

# Cherhill Parish Council



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## Press Statement on Wiltshire Council's proposals to close Lower Compton Household Recycling Centre

The much valued and well used **Household Recycling Centre at Lower Compton** forms part of the area administered by **Cherhill Parish Council**. As the tier of local government immediately below the unitary authority that is Wiltshire Council, Cherhill PC was stunned and horrified to learn only very recently of WC proposals to close 2 of its 8 HRCs, including that at Lower Compton, in August 2026. Both of these owned and operated by Hills Waste.

### **The lack of consultation**

Fundamentally, and astonishingly, Cherhill Parish Council has not been consulted at any stage and only learned of inclusion of this matter in the agenda of Wiltshire Cabinet, a few days prior to that meeting, and only then through the local press. A letter to Cllr Paul Sample, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Climate and Waste, was emailed to him on 7<sup>th</sup> December, outlining Cherhill PC's objections to the proposals. This was also copied to Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of Wiltshire Council. Neither has even acknowledged the PC's letter. This is an extreme discourtesy to this local council. Further, the PC's emailed letter was not mentioned during the discussions at Cabinet. The day following that meeting, we learned that a vote had actually taken place, without consultation, to close the sites, whereas prior to the meeting the Cabinet papers had clearly stated that there would first be a period of public consultation. Democracy appears to have been thrown out of the window. The lack of response to the local council and the hurriedly taken decision at Cabinet to consult neither the parish councils involved nor the public on the issue does not show Wiltshire Council in a good light. The pledge to be open and inclusive is not borne out by the actual decision-making process.

**The objections of Cherhill Parish Council** to this ill-considered proposal are various and have already been communicated to Wiltshire Council:

- 1) Closing Lower Compton HRC would result in Cherhill parish residents, indeed all residents in the Calne area, having to travel significantly further, ie to Devizes or Stanton St Quintin, in order to recycle. The greatly increased carbon emissions would negate any environmental benefits that WC claims to be seeking
- 2) It is obvious that older residents or those with disability would be severely affected by closure. Removing such local infrastructure results in severe hardship for vulnerable residents who rely on local facilities.
- 3) There is huge potential here for much increased local fly-tipping.

- 4) The primary financial argument for closure is that Lower Compton and the other Hills-owned HRC at Purton, require significant capital investment. WC has not provided any evidence to support such a claim and so we have to question this.
- 5) Lower Compton HRC is a long established and well run local facility. Closing it would result in great detriment to the many local communities that rely upon it.

**Further points we would now make to Wiltshire Council:**

- 6) The opening hours of Wiltshire's HRCs were reduced to 5 days a week a few years ago. Is it intended to return to a 7-day week to cope with the additional demand? This will in particular affect north Wiltshire, with the closure of both Lower Compton and Purton.
- 7) The proposal to move to a 3-weekly bin collection is said to be driven by a desire to push up the rates of recycling. How does that fit in with the closure of recycling centres and reducing their hours of business?
- 8) The 2021 census showed Calne to be the fourth largest town in Wiltshire by population yet it lacks many of the facilities of smaller towns, much to the exasperation of local residents. This decision would remove one of the few remaining pieces of infrastructure.
- 9) Under the Controlled Waste (Amendment) Regulations 2023, the Government prohibited DIY waste charges, specifically to remove barriers to responsible disposal. DEFRA's own 2023 policy statement confirms that '*providing for free is the most effective way to prevent fly-tipping*'. By closing the Purton and Lower Compton sites, Wiltshire Council is effectively reintroducing a massive barrier to proper disposal – distance- which violates the core objective of the national legislation, to make the 'trip to the tip' as frictionless as possible for the law-abiding resident.
- 10) To what extent are the costs of the statutory obligation on Wiltshire Council to start a food waste service being paid for by the projected savings of closing the 2 HRCs? Is the closure of these sites really just a straightforward money saving/reallocation scheme, as it was when closure was discussed, **and rejected**, by the previous administration a couple of years ago?
- 11) Has Cabinet commissioned a formal financial risk assessment of the projected cost of clearing fly-tipping in the Calne and Purton areas during the 24 months before a new site is able to open? How would those costs compare to the 'unjustifiable' extension fee to Hills Waste for these 2 HRCs to continue beyond August 2026?

**In summary:**

In their manifesto the largest party involved in the administration of Wiltshire Council declared they would be 'open and honest'. In the recently published '**Our Wiltshire Plan**' the Council said they would 'keep listening at the heart of our decision-making' and would move away from a '*system where decisions are taken by a few people with insufficient debate*'. Clearly that has not happened here. We call on Wiltshire Council to admit their mistake and go through with the consultation process in an honest and open way. Only then should a decision be taken on the future of the HRCs, 3-weekly bin collections and an online booking system. In essence the Council needs to govern in the way that was promised before the election.