



LARAC

Local Authority Recycling  
Advisory Committee

2021  
Annual Report

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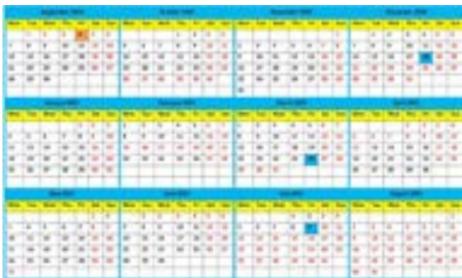
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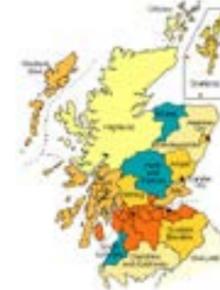
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# vision

To be the leading voice for local authorities on recycling, waste and resource management

# mission

To influence UK waste policy for the benefit of our members in a manner which advances the waste and resource industry. To provide membership services in a cost effective and quality manner so that our members are well informed. To provide premier local authority national waste conferences that act as a catalyst for information dissemination and promotion of good practice within local authorities.

# origins

LARAC was founded by and is still run by an Executive of serving local authority recycling and waste management professionals from the whole of the UK. Their experience and working knowledge means they are well placed to represent our members.

# chair's report

Well, I can safely say it's been a very busy year in terms of LARAC and the industry. Not only have we had to continue with the pandemic restrictions and adapting to new ways of working, but we also dealt with a few waste strategy consultations, as well as changing the organisation status of LARAC to become a limited company.

## 2020 LARAC Conference

In October 2020 the LARAC UK Conference was held completely online, two full days of speakers and workshops, and it was very well attended. Whilst we probably all feel that online events can't replace the atmosphere and experience of face-to-face events, in view of the circumstances I think we did something that was unique and tried to bring delegates together. This was thanks to the specialist software that our conference organisers, EMG, found and imported from the USA. We also did the LARAC Awards live online, and I may be biased but I thought it was one of the best online awards events out there.

## Work with Defra

In February 2021 we successfully lobbied Defra when it was decreed that the millions of Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) out there would need specialist waste collection and disposal. Common sense prevailed, along with a huge sigh of relief, when LFDs were re-classified as normal household waste in non-healthcare settings.

LARAC Exec members continued to communicate the local government view at a plethora of strategy stakeholder events prior to the strategy consultations being released in March and May 2021. Like the rest of industry, we were very disappointed that the three consultations on EPR, DRS and Consistency were not released together, and that Consistency had such a short turnaround of only

eight weeks. Like others, we asked for an extension but to no avail, and so we did what we could in the time given.

## Local Authorities



We received a lot of great feedback from our members on the help they were given by LARAC during the consultations period, i.e., briefing papers, workshops surveys and webinars, as well as final draft documents to facilitate the formulation of their own consultation responses. As we eagerly wait for the consultation feedback from Government, I hope and believe the help we gave resulted in many local authority responses which will help shape the future of policy in our industry and gain that all important funding we need to implement, or alter, services in the future.

Not only have various lockdowns taken their toll on local authorities being able to keep services running, but we are now experiencing a severe shortage of HGV drivers affecting service provision. The UK's exit from the EU and the Covid "pingdemic" (being told via the NHS Covid app to self-isolate as a result of being in contact with a Covid positive person) are cited as the main reasons, but there are other reasons such as lack of decent welfare facilities for drivers and an ageing population adding to the situation. Again, LARAC is at the forefront of helping collate information for Defra by way of a weekly survey, and we hope this

information has an impact on resolving the situation.

Now that lockdown restrictions have been eased, I'm looking forward to getting back to attending events in person, one of which is the LARAC UK Conference which is back for its second year in Birmingham's Hilton Metropole Hotel at the NEC. Bookings are looking very healthy; the agenda is full of knowledgeable speakers, and we are very thankful to our sponsors for helping to make this event possible and affordable to local authorities.

This is my last year as LARAC Chair (I'm not quite sure where the last four years have gone!) and so this is my last annual report too. The election for a new Chair will be after our next Exec meeting in October, which is also my last as Chair. LARAC continues to be the leading voice for local authorities on recycling, waste and resource management and it has been an honour to guide LARAC over the last four years, especially having the brilliant support from the LARAC Executive members. Last but definitely not least I want to say a very special thank-you to Jenny and Lee, at LARAC HQ, for supporting me over the last four years as Chair as well as all the valuable work they do behind the scenes for LARAC.

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Carole Taylor, LARAC Chair



# treasurer's report

The accounts for 2020/21 have been prepared and verified by Thorne and Co and are shown on the next page. The Executive initially set a surplus budget for the year, but this was revised in July 2020 once the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic were becoming apparent and a revised deficit budget of £11,000 for the year was agreed. Expenditure was reduced based on having no face-to-face meetings for six months of the year and income was reduced, and it was anticipated there would be no income from conferences for the year.

## Surplus

The final year position was significantly different from the budget forecast and resulted in LARAC achieving a £12,770 surplus.

Expenditure was significantly below the budget set. This was due in part to no face-to-face meetings happening all year and so saving on associated travel costs. The pandemic also brought forward the move to cease production of the Loop and move to a fortnightly series of LARAC OnLine features. This resulted in overall expenditure being around £20,000 lower than had been anticipated.

The revisions made in July to the income budget proved to be more accurate. There was a very small profit share received from the online conference that was held instead of the face-to-face event, but this still meant that conference income was down by over £50,000 compared to the previous year. However, membership income remained the same as the previous year and although numbers decreased from the previous year, web sales were in line with the revised budget.

Given how difficult the general economy has been LARAC has come through the last year in a very good position, aided by the surplus that was generated the previous year, largely through a strong return from the UK conference, as a result of moving to a new venue.

## Limited Company

These reserves have assisted LARAC in moving from an unincorporated body to a limited company and future accounts will need to be prepared on this basis.



The budgeting for this current year has also been difficult and a deficit budget has been set by the Executive, again on the basis that face-to-face meetings might start to take place in the second six months of the year and with a face-to-face conference event being held.

## Resources and Membership

A review of resources is also being undertaken within the organisation and the financial performance of this current year will be considered when looking at options going forward.

Membership levels are holding up very well and that may be in part due to the information and assistance that LARAC put out to members during the pandemic and throughout the consultations on consistent collections, DRS and EPR.

## Treasurer

During this current financial year our Treasurer John Coates left the LARAC Executive, and we welcome Andrew Bird who has taken on the role. I would like to thank John for all his work on the accounts and financial aspects of LARAC operations while he was Treasurer.

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Lee Marshall, LARAC CEO on behalf of the treasurers



# accountant's report

## Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2021

Income	2021	2020
Membership Subscription	117,641	117,313
Sale of Loop and copies	-	4,000
Webs Sales	20,158	26,375
Conferences	2,288	54,424
Interest	1,098	1,119
Other commercial activities	-	250
	<u>141,185</u>	<u>203,481</u>

Expenditure	2021	2020
LARAC Administration	86,272	84,324
LARAC Website	529	1,591
Honoraria	3,600	3,850
Secondes	20,744	14,526
Meetings		
Executive	-	6,040
Regional	-	875
Other	1,157	12,505
Conferences		
LARAC		1,446
Other		438
Insurance	1,935	1,850
Renewals	390	-
Subscriptions	600	620
Magazine publications	337	21,836
Features	5,400	-
Exhibitions	100	898
Promotional material	35	35
Accountancy fees	850	890
Depreciation	241	546
VAT	4,215	2,901
Professional fees	2,010	-
	<u>128,415</u>	<u>155,171</u>

<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>12,770</b>	<b>48,310</b>
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## Balance sheet as at 31 March 2021

Fixed Assets	Cost less Depreciation To 31.03.20	Additions	Sales	Depreciation	Balance
Canon Photocopier	-				-
HP Printer	-				-
HP Printer	-				-
Furna Desk	-				-
Computer	-				-
Computer	482			241	241
	<b>482</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>241</b>

### Current Assets

Debtors	1,590
Community A/C	24,651
Deposit A/Cs	139,164
LARAC Ltd	2,643
	<b>168,048</b>

### Current Liabilities

Received in Advance	3,417
VAT	654
Creditors	4,129
	<b>8,200</b>

<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>159,848</b>
Represented by:-	<b>160,089</b>

### Capital Account

Balance at 1st April 2020	147,319
Surplus for the year	12,770
Balance at 31st March 2021	<b>160,089</b>

We have prepared the accounts shown from the books, vouchers and information supplied to us and we certify that they are in accordance therewith. We have not carried out an audit.  
Thorne & Co, 1 St Mary's Street Ross on Wye, Herefordshire



# policy report

Consultations included those on consistent collections, DRS and EPR. It was not just the consultations themselves but a variety of working groups that members of the LARAC Executive were involved in. The discussions that took place in these working groups then fed into the consultation documents that finally arrived in March 2021.



The responses that LARAC submitted were some of the most comprehensive we have ever submitted and demonstrate the importance that is attached to them and just how vast they were. There were still a number of key areas that lacked detail and there is no doubt that work on these key policy areas will continue over the next couple of years.

Defra appears to want to push on with all three policy areas and the timetables they have outlined are ambitious given the amount of work to do and detail still to be sorted out.

Outside these areas of activity the UK seemed to be influenced by the general concern around plastics, and single-use plastics in particular. The Environment Bill had little progress through Parliament, a victim of circumstances rather than political wrangling over the comments. At the time of writing, it was in the Lords awaiting return to the Commons and consent. That said, the Office for Environmental Protection is being created and it will

be interesting to see how that body influences and shapes waste policy going forward, if at all.

Other consultations we worked on this year around the country reflected the public concern about plastics and include:

## Northern Ireland



We responded to the DAERA survey on the future of recycling and separate collection of household waste in NI and we are currently working on the DAERA public call for evidence on a plan to elimination plastic pollution in NI.

## Scotland



The Scottish Government were reviewing their policy on single use plastics and LARAC broadly supported the proposals. There was also a consultation on residential planning related to waste provision.

## Wales



Like Scotland, Welsh Government also consulted on single use plastics. In February we responded to the Litter and Fly-tipping Prevention Plan for Wales and in August 2020 we responded to the Welsh Government consultation on Reducing single-use plastics: proposals to ban 9 single-use plastic products in Wales.

## Environment Agency



There was a consultation related to Technical Competent Managers (TCMs) of permitted facilities, with proposals brought forward to make changes in attendance hours. LARAC favoured an option of linking attendance to the charging bands that a facility falls into.

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Lee Marshall, LARAC CEO



# the LARAC year

This LARAC year - spanning from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021 has truly been a year like no other, as it has been a year completely within the scope of Covid-19. There were no live events, no LARAC conferences and no weeks dominated by Exec journeys all around the country to attend meetings.

But, as we all know, meetings took place via zoom and they proliferated since there was no travelling time involved, and events were online, which could be more convenient, as we selected the bits we could benefit from most, and spent the rest of the day at work.

As a workforce we adapted, and LARAC adapted too. We took the chance to look at ourselves and adapt our services so that our members now benefit from an even more efficient LARAC.

## Business Plan

As you might expect from the past 12 months, what we had planned to work on and what we actually worked on were two different things as the impacts of Covid were felt. That doesn't mean that we haven't been able to make progress in some areas though. We have made the transition from an unincorporated body to a corporate body as was outlined at the AGM last year.

This means that LARAC now operates as a limited company, and this should put us on a firmer footing going forwards in terms of contracts and being able to employ people. From the outside there should be little if no difference, but it was an important step to take.

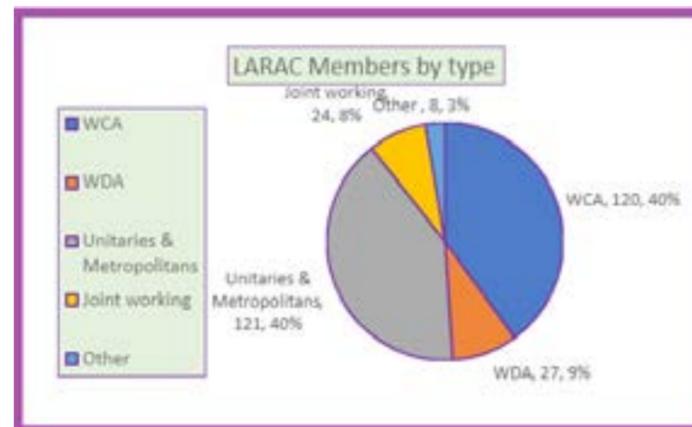
A review of the resources that LARAC utilises and what it might need in the future is ongoing and the results of that should start

to be seen mid-way through 2022. The aim is to ensure that the services we provide are timely and useful and that we also have a strong policy capability.

Next year will see a new Chair for LARAC and that also means that preparations will start on the next four-year business plan for LARAC, which has to be in place for the start of 2023.

## Membership and Membership Services

We are lucky enough to have a diverse membership - quite evenly balanced between WCAs and waste disposal, unitaries and joint waste authorities. The following shows the breakdown of present membership.



We introduced new efficiencies to our membership services during the year. Which meant we could improve on the frequency of our communications with members, and we could take advantage of improved software. This meant that information relating to the Covid 19 situation and the major government consultations was circulated to members effectively and efficiently and done in a timely manner. We hope (and feedback supports this) that this

made our information more useful to the local authority officers receiving it.

The use of Mailchimp for communications has also given us a more convenient method of providing linked documentation to members than was the case previously when briefing documents were sent as direct emails from the various LARAC email addresses.

## Communications

The Covid 19 pandemic caused a fundamental shift in how we communicated on a day-to-day basis as we all moved to the online world of Zoom and Team meetings. It was no different for LARAC and as Carole mentions in her piece, we held a complete two-day LARAC Conference virtually, including and Awards evening as well. The size and scale of it was probably bigger than any other waste event during the pandemic and we learnt a lot from it for the future, although we hope we are not in a position where we have to run an online UK LARAC conference again!

The pandemic also hastened our decision to stop producing the paper Loop magazine. It was something that had been under consideration for a while and with no one in their offices to receive the magazine it made sense to take the plunge and make the change. We wanted to keep the content of the Loop but deliver it in more bitesize chunks. We now have an online feature article that is included with every edition of the fortnightly newsletter LARAC Online. That regularity replaces the number of articles that had been previously supplied by the Loop in a quarterly feast of features. We know from the web stats that these articles are well read by our members, so it shows it was a change worth doing, and a menu of small morsels more often is one our members find more palatable.

# the LARAC year Continued

Elsewhere our communication activity has been as much about passing information on to our members as much as anything else. With a raft of information coming as a result of the Covid 19 situation and the consultations that took place this past year LARAC did its best to provide members with up to date and relevant information.

## Features



Tackling contamination: how easy is it to change habits?

This has been helped by the increase in individual logins to the LARAC website and to the email service. No longer restricted to just one person in each member authority it means more of you get the information in a timely manner. Recent growth in membership means we now have over 730 individual contacts across our 300 member authorities.

## Consultation Work

The past twelve months have been dominated by the consultations on consistent collections, DRS and EPR on packaging.

The consultations were released in March and May. But there was a lot of preparatory work that LARAC was involved in prior to then. There were a series of working groups and meetings leading up to their releases that gave LARAC the opportunity to influence the content of each individual consultation.

Defra had set up a cross cutting steering group that was intended to have a more strategic input to all three consultations and make sure the links between them all were considered. It was an industry-wide group and LARAC was one of only two local authority organisations on the group, the other being the LGA. The work between the three consultations was then split between the Chair, Vice Chairs and Policy Officer as they attended various meetings on each topic.



Unfortunately, at the time there was little information that LARAC was permitted to disseminate to members because the meetings were being held on a confidential basis, as they were helping to inform what went into the consultation documents. LARAC has built up a very good working relationship with Defra and was keen to ensure this was not damaged in any way by breaking or even stretching those confidences.

LARAC was also involved in a sprint group that looked at the current and future aspects of film and flexible recycling. This time LARAC was the only local authority organisation involved in the group, which on the one hand was good, but it was also a bit disappointing given the requirement to collect these materials would fall on councils. LARAC is also involved in the ongoing discussions taking place on EPR business waste payments and also litter payments.

So, while the support, briefings and webinars that you saw during the consultations is an obvious sign of what LARAC does in its policy work there is so much more important work that goes on behind the scenes. When we can produce a meeting report we do so and put those on the website for members to refer to. And this past year members of the Executive have very active in attending these meetings and putting across the views of local authorities and helping the wider industry and policy makers understand the issues they face in their day-to-day activities.

Lee Marshall, LARAC CEO

# northern ireland

Our work with Northern Ireland included our consultation work, but there were other things impacting on the waste world of Northern Ireland during the LARAC year.

## Covid 19

The impact of Covid 19 was seen as waste figures jumped by 11% in the first quarter of 2021. The recycling rate did also increase slightly during the same period. Household waste had also increased in the previous three quarters as people worked from home and offices and hospitality was largely closed.

## Driver shortages



In common with other parts of the UK this summer saw the driver shortage impact operations in Northern Ireland, with commercial collectors and local authorities having their services disrupted by the shortages.

## Brexit

This past year also saw the added complication for waste movements of the impacts of the UK's exit from the EU. That said it does appear as if the requirements under the Northern Ireland protocol for waste shipments has had minimal impacts on local authority operations.

## Food Waste Action Week



Northern Ireland took part in the first UK food waste action week in March 2021 with the environment minister calling for people to recycle more of their food waste. It is estimated that 25% of residual waste is food that could have been recycled.

## Consultations



DAERA consulted on the future of recycling and separate collection of household waste back in October 2020. The consultation appeared to be largely based on the first consistent collections consultation that Defra ran in 2019. The consultation did not propose any new policies and was seeking views on the steps needed to improve the quality and quantity of household recycling. It is unclear if and when a follow up consultation might appear. Given the push for consistent collections in England, partly to support high recycling targets on packaging producers, it would seem logical that there may be something coming forward for Northern Ireland authorities.

DAERA also launched a call for evidence on plans to eliminate plastic pollution in July 2021. At the same time they introduced measures to try and reduce the use of single use plastics across the Northern Ireland Civil Service estate.

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Lee Marshall, LARAC CEO



# scotland

Representing Scottish local authorities on the LARAC Executive continues to be an incredibly rewarding, fulfilling and challenging experience.

It has certainly been an unusual 16 months for us all due to the continued restrictions placed upon us by the novel coronavirus. LARAC has been at the forefront of many of the important strategy discussions held centrally to determine how we manage the operational implications of Covid-19 and put in place appropriate mitigation measures. As we slowly eased our way back to some form of normality after the long winter months, we have been somewhat pre-occupied by the Defra consultations on EPR, as well as DRS/consistency in England and Wales. Now that the consultations are out of the way for the moment at least, perhaps we can all start to consider what lies ahead for us all within the resource management sector.

As the implications of DRS, EPR and collections consistency are gradually becoming clearer and the proposed BMW landfill ban (in Scotland) has been put back to 2025 now, there is much work to be done to ensure that these most significant of policy changes can be implemented for the benefit of communities, local authorities and the environment as a whole.

## DRS

The Scottish Government is forging ahead with its plans for its all-in, “return to retail” 20p deposit refund DRS for glass, PET and aluminium cans following the delay to the project roll-out. How the planned scheme will impact the precise tonnage drop collected by local

authorities can only be estimated currently. I know Zero Waste Scotland is committed to delivering the scheme on 1 July 2022, and

with the not-for-profit Scheme Administrator Circularity Scotland now in place, things are certainly ramping up.

## Household Recycling Charter

The first stage review of the Code of Practice by the Advisory group is now complete and following agreement with Scottish Government & COSLA, a consultation process will take place to formally seek feedback from stakeholders on the proposed revisions – this is currently scheduled to commence during Aug/Sep 2021. Once consultation responses have been reviewed, a second stage review by the Advisory Group will take place with a view to producing a final draft for sign off later in 2021. Those Councils which have signed up to the Household Recycling Charter in Scotland are at various stages of implementation. My own council, West Lothian, has signed up to the Charter and we are currently in the process of planning for the implementation of a Charter compliant twin-stream recycling service around June 2022.

## Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF)

Stage 1 Expressions of Interest to the Scottish Government’s £70M Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) have been assessed by ZWS and outcomes/feedback is being provided to LAs on all projects submitted. LAs have now proceeded to Stage 2 application. RIF represents a rare opportunity for a strategic review of your current service model and to put forward a bid for a significant level of funding to improve it.



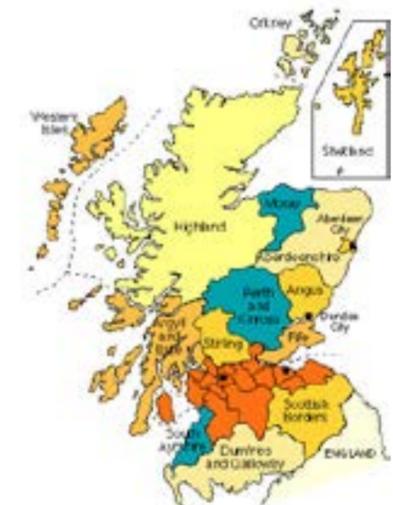
## WCA Programme

Scotland Excel’s Waste Composition Framework is now live and available for LAs. Zero Waste Scotland is currently assessing EOIs received from LAs to undertake studies for the WCA programme and aimed to conclude this by end of July – LAs selected to participate in the Autumn 21 fieldwork will be contacted in the next few weeks to progress study preparation.

## Conclusions

The UN Climate change Conference (COP26) being held in Glasgow 31 Oct – 12 Nov represents an excellent opportunity to think about the bigger picture and the pivotal role effective resource management has to play in mitigating climate impacts as we adapt and improve our sector on the path to net zero and reduced raw material use within a more circular economy model. It is important that LARAC strives to be part of this paradigm shift and can adapt to meet these challenges ahead. With the wide range of commitment and skills and experience on the LARAC Exec, there is no reason for it not to.

Stephen Gilfillan, LARAC Scotland representative



# wales

Seems like only a couple of months ago I wrote, “38 years in the world of waste, 18 years in local government and now into year 8 representing Wales with LARAC”. Now, in a flash, I need to add one to each of those – is that Covid or me getting old?

But some positives do appear to have come out of Covid, with data from Wales Recycles suggesting 55% of people in Wales are recycling more than they did before and Wales recycling rate now tops 65%. It seems the pandemic has focussed minds on the state of the planet?

As part of its ambition to move from third to the top of the recycling table the Welsh Government published its ‘Beyond Recycling’ strategy. 70% by 2030 (but hopefully a lot sooner as I’m getting old and would like to be around then) and onto becoming a zero-waste nation by 2050.

## Litter

Litter in general, and single use plastics in particular have been the main focus of LARAC’s consultations over the past 12 months with the Welsh Government. A real negative of the effects of lockdown has been an increase in littering and fly-tipping in many of our beauty spots.



The ‘litter and fly-tipping free Wales’ aims to raise the profile of littering and the associated behaviour, improve enforcement capabilities (including moving vehicles), improve monitoring of fly-tipping and, of course, introduce a deposit return scheme.

## DRS

18 months ago we were talking of a deposit return scheme and some, even younger than me, were reminiscing about the days of 10p on a pop bottle and how easy a deposit return system could be. Then we realised how complicated it would now be with so many material shapes and sizes, but generally agreed we could do it. Then we all changed our behaviour from March 2020 and started buying everything on-line and now have to consider if this fundamental change in behaviour is here to stay – and so how do you now return your containers to Amazon and Tesco on-line?

## Single-use

Reducing single use plastics in Wales looks to ban a range of single use, hard to recycle and commonly littered products including straws, cotton buds, polystyrene food and drinks containers, and oxo-degradable plastics. Whilst LARAC is supporting this proposed ban we are working on ensuring that any changes are supported by suitable collection and disposal options.

## Covid-19

Over the past 12 months, not surprisingly I have done lots of work, on behalf of LARAC, on the effects on the waste sector of Covid, including short term responses to the pandemic and the longer term effects on collections and markets.

With the low fruit all picked Wales emphasis continues to move

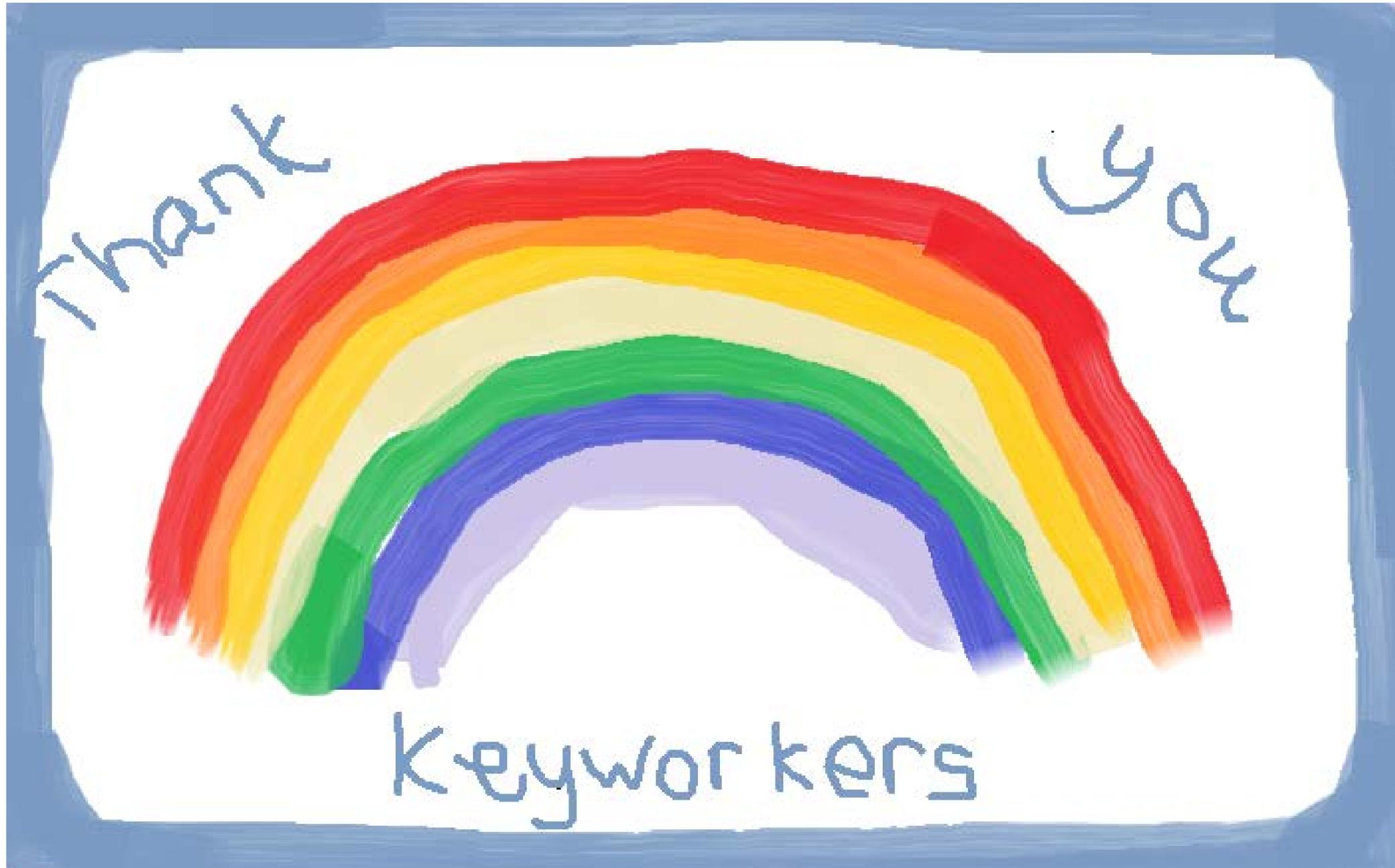
to the harder to reach materials – plastic film, carpets, mattresses etc. as you would expect. But now we are also getting serious with compulsory recycling at kerbside and at HWRCs – the latter made easier by the introduction, at many sites, of a booking system courtesy of you know what.

There have been many advantages of holding virtual meetings, particularly in carbon savings and time. But so looking forward now to occasionally meeting you again in person (and even eating some real sandwiches!). Fingers crossed!

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Paul Quayle, LARAC Wales representative





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[admin@larac.org.uk](mailto:admin@larac.org.uk)