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PRESS RELEASE

ESA supports WISH guidance to keep waste workers safe during COVID-19 crisis

LONDON, 2 April 2020 – For immediate release

The Environmental Services Association (ESA), the voice of the UK's recycling and waste management industry, welcomes and supports guidance published today by the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) Waste Industry Safety & Health Forum (WISH), which has been drawn up to protect and reassure waste workers serving on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis.

The guidance, which was produced in consultation with Public Health England (PHE), UK Government and ESA members, among many others, sets out safe working practices to limit the transmission of COVID-19 among recycling and waste operatives, who are still delivering an essential daily service as key workers.

Responding to the guidance, **Executive Director of the Environmental Services Association (ESA), Jacob Hayler, said:** *"We are grateful to WISH for producing this document in consultation with public health experts and industry health & safety professionals, and the ESA fully supports it as a set of guiding principles for operators.*

The guidance, which has been developed with advice from Public Health England and UK Government, is clear that waste services can be safely maintained as long as businesses and operatives follow, rigorously, good hygiene standards and have the necessary facilities available to do this. It is vital that operatives and managers maintain a regular and open dialogue, and that any team member who feels unwell with suspected COVID-19 goes home immediately or does not come in to work.

The guidance recognises the difficulty in maintaining social-distancing for collection crews, but clearly considers any risk associated with this to be low where all other recommendations are followed. The guidance is therefore not prescriptive about crew numbers in cabs, but suggests that numbers should be minimised through a range of measures wherever possible.

The guidance does not recommend the use of facemasks or other medical PPE other than nitrile gloves, but ESA and its members are closely monitoring conventional PPE supply chains to ensure sufficient quantities remain available to meet the industry's requirements.

Although many HWRCs are now closed, some remain open primarily as a resource for local authorities. It is important to stress that visiting these sites is not essential travel for most of us and members of the

public should not be using them. Unfortunately, despite the season, now is not the time to have a “spring-clean” and residents should hang on to bulky waste or materials they would otherwise take to a recycling centre until facilities re-open. Householders should not be putting this material in their general waste, as this will further strain services.

Our sector is well-versed at keeping its employees safe in respect of workplace hygiene, but it is now more important than ever that frontline recycling and waste workers follow the instructions provided by their respective employers and take note of the guidance provided by WISH. On behalf of the ESA, I would like to sincerely thank all recycling and waste operatives and support staff for continuing to provide such a vital public service in this time of national crisis.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

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