You will be required to purchase compatible software. Until such time, you can use Defra's own temporary spreadsheet template, downloaded from the service once you've registered.

Does this affect carriers, brokers or dealers? Not yet. This is Phase 1, focused solely on waste receiving sites. Carriers, brokers and dealers are expected to be brought into scope from spring 2027 (voluntary) with mandatory use planned from autumn 2027, subject to change. If you fall into this group, you should start preparing now and stay alert for updates.

What if I can't use digital systems? Provisions exist for those who are "digitally excluded" (for example, sole traders without employees, where digital use isn't reasonably practicable due to age, disability, location or similar barriers). You'll need to notify your regulator and obtain a digitally excluded number, then keep written records instead.

Where can I get help? Call the helpline on 03000 203 781 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, excluding public holidays), or check the guidance on GOV.UK.

What about paper returns? Please note that paper returns will still be required initially according to your current processes alongside digital data submission.