

The complete operator's guide

Digital Waste Tracking, explained.

Everything UK waste operators need to know about DEFRA's digital waste tracking: the deadlines, who it applies to, the free way and the software way to report, what you must record, and how LoadSnap does it for you.

Receiving sites

In force since 1 October 2026

Carriers, brokers and dealers

From October 2027

~12,000

receiving sites in Phase 1

£26

a year per organisation, paid to
DEFRA

£1,000

fixed penalty for not complying

Before you start

See it working first, free

If you would rather watch than read, we filmed LoadSnap doing all of this in the real product: a load taken in at the gate and filed to DEFRA, a carrier's job from booking to handover, and a firm that does both. No sign-up, a few minutes each.

Received	Reference	Carrier	Weight	Came from	Stage	What happens next
2 Oct 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0318	Northgate Waste Services Ltd	2.8 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Northgate Waste Services Ltd	To receive	Take it in when it arrives On its way in
2 Oct 2026 Calder Vale Wood Yard	WTN-2026-0319	Pennine Clearance Co	1.5 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Pennine Clearance Co	To receive	Take it in when it arrives On its way in
29 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0311	Northgate Waste Services Ltd	5 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Northgate Waste Services Ltd	Filed	Nothing
24 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0299	Northgate Waste Services Ltd	180 kg	EXTERNAL CARRIER Northgate Waste Services Ltd	Filed	Nothing
17 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	—	Fellside Haulage Ltd	1.6 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Fellside Haulage Ltd	Filed	Nothing
30 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0312	Fellside Haulage Ltd	1.2 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Fellside Haulage Ltd	Filed	Nothing
26 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0304	Fellside Haulage Ltd	11.8 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Fellside Haulage Ltd	Filed	Nothing

Receipts in LoadSnap: every load taken in, where its paperwork is, and what happens next.

Watch the films at loadsnap.co.uk/tour

Pick the film for your kind of business, or scan the code with your phone's camera.

[Receiving site film](#) [Carrier film](#) [Carry and receive film](#)



Or try it yourself. Drivers and weighbridge staff use the iPhone and iPad app. The weighbridge computer runs our free Windows connector.



[Start here](#)

Find the pages for your business

Your duties depend on what you do with waste. Find the row that fits you and read those pages first. Everything else is still worth a look when you have time.

Receiving site

Transfer station, MRF, treatment, landfill, scrap yard. Your deadline has passed.

[6 Timeline](#)
[8 Free or software](#)
[10 What to record](#)
[11 Timing rules](#)
[14 Checklist](#)
[16 LoadSnap for receivers](#)

Watch
Receiving site film

Carrier

Skips, grab hire, collections. Mandatory from October 2027, but receivers need your details now.

[6 Timeline](#)
[7 Who it applies to](#)
[10 What receivers need](#)
[14 Checklist](#)
[17 LoadSnap for carriers](#)

Watch
Carrier film

You carry and receive

Your own vehicles, tipping at your own site. Receiver rules apply today.

[6 Timeline](#)
[8 Free or software](#)
[10 What to record](#)
[11 Timing rules](#)
[14 Checklist](#)
[18 LoadSnap for both](#)

Watch
Carry and receive film

Broker or dealer

You arrange the movement and someone else carries it. From October 2027.

[7 Who it applies to](#)
[10 What to record](#)
[12 Penalties](#)
[14 Checklist](#)
[19 LoadSnap for brokers](#)

Read
For brokers and dealers

Producer

A business whose waste is collected. No start date of your own, but your duty of care counts.

[7 Who it applies to](#)
[14 Checklist](#)
[19 The producer portal](#)

Try
Live producer demo

Not sure which you are?

If your site holds an environmental permit and waste comes in through your gate, you are a receiving site, even if you also run vehicles. Sites on registered exemptions are not in Phase 1.

Digital Waste Tracking (DWT) is the biggest change to UK waste paperwork in a generation. Paper transfer notes are going digital, and for receiving sites the deadline has already arrived. This guide is written for the people who move and receive waste, not for compliance departments.

What's inside

01	What DWT is, and why it matters	5
02	Timeline and deadlines	6
03	Who it applies to, and when	7
04	Two ways to report: free or software	8
05	What DWT replaces	9
06	What you must record	10
07	Timing rules and the system	11
08	Penalties and enforcement	12
09	The bigger picture: waste crime	13
10	Your checklist	14
11	How LoadSnap works	15

At a glance

- **Mandatory for permitted receiving sites** since 1 October 2026 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and from 1 January 2027 in Scotland.
- **Carriers, brokers and dealers follow in October 2027.** Their public beta opens in spring 2027, after a limited trial from autumn 2026.
- **One UK-wide service** under the Environment Act 2021, replacing paper transfer notes and consignment notes over time.
- **Free to report by spreadsheet**, or through software that files each load for you over DEFRA's API.
- **£26 a year per organisation**, paid to DEFRA whichever way you report. First payment due by 31 January 2027.
- **£1,000 fixed penalty** for not complying, with uncapped variable penalties and unlimited fines above that.

01 The basics

What DWT is, and why it matters

Digital Waste Tracking is a single, UK-wide digital service that records the movement of waste from the point it is produced to the point it is finally dealt with. It replaces the paper trail of transfer notes, hazardous consignment notes and separate returns with one connected digital record for every load.

It is built on powers in Section 58 of the Environment Act 2021, which added new duties to the Environmental Protection Act 1990. England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have agreed to build and use the same shared service, so a business working across borders uses one system.

Why it's happening**Stop waste crime**

An auditable trail from start to finish makes it far harder to misdescribe or "lose" waste, and lets regulators check loads at the roadside.

Better data

Consistent, near real-time data across all four nations replaces scattered paper and occasional surveys.

A circular economy

Reliable data on what is produced, recovered and lost is the foundation for recovering more and wasting less.

In plain terms

A load of waste used to be weighed at the gate while someone filled in a paper note. Under DWT, that same moment creates a digital record with a unique tracking ID, sent to DEFRA, ideally without anyone typing it in twice. The waste, who carried it and where it ends up are all joined together in one chain.

02 The road to law

Timeline and deadlines

DWT slipped twice, from April 2025 and then April 2026. This time the dates were set in legislation, and the receiver deadline arrived on time on 1 October 2026.

- 2018
First committed in the Resources and Waste Strategy.
- January to April 2022
Joint four-nation consultation, 713 responses.
- Autumn 2025
Private beta opens to invited waste receivers.
- 24 April 2026
Digital Waste Tracking (England) Regulations 2026 laid in Parliament.
- 28 April 2026
Public beta opens for receiving sites, voluntary.
- **1 October 2026, you are here**
Mandatory for receiving sites in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. A limited trial for carriers, brokers and dealers starts this autumn.
- 1 January 2027
Mandatory for receiving sites in Scotland.
- 31 January 2027
First £26 annual charge due to DEFRA.
- Spring 2027
Phase 2 public beta opens. Any carrier, broker or dealer can join voluntarily.
- October 2027
Phase 2: mandatory for carriers, brokers and dealers.
- Later phases
Registered exemption holders (about 150,000) and green-list waste exports.

03 Who it applies to

Who it applies to, and when

Your duties and your deadline depend on your role in the chain. Find yourself below.

Receivers

Phase 1, now

Permitted and licensed sites

Mandatory since 1 October 2026 (Scotland 1 January 2027). Transfer stations, MRFs, treatment sites, landfill, energy from waste, AD, composting and scrap yards. You create the record and get the tracking ID for every load you receive, and you pay the £26 charge.

Carriers

Phase 2, Oct 2027

Carriers and hauliers

Mandatory from October 2027, with a public beta from spring 2027. You record the movements you carry from the point of production. But see the squeeze below: your real deadline is earlier.

Brokers and dealers

Phase 2, Oct 2027

Brokers and dealers

Mandatory from October 2027. You record the movements you arrange, with your registration and authorisation numbers on each record.

Producers

Duty of care

Businesses producing waste

No separate start date, but your duty of care is unchanged: accurate descriptions, EWC codes and quantities. Get it wrong and the mistake is now visible to everyone down the chain.

The downstream squeeze

Carriers and producers should not treat October 2027 as a free pass. Receiving sites have had to record every load they take in, including your details, since October 2026, so they need clean digital information from you now. Loads that arrive without it can be turned away at the gate.

04 How to report

Two ways to report: free or software

You can report every load yourself on DEFRA's free spreadsheet, or let software send each one for you over DEFRA's API. Either way, DEFRA charges **£26 a year per organisation**, covering all of that organisation's sites. The first payment is due by 31 January 2027.

Free to use

Route 1: DEFRA's spreadsheet

- 1 Register on GOV.UK and get your organisation's digital waste tracking code. Your permit number must match the public register exactly.
- 2 Pay the £26 annual charge.
- 3 Download DEFRA's template spreadsheet. You cannot use your own or change its format.
- 4 Fill in the mandatory fields for each load. One spreadsheet can hold several loads and several of your sites.
- 5 Upload it within two working days of each load arriving. Busy sites end up uploading every day or two.

DEFRA calls the spreadsheet temporary and expects to keep it until at least October 2027.

Through software

Route 2: software such as LoadSnap

- 1 Register on GOV.UK, get your code and pay the £26 charge, the same as route 1.
- 2 Paste the code into LoadSnap once and press Test Connection to check DEFRA recognises it.
- 3 Record each load as it comes in, at the weighbridge or on a phone.
- 4 LoadSnap sends it to DEFRA and stores the tracking ID that comes back. Nothing to download, fill in twice or upload.

LoadSnap's Starter plan files up to 10 loads a month to DEFRA at no cost. Paid plans cover more loads and the rest of the business.

	DEFRA spreadsheet	Software (LoadSnap)
DEFRA's £26 a year	Yes	Yes
Software cost on top	None	None on Starter, then by plan
Each load typed	Twice: note, then template	Once
Remembering the two-day deadline	Down to you	Sent as each load is recorded

05 Out with the paper

What DWT replaces

DWT pulls a scattered mix of mostly paper systems into one digital record set, broadly like a full hazardous consignment note plus the receiving site's details.

Paper system being replaced	What it covered	Today's retention
Waste transfer notes	Every transfer of non-hazardous controlled waste.	2 years
Hazardous and special waste consignment notes	England, Wales and NI; SEPA codes in Scotland.	3 years
Annex VII forms	Green-list exports. Still travel with the load; the data moves to DWT in a later phase.	Later phase
Returns	Hazardous consignee returns, quarterly site returns, pre-notifications.	In time
Edoc	The old voluntary electronic transfer note system from 2014.	Closed

Paper isn't switched off overnight

For now you keep doing your existing paperwork alongside DWT: hazardous consignee returns, quarterly returns, consignment notes and transfer notes all carry on as normal. DEFRA says plainly: "Initially we will not be moving away from current reporting methods." Expect a period of running both.

06 The record set

What you must record

Receiving sites record information in three areas. Carriers, brokers and dealers: this is also what the site will ask you for at the gate. Capture the right fields first time and the rest takes care of itself.

1 What the waste is

EWC code

Plain description

Physical form

Container type

Weight and unit

Hazardous?

POPs, which and how much

2 What happened before it arrived

Activity that produced it

Where it came from

Carriers

Brokers or dealers and their numbers

Producer SIC code

Consignment note code if hazardous

How it travelled

3 Where it is now, and what's next

Receiving site and permit number

Date and time received

Waste hierarchy option

Intended treatment (R or D code)

Plus two digital-only fields

Every record also carries its unique Digital Waste Tracking ID, and the code that identifies the receiving organisation.

07 Timing and the system

When and how you record it

The two working day rule

Not real time, yet. Each record must be complete by the end of the second working day after the waste arrives. Waste in at 1pm on Tuesday means recorded by 23:59 on Thursday.

- Change a record whenever the details change: corrections, treatment route, accepted or rejected.
- If the service is down, tell the regulator, keep a written record within the deadline and upload it within 7 days.
- Correct mistakes within one month of finding them.
- After about two years, DEFRA expects to move towards recording in real time.

DEFRA chose to build the service around an API, a direct link that software uses to send records. Most operators never touch the government service themselves; their software does it for them.

Preferred

Software that sends each load

No typing twice. The load is recorded once and a tracking ID comes back.

DEFRA's spreadsheet

Free, and a bridge rather than a destination. Expected to last until at least October 2027. Hard work at volume.

Paper route

Written records through your regulator, for businesses that cannot go online. DEFRA expects very few permit holders to need it.

Ask your software supplier

If your software cannot send to DEFRA, you cannot report that way. GOV.UK lists the software that has passed DEFRA's testing, so check yours is on it before you rely on it.

08 If you don't comply

Penalties and enforcement

£1,000

fixed penalty for not complying

Myth buster

Many websites quote £500 or £5,000.

Both are wrong. The legislation sets the fixed penalty at £1,000, increased by 50% if paid late or not at all. Always check legislation.gov.uk.

The enforcement ladder

1 Variable penalty

No cap in England. The regulator sets it on environmental impact, gain, blame and history. Scotland caps it at £40,000.

2 Compliance notices

Steps you must take by a set date. Cost recovery notices can follow.

3 Criminal prosecution

An unlimited fine on conviction in England. Convictions sit on a public register.

Enforcement starts soft

The government says it will start with education and support, moving to advice, warning letters, cautions and prosecution for anyone who keeps getting it wrong. Regulators: Environment Agency (England), NRW (Wales), SEPA (Scotland), NIEA (Northern Ireland). The bigger commercial risk is often loads turned away and contracts lost, not the fine.

09 The bigger picture

Why DWT is a weapon against waste crime

DWT is a central part of the Waste Crime Action Plan, published on 20 March 2026. The numbers behind it explain why the government is serious this time.

£1bn

a year, the cost of waste crime to the English economy.

~20%

of all waste is illegally managed, roughly 34 million tonnes.

749

new illegal waste sites found in 2024/25, up from 427.

+£45m

extra for the Environment Agency's waste crime enforcement over three years.

Satellites and drones

A new Operational Waste Intelligence Unit, plus data sharing with the Land Registry, HMRC and HGV licensing.

DWT gives regulators something they have never had: a way to check at the roadside and on site. Was the waste actually delivered to a legitimate site? Is a site taking more than its permit allows? A connected digital trail answers both, and finally makes the effort of legitimate operators visible.

A note on the figures: the £1 billion is the cost to the English economy; the Environmental Services Association argues the UK-wide cost may reach £2 billion.

10 Act now

Your checklist

Receivers, and firms that carry and receive

Mandatory now

- Register on GOV.UK and get your digital waste tracking code.
- Pay the £26 charge by 31 January 2027.
- Pick your route: DEFRA's spreadsheet or software.
- Check your permit number matches the register exactly.
- Ask your software supplier if they have passed DEFRA's testing.
- Capture the full record at the gate and train staff on it.
- Set up a reliable way to spot POPs.
- Keep your existing returns going alongside DWT.

Carriers, brokers, dealers

- Don't wait for 2027. Receivers need digital details from you now.
- Get your EWC codes and descriptions right on every load.
- Join the Phase 2 public beta when it opens in spring 2027.
- Choose software that can send your records when Phase 2 starts.

Producers

- Get EWC codes and waste descriptions accurate now.
- Check your carriers are registered and in date.
- Expect carriers to ask for your details digitally.

The smartest move today

If you receive waste, check every load from 1 October 2026 has a tracking ID. If you carry or broker it, use the time before October 2027 to get your data clean, so receivers keep taking your loads.

11 How LoadSnap works

One record per load, filed to DEFRA for you

LoadSnap is waste management software for receivers, carriers, brokers and dealers, with a portal for the producers you work for. Each load is recorded once, and that one record becomes the transfer note, the DEFRA filing and the invoice.

DEFRA Submissions ⓘ

The record of what has been sent to DEFRA, one submission per receipt. Receipts that still need submitting live in Receipts, with their deadlines.

[+ Log a receipt](#)

Filed
5
Accepted by DEFRA

Rejected
0
Nothing needs a fix

Awaiting response
0
Sent, no answer recorded yet

Due by Mon, 5 Oct
0
Not yet filed, due within a working day

Search by LoadSnap code, tracking ID, carrier, vehic

All 5 Needs you 0 Waiting on DEFRA 0 On the register 5

Where it stan...	Tracking ID	LoadSnap co...	Carrier	Site	Time left	What you can do	Attempt...
Filed	WTR-2026-004155	CVR-2026-0312... Note WTN-2026...	Fellside Haulag...	Calder Vale T...	Filed on time Filed 30/09/2026	Send a correction No deadline. DEFRA take a change...	1 ...
Filed	WTR-2026-004180	CVR-2026-0311... Note WTN-2026...	Northgate Was...	Calder Vale T...	Filed on time Filed 30/09/2026	Send a correction No deadline. DEFRA take a change...	1 ...
Filed	WTR-2026-004112	CVR-2026-030... Note WTN-2026...	Fellside Haulag...	Calder Vale T...	Filed on time Filed 26/09/2026	Send a correction No deadline. DEFRA take a change...	1 ...
Filed	WTR-2026-004147	CVR-2026-029... Note WTN-2026...	Northgate Was...	Calder Vale T...	Filed on time Filed 24/09/2026	Send a correction No deadline. DEFRA take a change...	1 ...
Filed	WTR-2026-004138	CVR-2026-028... Received 17/09/2...	Fellside Haulag...	Calder Vale T...	Filed on time Filed 17/09/2026	Send a correction No deadline. DEFRA take a change...	1 ...

Showing 1-5 of 5

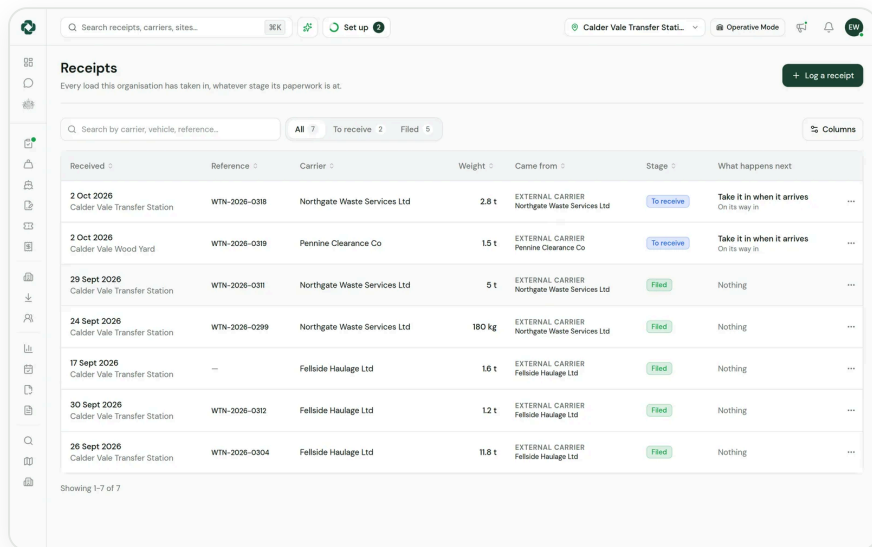
DEFRA Submissions: what was sent, the tracking ID DEFRA gave back, and anything that needs fixing.

- 1 Connect once.** Paste in your DEFRA code and press Test Connection.
- 2 Record the load.** At the weighbridge, in the office, or from a photo on a driver's phone.
- 3 AI suggests the EWC code.** From the photo, out of 850+ codes. You check and confirm.
- 4 Filed to DEFRA.** The record goes over DEFRA's API and the tracking ID is stored with it.
- 5 Nothing missed.** The two working day clock shows on each load, and anything DEFRA turns down is listed with what to change.
- 6 Your page next.** Receivers turn to page 16, carriers 17, firms that do both 18, brokers and producers 19.

LoadSnap for receiving sites

Weighed in, checked, filed

Every load through your gate becomes a receipt. The weight comes off the bridge, the carrier's details come from their note or code, and LoadSnap files it to DEFRA inside the two working days.



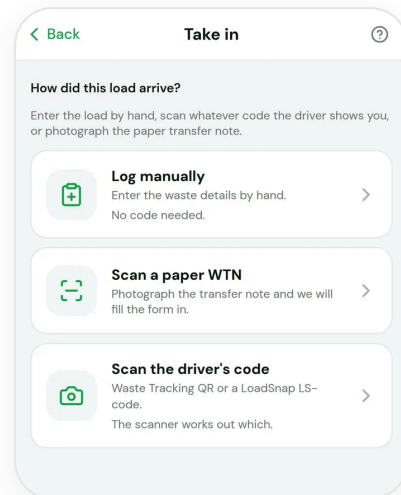
Receipts
Every load this organisation has taken in, whatever stage its paperwork is at.

Search by carrier, vehicle, reference...

Columns

Received	Reference	Carrier	Weight	Came from	Stage	What happens next
2 Oct 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0318	Northgate Waste Services Ltd	2.8 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Northgate Waste Services Ltd	To receive	Take it in when it arrives On its way in
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17 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	—	Felldside Haulage Ltd	1.6 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Felldside Haulage Ltd	Filed	Nothing
30 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0312	Felldside Haulage Ltd	1.2 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Felldside Haulage Ltd	Filed	Nothing
26 Sept 2026 Calder Vale Transfer Station	WTN-2026-0304	Felldside Haulage Ltd	11.8 t	EXTERNAL CARRIER Felldside Haulage Ltd	Filed	Nothing

Showing 1-7 of 7



Take in

How did this load arrive?

Enter the load by hand, scan whatever code the driver shows you, or photograph the paper transfer note.

- Log manually**
Enter the waste details by hand.
No code needed.
- Scan a paper WTN**
Photograph the transfer note and we will fill the form in.
- Scan the driver's code**
Waste Tracking QR or a LoadSnap LS-code.
The scanner works out which.

The weighbridge app on a phone or iPad: how did this load arrive?

Receipts: every load in, its stage, and the DEFRA deadline on anything not yet filed.

Weight off the bridge

The free LoadSnap Weighbridge connector reads your indicator, so nobody types a weight.

Consignee returns

Quarterly hazardous returns built from the same receipts.

Three ways a load arrives

Typed in, a photo of a paper note read for you, or the driver's code scanned.

A portal for your customers

Producers see their own loads and notes, free for them.

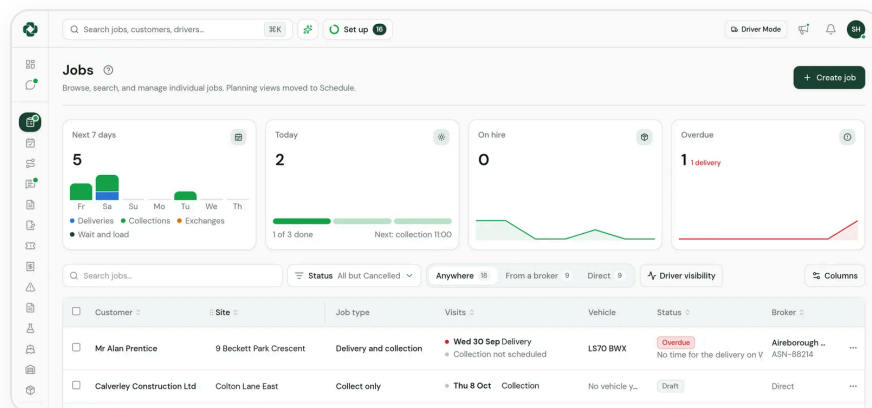
Get the apps. The connector runs on the weighbridge computer. Staff at the gate use the app.



LoadSnap for carriers

Booked, collected, handed over

Jobs go out to your drivers' phones. The driver photographs the load, the customer signs on the same phone, and the receiving site gets your details digitally before the vehicle reaches the gate. Ready for Phase 2 the day it starts.



Jobs: the week ahead, what is on hire, and anything overdue.

Schedule and routes

Every vehicle's day on one board, with the driver's route.

LoadSnap Connect

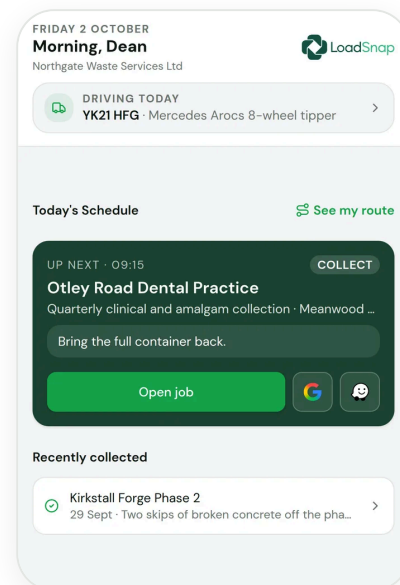
Hands each load to the receiving site, so it is in their system at the gate.

Signed transfer notes

Signed on the driver's phone at collection, kept on the job.

Vehicles and invoices

MOT and licence dates, checks, and the invoice from the job.



The driver app: today's jobs, with directions in one tap.

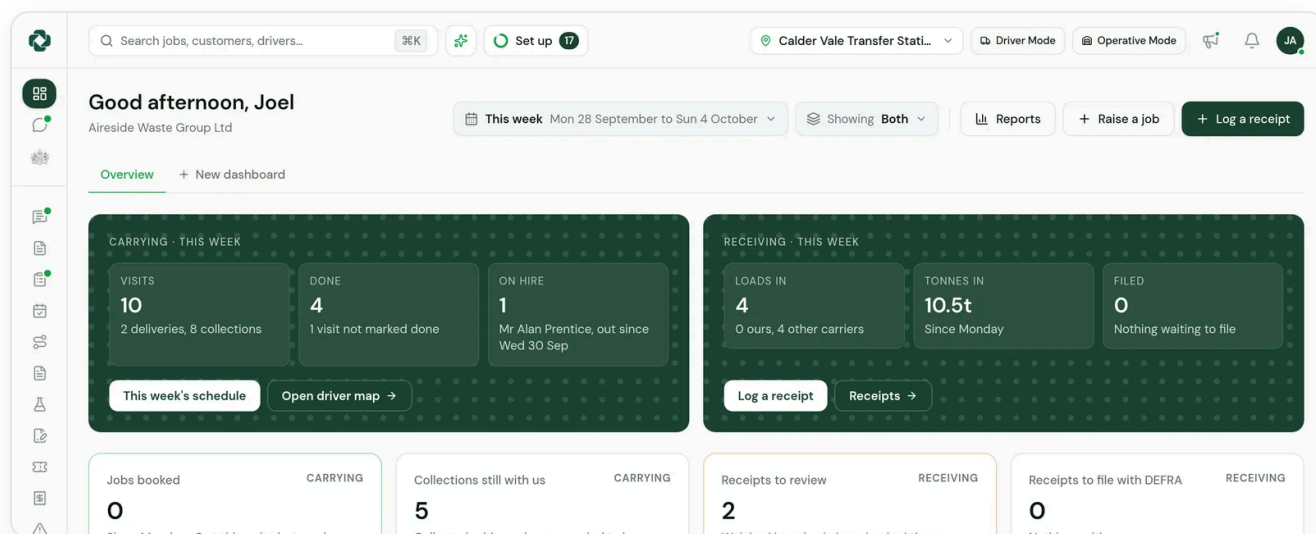
Get the driver app on iPhone and iPad, or open it in any phone's browser.



LoadSnap if you carry and receive

Out on your vehicle, back through your own gate

When your own vehicle tips at your own site, the collection and the receipt are the same load. LoadSnap keeps them as one: the driver's collection becomes the receipt at your gate, and that receipt is what goes to DEFRA. Nothing is typed twice.



One dashboard for both sides: what your vehicles are doing this week and what has come through the gate.

One record per load

The driver's collection carries straight on to the receipt, with the weight added at the bridge.

Only receipts go to DEFRA

Today the receipt is filed. When carriers join in 2027, the collection is ready to file too.

Other carriers too

Loads from other firms come in the same way, by their code, their paper note or by hand.

See it in four minutes

The carry and receive film follows one load from the customer's site, onto your vehicle and back through your own gate: loadsnap.co.uk/tour

LoadSnap for brokers and dealers

Arrange the load, keep the proof

You book the collection and another company carries it. In LoadSnap you give the job to one of your saved carriers, they get an emailed link with no account to make, and they sign the transfer note on it.

One link, no account

Your carrier signs at collection and photographs the site's ticket. The weight is read off it.

Registered carriers only

Checked against the public register when you save them. You are on every note as the broker.

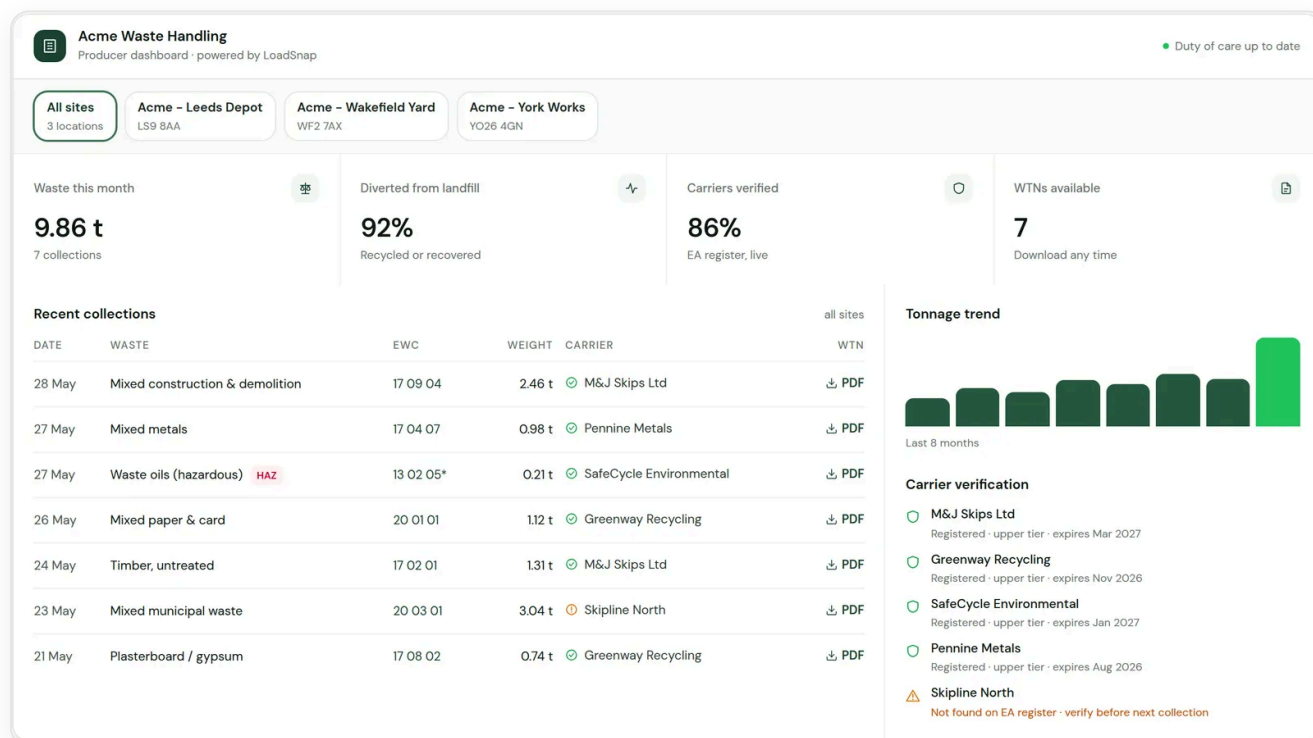
What you keep

Your charge and their price side by side on each job, and the proof of where it went.

For producers, and the firms that serve them

A free portal for every customer

Every carrier and receiver on LoadSnap can give their customers their own login: each collection, the transfer notes to download, carrier checks and how much was kept out of landfill. Producers pay nothing for it.



The producer portal. Try the live demo, no sign-up: loadsnap.co.uk/producer-demo

Get started

Snap. Classify. Comply.

Connects directly to DEFRA DWT. Get started in minutes, no card required.

AI waste classification

850+ EWC codes, suggested from a photo.

Direct DEFRA filing

Over DEFRA's API, with the tracking ID kept on every record.

iPhone, iPad and browser

The same app on the App Store or any phone's browser.

Producer portal

Your customers see their own loads, notes and invoices.

Start free at loadsnap.co.uk

Watch the free demo



This guide reflects the Digital Waste Tracking regulations and DEFRA guidance as at October 2026. Dates after that are planned and have slipped before. Penalty figures are often misreported elsewhere, so always check legislation.gov.uk and [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk). LoadSnap is a trading name of Web Hero Limited, Leeds, UK.