

Rt Hon Emma Hardy MP
Minister of State
Department for Environment, Food & Rural
Affairs
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Katie Stewart
ADEPT President 2026/27
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By email

31st July 2026

Dear Minister

Fridge/freezer recycling capacity crisis

On behalf of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT), I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We look forward to working alongside you, your ministerial colleagues and your officials at a pivotal time for the waste sector for local authorities.

As you may be aware, ADEPT is the voice of local authority place directors and their teams. Our members manage vital local services, from highways, waste, recycling and planning. Collectively, our members provide services for more than 42 million people, manage 164,000 miles of road and handle around 75% of all recycled waste in England.

I write to alert you to an urgent national issue that requires immediate government and regulatory intervention which is already impacting public services. Several of the UK's small number of specialist fridge recycling facilities are temporarily unavailable due to fires, breakdowns and closures. As a result of this loss of processing capacity, Producer Compliance Schemes have had to suspend collections of fridges and freezers from local authority sites. Many Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) have now exhausted their safe permitted storage capacity and are turning residents away or will be doing so imminently. Inevitably, many fridges will be fly tipped, causing environmental harm and risking public outrage.

This is a system-wide problem that no single party can resolve alone and is not a one-off event. We are asking for three things:

1. Clarity on the obligations of Producer Compliance Schemes during plant outages, with funding secured to support any additional costs falling on local authorities.
2. Continued support for the Environment Agency to build on its constructive early work by introducing a simple, fast, risk-based system for consenting temporary storage sites.
3. Government action to create the conditions for investment in additional UK processing capacity, so this situation does not recur.

A technical briefing note is attached setting out the issue and our requests in more detail. We would welcome an early meeting with you or your officials to discuss how, working with the regulator and the compliance schemes, we can resolve this together.

We hope that you will be able to address this important issue so that all local authorities can once again offer a disposal point to their householders for discarded fridges and freezers.

Yours sincerely,



Katie Stewart

ADEPT President 2026/27

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cc. Hannah Bartram, Chief Executive, ADEPT

Wendy Barrett, Chair, ADEPT Waste Working Group