

15 April, 2020

## Hold fire on bonfires, say SWP and fire chiefs

Somerset Waste Partnership and fire services are teaming up to ask people to pour cold water on plans for back garden bonfires.

Recent weeks have seen a rise in calls to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service to attend potentially dangerous back garden bonfires.

And district councils are also seeing a growing number of complaints about nuisance fires - in some cases including 'black smoke' fires, with people allegedly burning plastics and other toxic materials.

The increase is being put down to the fine weather and the impacts of Coronavirus: restrictions on movement, closure of recycling centres and the suspension of the garden waste collection services.

It may be tempting to burn garden waste and material you might usually take to the Recycling Centres, but the public is being urged to hold fire and think about the impact on neighbours and emergency services.

Where possible, people should hold on to garden waste until the Recycling Centres reopen and try not to generate waste that is going to be hard to dispose of.

Home composting may be an option for some and you can find more information here <https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/home-composting/>

Burning plastics, rubber or painted materials is illegal and the fumes can cause pollution and is harmful to health. With recycling centres closed, people are asked to keep hold of materials until they reopen.

Mickey Green, Managing Director of SWP, said: "We appreciate that this is a difficult period and it will be frustrating and inconvenient for some.

"But it's important that we don't put additional demand on hard-stretched emergency services and think about the impacts on others

Laura Pratt, Community Safety Prevention Manager for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, said: "When a fire crew is checking a bonfire, it could be delayed from going to a more serious incident elsewhere. Particularly at this time, we need to keep our resources ready for real emergencies.

"So we are asking people not to light bonfires and not to contact us to report other people's bonfires unless they are out of control. Always call 999 in an emergency and stay safe."

All 16 of Somerset's Recycling Centres are temporarily closed, in line with the current restrictions on non-essential travel. Garden waste collections have been suspended so crews and vehicles can focus on maintaining the rubbish, clinical and recycling collections.

For more information about how to reduce and reuse your waste, visit [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus) For the latest information about services and any disruption visit [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus) and follow @somersetwaste on Twitter and Facebook.