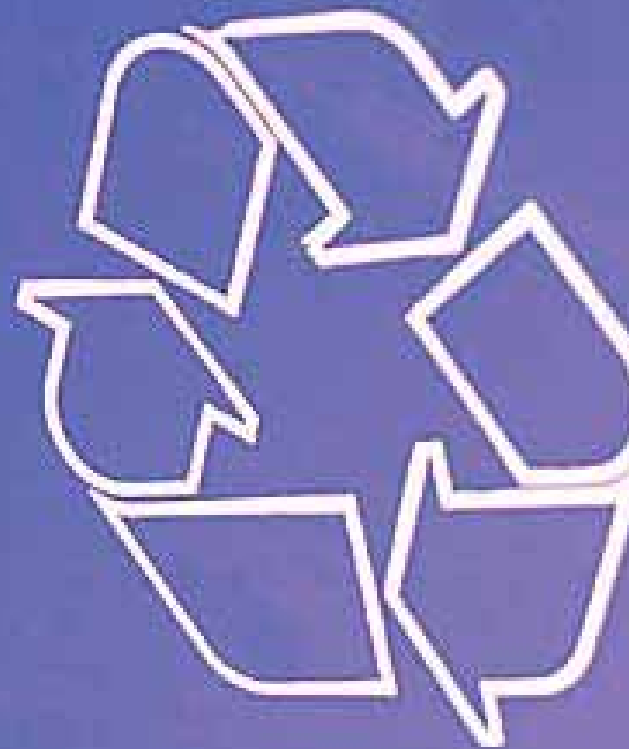




membership resources

The future for waste management: an appreciation



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Foreword

Waste Management has never had such a high profile as now. What was once a matter of collecting the rubbish put out by householders once a week has turned into a service that needs to develop alternative solutions to maintain the pace of change and meet future targets. The UK is facing major challenges in managing our waste sustainably not only as part of the commitment to sustainable consumption but also in the battle against climate change. Local Authorities have a leading part to play, and as this publication demonstrates they are rising to meeting that challenge

There are many unanswered questions relating to recycling, the concept of allocating waste allowances and in identifying the waste production of individual households. These can relate to the limits of the market to accept recyclates, the differing approaches needed in collection for urban and rural local authorities and the advancement in technologies needed to take real advantage of any potential benefits. Here local authorities have a key community leadership role to play in delivering solutions to these issues.

Some of these issues also raise serious and significant questions of "customer satisfaction" creating potential conflicts between service suppliers and residents and even between residents. It is my view that the public are deeply "on side" with us in the push to recycle. However, this spirit could easily be lost through poorly thought out schemes that create deep resentment in a core service. That is why good communication and education campaigns are also critical.

This publication raises many thought provoking issues that could deliver answers and I hope you find it useful in the quest to find the solutions

Cllr Symon Fraser

Chair of APSE national waste management advisory group network



Introduction

This publication outlines the major issues concerning waste management services and describes a possible format for reducing household residual waste levels through introducing incentives and/or charges. It also contains papers from members of the APSE Waste Management advisory group network on six of the key issues affecting local authorities in the next 2-5 years. These accompanying papers give views which may not necessarily be the view of APSE but will hopefully stimulate further debate.

The six papers cover

- ♦ Improving Recycling
- ♦ Charging
- ♦ Enforcement
- ♦ Efficiency
- ♦ Energy from Waste
- ♦ Education/Campaigns

APSE would like to thank those who have contributed to this publication.

Policy Overview

What is the current position?

The UK produces about 330 million tonnes of waste every year. This includes 220 million tonnes of controlled wastes from households, commerce and industry (including construction and demolition wastes). Although the focus of Government initiatives and publicity centres on household wastes they represent only about 9 per cent of total arisings. The remaining 100 million tonnes consists of minerals waste from mining and quarrying, which is not subject to control under the EU Waste Framework Directive.

Although the level of municipal household waste collected fell in 2005/06 the trend over the last five years shows levels of waste rising at 0.5% per annum. The results for 2006/07 which will be published in autumn 2007 will provide further evidence if the trends of recent years will be sustained. Recycling and composting is increasing at a faster rate than the level of waste and has reached 27% for 2005/06. This has been predominately through voluntary measures and has succeeded to some extent in changing the public behaviour.



These improvements are still not at a fast enough rate to meet EU landfill targets by 2010 and lags behind the majority of our European neighbours (sources DEFRA & National Audit Office). The majority of other nations in the EU and many other countries including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, rely on a mixture of alternative options to landfill, often depending on the type of waste involved. Some EU nations are putting even more focus on reducing waste growth, increasing recycling and developing new technologies to tackle waste. The common factor identified is that these countries tend to have high public awareness of the waste problem. Many have introduced education programmes informing businesses and the public how to go about waste reduction, re-use, recycling and composting. International experience has demonstrated that long lead times have been involved in getting new infrastructure in place and changing behavior. For example in Holland and Belgium it has taken 10-15 years to achieve change following significant increases in Landfill Tax, producer responsibility and new waste infrastructure. The UK faces having to make a step change over a far shorter timeframe.

Whilst this paper concentrates on household waste there is a need to highlight sustainable waste management in the non municipal sector which produces over ten times the size of household waste. Defra indicate in their Waste Strategy that this will be achieved with greater integration of planning and procurement between municipal and some non-municipal waste. In particular for Construction, the need to reduce waste at all stages has been central for many years since the Rethinking Construction report in 1998 of the Construction Task Force on the scope for improving the quality and efficiency of UK construction. APSE intends to produce a further paper on sustainable construction.

The Waste Hierarchy

This sets out the current theoretical framework of how to effectively manage waste with the idea being that action should be as high up the hierarchy as possible to support sustainable development and reduce the impact on the environment. This perceived wisdom is

- i. Waste minimisation - reducing waste produced by industry or households through efficient production and design, reduction of packaging or reducing waste that needs to be collected through home composting.
- ii. Re-use - re-use of products and materials around the home or via waste swap shops or waste exchanges.
- iii. Recycling - recycling of materials eg paper and aluminium, or Composting eg green waste
- iv Thermal treatment/energy recovery - incineration, gasification or pyrolysis
- v. Final Disposal - landfill

The statistics from Defra show an over emphasis on recycling has led to a four fold increase in recent years with no effect on waste minimisation. This appears to contradict the aims of the waste hierarchy. This leads to the following four conclusions;

1. The level of waste collected is unsustainable unless further action is taken;
2. Individual householder responsibility for waste generation is limited;
3. A range of strong waste minimisation measures need to be introduced;
4. Reliable technologies for dealing with waste/recyclables are limited and in some cases unproven.

What options are there?

Build/source alternative disposal facilities

The established reliable technologies are either landfill or incineration (Energy from Waste - EfW). It is likely that only limited extra landfill capacity will become available plus this would not help us meet EU Landfill targets. It is already accepted that landfill is a minor part of the solution for some residual wastes that cannot be dealt with in any other manner, particularly special wastes such as non-recycled fly and bottom ash from the EfW process. EfW has remained constant at 9% for a number of years due to limited planning permissions being given even where this technology is the strategy determined by a WDA. Public concerns over health issues and a view that EfW locks in waste that could otherwise have been recycled remains emotive and high on the public agenda in their reaction to proposed EfW facilities. The Government's 2006 Energy review believes that the first of these concerns is not supported by the available evidence, whilst the second can be addressed through the careful design of local waste strategies to limit the capacity of EfW plants (source DTI Energy Review). These issues are being addressed in the Government's revision of the waste strategy for England. However, EfW remains low in the waste hierarchy, with the priority towards prevention, reuse and recycling before EfW.

Diversion from landfill via other options has been encouraged in a number of countries through the use of landfill taxes, often with additional instruments including landfill bans on certain types of waste. The current UK landfill tax rate (2007/08) of £24 (approx 34 Euros) per tonne contrasts with landfill tax rates in countries such as Denmark (50 Euros per tonne) and Austria (43.6 Euros per tonne). The Government announced in the March 2007 Budget its intention to increase the landfill tax by £8 per tonne each year until 2010 when it will be £50 per tonne. The use of landfill taxes has proved to be a useful source of funding for developing alternative infrastructures for managing waste and incentivising people to use alternative waste management approaches. In addition, regulations ban the landfill of certain wastes.

Increase Recycling

The proportion of waste recycled has now increased to 27% (Defra 05/06) which is described as a tremendous achievement by the public and local authorities. Despite this, figures from Europe show the UK is still towards the bottom of the recycling league with many countries recycling over 50%. Even though recycling rates will improve (possibly to 50%); the gains are likely to slow over time, requiring a mixture of enforcement and education to raise householder awareness and sense of responsibility. Increased recycling capacity or alternative treatment and disposal facilities will not tackle the growth in volume of waste. They are both end of pipe solutions.

Waste minimisation and prevention

This is the only option that addresses the issue of waste volumes. There is no one solution to waste minimisation and it will need to involve a combination of education and enforcement, legislation on retailers/manufacturers and controversially, probably some form of charging for refuse collection.

This is tackled in a number of countries through the use of product taxes on a life-cycle approach. For example, Denmark has a general tax on disposable items such as batteries, electric bulbs, tyres and pesticides. Similarly, Belgium has a product tax on a number of items including disposable drink containers and some types of packaging. Italy and recently Ireland have introduced taxes on carrier bags.

A further concept with regard to waste prevention is the idea of zero waste. The general meaning of zero waste is of a goal of zero waste to landfill over a period of five to 15 years: recycling 100 per cent of waste. A number of countries, regions and cities have adopted zero waste goals, such as, New Zealand, the Philippines and San Francisco, USA. In the UK, only Bath and North East Somerset Council have adopted a long term vision of zero waste within their waste strategy. Many of these places have dramatically improved recycling rates and raised awareness about the nature of waste, with recycling rates of over 70 per cent being seen, in Flanders, Belgium, Kamikatsu, Japan and Canberra, Australia.

The major difficulty for local authorities in achieving zero waste is one of waste prevention, because they have little control over the kind of products that are put on the market. In the UK, the debates on waste and products have in the past been kept separate. The waste debate has revolved around meeting targets set by the EU for diverting waste from landfill and for meeting packaging regulations. These targets have been successful in driving higher recycling, but have not helped to get any serious policy and business grip on waste prevention, or on the nature of products.

Other Issues

Funding

A number of local authorities are identifying that PFI is not the answer because of the major impact that it has on revenue budgets. Additionally, PFI schemes involving incineration can put a threshold on the amount a council may want to recycle or send for reuse. If the implications of failure to meet EU landfill targets (fines at £150 per tonne) or the increasing charge to dispose to landfill are factored into whole life costings do solutions funded by prudential borrowing become more attractive? To date Defra are suggesting that prudential borrowing is limited to interim or smaller scale facilities/technologies as larger facilities require such large sums of capital investment, e.g. upwards of £80m for a 200+ktpa Energy from Waste plant. Defra expects to produce its guidance to Local Authorities on funding options for waste infrastructure later this year as the output of the Waste Infrastructure Development Programme (WIDP).

Different priorities for collection and disposal

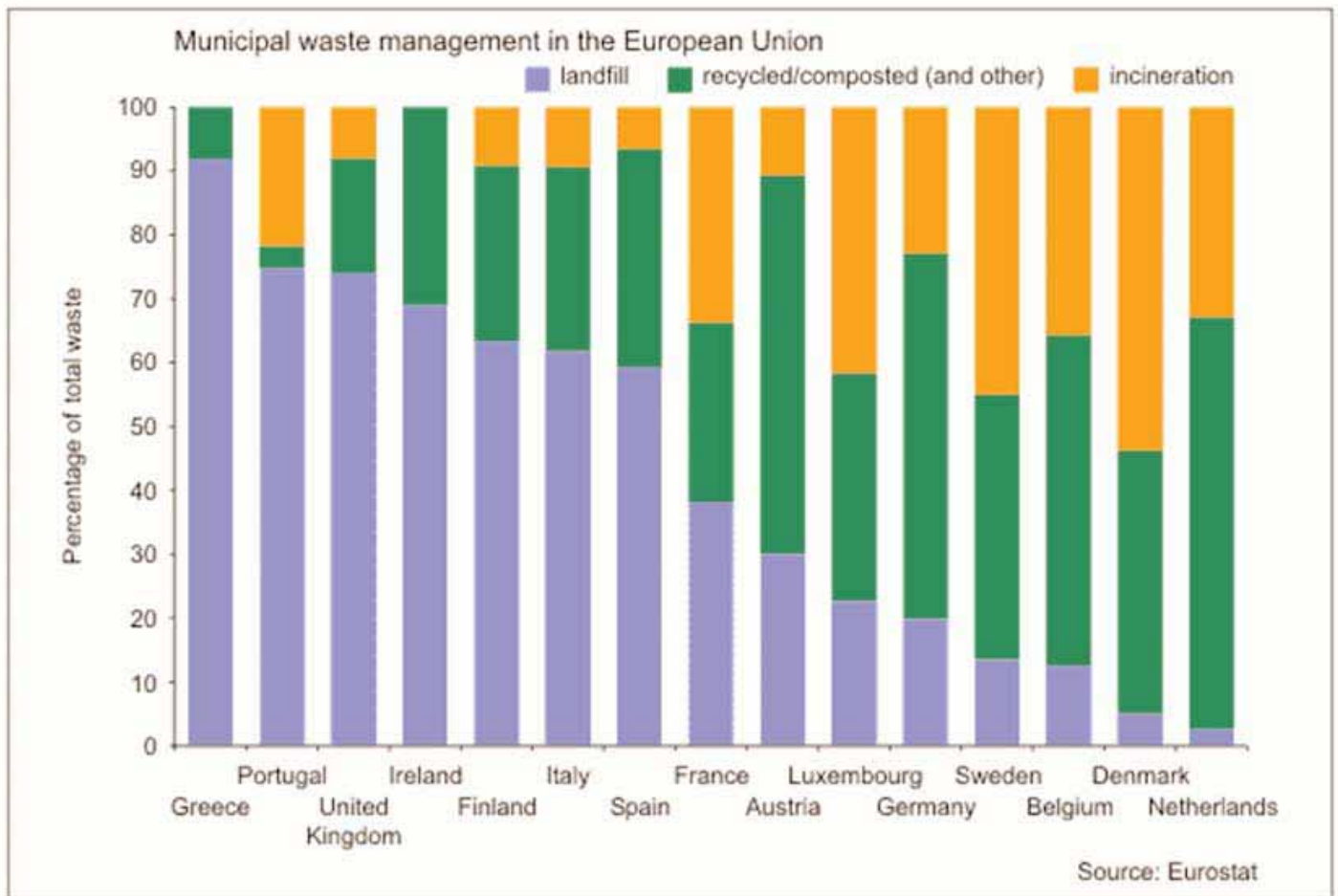
The split in responsibilities between Waste Collection authorities (WCA) and Waste Disposal authorities (WDA) is unique in Europe to England. A particular issue is on payments where a WCA has no incentive to minimise waste arising despite having an incentive to recycle.

In practice, it is accepted that economies of scale exist at the disposal end but not in collection because of the need for better local knowledge and the APSE view would be for collection responsibilities to remain with the WCA but for closer relationships to be developed with the WDA. This however, is not a universal view as problems in the relationship between WDAs and WCAs can be fraught with difficulty particularly if the political direction of the two is in opposition. Some believe that the two-tier system in waste will disappear in the future, especially if waste becomes a utility as per gas and electricity.

WCAs, however, should be required to comply with the reporting requirement for the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) in using Waste Data Flow.

Role of EfW or incineration

It appears from the Governments Energy Review that incineration will be part of the solution especially as the Government believes that the health objections are not proven and that the new generation of incinerators are less harmful to the environment (Defra Review of environmental and health effects of waste management: municipal solid waste and similar wastes - May 2004). The NAO have urged the Government to launch a publicity campaign to demonstrate the benefits of EfW. Incineration is far more widespread across Europe, especially in those countries having greater recycling rates than the UK with some countries disposing of over 50% of their waste. This is illustrated by the graph overleaf which dates from 2003.



The Waste Implementation Programme of Defra with the Environment Agency has reviewed emerging technologies and has set up the waste technology data centre to provide up to date information and advice on specific waste technologies. As well as technical data, the centre provides information covering regulation, authorisation, performance, costs and overall environmental value. There are currently over 30 case studies on a variety of technology providers. (source www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wtd)

One of the technologies featured on the data centre is a thermal treatment alternative to incineration called autoclaving. The Autoclave process accepts 'black bin bag' waste and treats the batch in a pressurised vessel with the application of saturated steam. Glass, cans, plastic bottles are delaminated, with plastics, papers and films being reduced. Kitchen and garden waste are cooked, stabilised and reduced and co-mingled with the other residues. On completion of the treatment phase, the cellulosic biomass (cellulose) forms a fines material that is easily screened from the heavies or larger particulate within the co-mingled residue. The technology behind this process is still in its infancy for municipal waste and as yet the cellulose residue (although greatly reduced in volume) has to go to landfill. This system does however mean that some kerbside recycling collections (excluding compost collections to meet BVPI82b) may not be needed and these savings could be used for prudential borrowing to install an autoclave.

The difficulty is that waste managers do not have the time for some of these near market technologies to come to fruition or large scale implementation in time for the obligations of the WET Act to meet the first EU Landfill Directive targets in 2010. Planning and commissioning may be a 5+ year process depending on whether permission is granted first time around. Therefore, the immediate focus is to reduce municipal waste at source.

John Marsh
Principal Advisor, APSE

A possible solution

The starting point has to be that there is no solution to this problem that does not involve a change in public behaviour. The public are going to need to take ownership to both reduce and separate waste. At present voluntary participation in recycling varies widely from 90% to 40% dependent on the success of communications and campaigns (source; research for Devon CC by Eunomia consulting). To increase this either a stick or carrot approach will be needed, providing economic drivers for behavioural change.

Additionally from the above it can be assumed that the solution will also involve more EfW, especially in light of the current Government Energy review, for example Renewable Obligations Certificates (ROC) are now available for EfW generated combined heat and power. EfW will not reduce levels of waste but may reduce biodegradable waste sent to landfill.

Another issue is that the public are not aware of the true costs of refuse collection and disposal. MORI research shows that most people believe that the figure for collection alone is around £200 per household per annum (Performance Networks data gives a figure of just over £50). The potential fines of up to £0.5 million per day for the UK for failing to meet 2010 EU landfill targets also need to be factored into costings for waste management. Many authorities have in place successful communications and campaigns. These will need to be coupled with effective enforcement strategies. Following the failed prosecution by Exeter City Council, APSE approached Defra to provide definitive advice to assist local authorities when taking prosecutions.

In terms of waste minimisation, encouraging residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce is crucial. Legislation currently makes it difficult for authorities to charge or offer incentives for waste collection, which is in direct contrast to most other countries although the Government has hinted that this may change. This will also mean changes to behaviour in areas such as purchasing. This is illustrated by the Defra estimate that 20% of food bought goes to waste. This confirms the important role in waste minimisation (and other areas of the waste debate for effective campaigns and communications).

APSE is proposing a joint approach based on giving every individual an "Annual Household Residual Waste Allowance" together with a major education campaign that informed businesses and the public how to go about waste reduction, re-use, recycling and composting. The experience from Europe shows that this may take a number of years to establish the infrastructure and change behaviour.

Having an individual allowance would overcome the common argument that large families would be penalised as they would be allowed a greater allowance. The incentive would be to dispose of less waste than your allowance rather than penalise. There are a number of questions with such a policy

- ♦ How to set (and at what level) the allowance;
- ♦ What level of incentive (or penalty to impose);
- ♦ Costs of monitoring/administering the scheme - this assumes a level of e-enablement in the collection service of WCAs which is limited to only a few at the moment and can be acquired only at significant capital outlay and ongoing revenue costs;
- ♦ Any level of charge is likely to be regressive in nature (i.e. it affects the less well off disproportionately).

The driver of current legislation - the Waste and Emissions Trading Act - is the EU Landfill Directive. The Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) has concentrated effort in the removal of biodegradable streams from waste. With the introduction of kerbside green/kitchen waste, Councils see an increase in overall waste arisings exacerbating the concern over waste minimisation.

There are two ways of addressing the organic waste stream, either by a drive to home composting, aiding waste minimisation, or kerbside collections that turn such material into compost in bulk using modern production methods to provide a quality product with an end value.

If a kerbside service is preferred for green waste, councils will have to offer a three stream waste collection service based on

- ♦ Household residual waste
- ♦ Dry recyclables
- ♦ Green/Garden waste

A number of issues still need to be overcome such as food and kitchen waste recycling and whether this can be accepted as "green" waste especially in areas where authorities do not have access to in-vessel composting facilities. Additionally, the problems with the housing stock in terms of type of property, size and layout of modern houses schemes may present difficulties for some local authorities.



Charging schemes have attracted considerable negative publicity especially over possible increases in fly tipping and cross contamination. In Europe a range of charging schemes are in operation. The view taken is that although there is some illegal measures taken these are outweighed by the benefits. The evidence from schemes in Flanders, Belgium and Germany show that substantial reduction in residual waste can be achieved. (source Financing and Incentive schemes for Municipal Waste Management, Eunomia Consulting). The Flanders scheme in particular has shown considerable reductions in amounts of weight collected where a target has been set of 150kg of residual waste (waste not recycled) per capita per year. In England, the per capita figure is presently about 400kg, which indicates we are some years away from the Belgian culture on waste. The target if set at the appropriate level should stimulate waste prevention, not just from householders, but ultimately from producers as they react to pressure from the public. There is no evidence to suggest that such a scheme would not work for the UK. Studies in Belgium found that a variable household tax has a significant impact on the amount of residual household waste offered. It was found that the introduction of a payment for residual waste collected would lead, in an average commune, to a decrease in the amount of residual household waste offered of approximately 30 kg per inhabitant.

There are two avenues through which the residual waste collected is reduced. In the first method, the charges lead to improved separation. This means that the amount of waste selectively collected increases significantly. This is called the separation effect which is responsible for about 30% of the decrease in the amount of residual household waste offered. In the second method there is a reduction in waste set out for collection either through genuine preventative behaviour or through evasion. This is believed to account for, on average, 70% of the typical reduction in the quantity of residual waste.

Producer Responsibility

Introducing incentives to reduce waste for individuals will not work unless more responsibility is put on producers. Government needs to be bolder in tackling the business, manufacturing and the retail community in addressing waste minimisation issues. A carrot approach may be more politically appetising, such as tax relief on achievement of waste reduction that has a direct effect on consumer waste reduction. Incentivising individual responsibility will lead to demands on producers which will also act as a driver. This is best illustrated by statistics from DEFRA showing that currently over 40% of the waste in household bins is retail packaging. One practical measure could involve the introduction of a simple red, amber or green traffic light system identifying good or bad packaging similar to those that now identify food types.

The embedding of cradle-to-cradle thinking across government and in business practice would allow the UK to join up the waste and product agendas, which is something where there has been a distinct reluctance to take place. Through giving more responsibility to producers, not just for dealing with waste, but also for designing out waste it is argued that it will make individual producers substantially rethink their products. Further producer responsibility measures are needed that will inspire new approaches to design.

A further proposal could involve local authorities taking a lead by introducing tighter specifications in contracts on this issue. There is currently a large gap between the Government's aspiration to lead on green procurement, and practice on the ground. One method to drive innovation would be for public institutions to adopt 'waste neutral' objectives. This means seeking to balance the amount of waste sent offsite with recycled materials purchased.

The new requirement for site waste management plans for construction and demolition projects in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act could be used as a driver. In some areas of Spain, developers must provide a bond before construction begins which they lose if they breach waste limits.

The introduction of a product levy that tax environmentally damaging or hard-to-recycle products could shift behaviour from certain products towards better alternatives. This could include disposable or non-recyclable or hard-to-recycle products, such as cameras and non-refillable printer cartridges. There could also be a levy on composite materials, such as hard-to-recycle multi-layered beverage cartons and could also apply to plastic packaging, of which only two types of plastic are routinely recycled in the UK. The money from a levy on such packaging could be used to fund collection and recycling, or the charge could be levied in such a way as to encourage consumers to choose products with the best overall environmental performance.

John Marsh
Principal Advisor, APSE

How to improve recycling: key success factors

Author: Alison Hunter, Waste Policy Manager, Vale Royal Borough Council

Vale Royal Borough Council located in the heart of Cheshire, has a clear goal to become the best place for recycling and composting in the UK. To make this dream a reality Vale Royal has taken both bold and innovative steps to change the way we deliver our waste services.

In April 2004 Vale Royal introduced its alternate weekly refuse and recycling service borough wide in one single phase to 54,000 households, the first in the Country to do so. The recycling scheme allows every property in the borough to recycle, regardless of their housing type and location.

All residents are provided with a 55 Litre kerbside box for the collection of glass, cans and textiles, and a reusable bag for paper. In addition residents with gardens are provided with a 240 litre brown wheeled bin for the collection of garden waste and cardboard for on-farm composting. The introduction of the new scheme has meant that every resident has moved to alternate weekly collection of their waste, with recycling and garden waste collected one week, and residual waste the other.

With the introduction of the alternate weekly collection scheme Vale Royal's overall recycling and composting rate has dramatically increased from 15% in 2003/04 to 40% in one year. The recycling rate has continued to increase with the introduction of kerbside plastic to 80% of residents, and currently stands at 42% for 2005/06.

Vale Royal in 2004/05 was the highest performing authority in the North of England and the 9th highest in the UK for recycling and composting. In addition Vale Royal was also the 3rd most improved authority for recycling performance.

The alternate weekly collection scheme has seen significant improvements in the way waste is collected and recycled in Vale Royal, providing real benefits to the local community and environment. During this process the Council has learnt many lessons through a challenging period, and would like to share what it believes are the key success factors to implement an effective and successful recycling service.

Strategic plan

Vale Royal is committed to the Cheshire Household Waste Management Strategy, along with all other Cheshire Districts and the County Council. The Cheshire Strategy is built upon Cheshire resident's consultation results, and has political backing across all districts to achieve a Cheshire wide recycling rate of 40% by 2010 and 50% by 2020.

Scheme design

1. **Simplicity:** Keeping the scheme simple and easy to understand will ensure greater participation from householders.
2. **Work backwards:** Know what recycling processors are in your area and be clear about their quality standards. An open dialogue with recycling processors will allow partnerships to develop, with a clear understanding of both parties' requirements.
3. **Realistic timescales:** A clear timetable for mobilisation and implementation is essential. Consider factors including the time of the year and the political timetable, to determine the best time to start any scheme.
4. **Dedicated budget:** Ensure there are dedicated resources for mobilisation, promotion and education, including sufficient personnel to manage the scheme effectively.
5. **Clear policies:** Clear service standards for residents tackling issues such as side waste, additional capacity and missed collections are essential.

Why introduce alternate weekly collections?

Alternate Weekly Collections (AWC's) are a principle driver for increased recycling, by restricting both the frequency and capacity of residual waste collections. Recommendations for successful AWC's include:

1. Introduction of AWC's in one single phase allows the same message to be conveyed throughout the district. Borough wide introduction allows for a noticeable step change in performance, including service equality across the borough.
2. A 4-Day working week, ensures little disruption of collections from Monday Bank Holidays keeping day changes to a minimum.
3. Same day collections for both residual and recycling collections, on alternate weeks keep the scheme simple and easy to use and understand.
4. A Full Risk Assessment of AWC's highlights and quantifies perceived and associated risks, enabling their effective management.
5. Cross party political support will assist with the implementation and management of AWC's. Should this not be the case be prepared and aware of the issues which might arise. Speak to other Councils who have experienced AWC's for advice.
6. Consider how to target hard to reach properties including flats, estates and terraced properties. Choose flexible and different solutions; remember one solution does not fit all purposes.

Partnership collection contract

A strong focus for the service and the success of our recycling scheme has been the extensive working with all the Council's partners. Partnership working has ensured the scheme can progress and develop effectively.

In partnership with our collection contractor, Vale Royal has developed an innovative resource based partnership contract that allows for flexibility around the main principles of the contract.

This provides for a closer working relationship to ensure the service is adaptable to change and provides continued service improvement.



Mobilisation plan

To ensure the smooth and effective implementation of AWC's mobilisation plays a key role, consider:

1. Minimising the time between box deliveries and first collections, to ensure material loads are more manageable when the scheme goes live.
2. Using the same crews who will be making collection to deliver boxes, to improve familiarisation of rounds.
3. Comprehensive collection round routing, using local knowledge of existing collection crews and GIS Mapping
4. Front-line staff training, including site visits to recycling processors for employees.
5. Launch the new scheme, using the same message at different events. A video of how the scheme will work is really useful.

Education and awareness strategy

One thing can be said for the recycling scheme is that everybody is now talking about waste. Keep the publicity simple and use all media forms to engage with stakeholders, including resident information packs, billboards, radio adverts, bus backs, and road shows. The most recent project is a new educational DVD and information pack. The DVD contains

3 films designed to encourage different members of the household to recycle. The DVD is being distributed to all householders in the next quarterly Recycling Newsletter.

Continual service review

Listen to the views of customers through regular consultation. Monitoring and evaluation of the schemes performance enables targeted promotion and service development to maximise waste recycled.

Conclusion

Standing still is not an option, be clear of what you want to achieve and how you are going to do it. You only get one chance to get residents enthused about recycling, so you need to get it right first time. There are few second chances. Consult with residents and members, keeping them informed of their progress and new developments. Learn from others, do not reinvent the wheel. Keep it simple and recycling participation will remain high.

Finally be prepared!

A light-hearted view on some of the complaints and queries we received when the scheme was implemented.

- ♦ 'I have legionnaires disease in my bin due to the fortnightly collections'
- ♦ 'A large rat or squirrel has eaten into my wheeled bin'
- ♦ 'I've lost my false teeth in the recycling box can you help?'

Be prepared and flexible to allow continued public support to ensure the scheme is a success

Variable Charging for Domestic Waste

Author: Steve Beard, Head of Environmental Health Services, Blaby District Council

Introduction

Restricting the amount of waste households can expect to have collected is essential in changing long established habits. This has been shown to have a marked effect on participation in recycling (1). However flexibility is necessary to meet variation in demand and retain support. If extra capacity is available at no extra cost, because we have been conditioned to maximise what we get, we will demand the biggest size available. Therefore some means of deterrent is required - this is where variable charging (VC) schemes come in.

There has been considerable debate over charging residents for the collection and disposal of domestic waste. The issue is not straightforward;

- ♦ There are two seemingly opposing view points;
 1. waste collection should reflect the need to protect public health and satisfy the demands of the customer (the rationale behind the statutory duty?), or alternatively
 2. the resident is a "polluter" who should pay in relation to the amount they pollute.
- ♦ The issue is also confused by the lack of any direct correlation between the "price" (the Council Tax) paid by the "customer" and the service received. This opens up the whole issue of how Council services are funded and what form local taxation should take.

There is no doubt that waste collection is a vitally important service which fundamentally affects the perception of local authorities (2). Collection systems for waste and particularly recycling increasingly require the involvement and co-operation of the householder. If this involvement is to be given willingly, the system adopted must be perceived to be fair and sensible to those who are to use it. This may seem obvious but the need to take account of local "culture" is frequently overlooked when attempts are made to transplant systems used elsewhere in the world.

What is Variable Charging?

A VC scheme is basically one in which the cost of the service varies depending upon the quantity of waste disposed of (not recycled). There are two types;

- ♦ Volume based
- ♦ Weight based

Charging schemes come in several forms;

- ♦ Bin subscription
- ♦ Pay per bag
- ♦ Tag/sticker
- ♦ Weighing and billing
- ♦ Baseline with optional extra cost items (hybrid)
- ♦ Reward schemes for minimising waste.

UK Legislation

The main legislation is found in Part 2 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA90).

- ♦ Section 45 makes it a duty for every Waste Collection Authority (WCA) to arrange for the collection of household waste, and states that no charge shall be made for the collection except in cases prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State.

This duty is the main barrier to many types of variable charging scheme in the UK. Providing an unlimited "free" waste collection service is incompatible with sustainable waste practice and promotes a throw away culture. No business could survive by offering "free" unlimited access to a resource hungry product. The test of "reasonableness" could be used to limit WCAs liabilities under this section.

- ♦ Section 46 permits the WCA to reasonably require the householder to use specific and separate receptacles for waste. The WCA can specify the size of the containers, where they must be placed to be emptied and what can be put into each container.

These receptacles can be provided;

- ♦ Free of charge by the WCA
- ♦ Upon payment of a single or periodic payment*
- ♦ By the resident and at their expense.

*This provision has been used by some WCAs to make additional charges for larger or additional containers, thereby enabling variable charging schemes to be introduced.

Considerations

The true cost of waste collection and disposal (typically £50 and £100 respectively per house/year) is much lower than commonly perceived. Whilst this is set to rise it will still be small relative to the average Council Tax bill. Any VC system therefore must be very simple, efficient, easily understood and robust in order to minimise additional administrative overheads.

Weight related schemes can appear to meet these criteria. Electronic tags can be put into bins and weights automatically recorded against each wheeled bin emptied. However, in practice bins frequently get lost or "swapped" between houses and not all residents can have bins. Records need to be kept for every household and bills are sent out retrospectively. Systems would need to be very



robust if they are not to be vulnerable to challenge from residents querying bills and recorded weights. "Popular" opposition is already attacking "big brother spies" and protest could take the form of coordinated bill queries and refusal to pay (c.f. Poll Tax).

Volume related schemes can operate "on demand" and therefore affect only those properties requesting additional capacity. Payment is usually made at the point of sale in advance of collection, largely avoiding credit control issues. Larger capacity bins provide a visual signal of households producing the most waste, which can create a "peer pressure" to reduce waste. Unlike rewards, additional charges do not need to be large to be effective. Any charge on top of the Council Tax is usually avoided on principle!

Reward schemes tend to be weight based and the "rewards" could be disappointingly small for residents if related to genuine savings. Full participation in recycling schemes is unlikely to result in any savings in collection costs, whilst even a 50% saving in disposal costs amounting to say £50 (ignoring extra admin costs) could be regarded as a small reward compared to the annual Council Tax bill.

Summary

- ♦ Providing an unlimited "free" waste collection service is incompatible with sustainable waste practice and promotes a throw away culture.
- ♦ Restricting the quantity of waste collected for disposal increases recycling rates and participation.
- ♦ Flexibility and readily accessible alternatives reduces public resistance.
- ♦ Key factors in promoting recycling (3) are;
 - o Quality services
 - o Variable charges for householders
 - o Information and promotion
- ♦ Public "culture" and existing legislation in the UK precludes the early introduction of full "pay by use" schemes.
- ♦ Hybrid schemes charging for containers are legal and workable.
- ♦ Charges do not have to be large to be effective deterrents.
- ♦ Keeping track of bins could make "weigh and pay" schemes unworkable.
- ♦ Current legislation does not encourage variable charging schemes. However the need for primary legislation could be avoided by the Secretary of State making regulations under s45 EPA90, permitting WCAs to charge for domestic waste collection where there is a kerbside recycling collection system in place.
- ♦ Billing must be minimised, kept simple and straightforward.
- ♦ Councils should be able to separately identify and charge for additional optional services in with the annual Council tax bill to reduce costs by simplifying administration and the use of common payment and recovery systems.

References

1. Audit Commission; Refuse and Recycling Service Inspection Blaby District Council, Para 45; Nov 2003
2. Audit Commission; Learning from Inspection: Waste Management - The Strategic Challenge; July 2001
3. Cabinet Office Strategy Unit; Waste Not, Want Not; November 2002

The role for enforcement

Author: Steve Freeman, Recycling Manager, Exeter City Council.

Recent years have seen major changes to waste services provided by local councils and the pace of change is quickening! The traditional simple weekly collection of whatever waste a resident cares to put out has just about disappeared everywhere in the UK. Rising volumes of waste, increasing disposal costs, statutory recycling targets and increasing concern over environmental issues means that the waste services provided to residents are increasingly complex and residents are now required to actually think about what they do with their waste.

Here in Exeter most residents have a fortnightly collection of waste alternating with a fortnightly collection of recycling, together with an opt in paid for collection of garden waste. Traditional dustbins have been replaced by three wheelie bins.

This added complexity is received differently by different residents. At the risk of stereotyping:

- ♦ The 'environmentalists' welcome the emphasis on recycling and want to see ever more materials recycled. The complexity of the system is not a problem as long as it is clearly explained.
- ♦ By far the largest part of the population fall into the 'willing to help' and the 'persuadable' categories. These people will use the system, (though probably with a few grumbles) and the key challenge is to provide them with good information and a high quality of service to keep or win their support. All party political support and good press relations are critical!
- ♦ The 'uninformed and confused' don't know what they are expected to do. Students, migrant workers and residents moving into the area all fall into this category, complicated by service differences from where they have lived before. New resident packs, student campaigns, communications with landlords and newsletters all help.



However this still leaves the 'uninterested' and 'unwilling' who can't or won't use the new system as they are asked. They want all their waste removed weekly and see this as the responsibility of the council and their right. From a council point of view this is difficult to manage. All councils seek to provide a high quality responsive service at a reasonable cost as well as complying with legal responsibilities. There is also a responsibility to ensure that systems are properly used and that the maximum return is achieved from council investment under the principles of Best Value.

Once systems are well established and multiple attempts have been made to help people recycle properly there has to be a place for enforcement.

Existing legislation.

Most of the relevant legislation concerning household waste management stems from the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA). Section 48 of the Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005 inserts new sections 47ZA and 47ZB into the 1990 Act, which came into force in April 2006.

These new sections apply where an authorised officer of a waste collection authority has reason to believe a person has committed an offence under Section 46 or 47 of the Act. The officer can issue a fixed penalty notice offering the person an opportunity to discharge any liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty, currently set at £100. However should the fixed penalty be disputed, the prosecution reverts to the original parts of the EPA.

For household waste management there are two key areas Councils are currently wrestling with - restricting the total amount of waste collected and encouraging recycling.

Restricting the amount of waste collected.

The EPA places a responsibility on Waste Collection Authorities to collect household waste and while Defra advise that it is reasonable for councils to set limits on the amount of waste collected, side waste bans are unpopular with some residents and can be difficult to enforce without causing more problems. Enforcing the ban can lead to litter and flytipping and ultimately to less clean streets affecting the headline performance measure BVPI 199.

In Exeter residents are allowed one large wheelie bin (or equivalent) for waste per fortnight and unlimited space for recycling. No side waste is allowed and at locations where there are particular problems, fixed penalty notices are issued when offenders can be identified.

Encouraging recycling

The EPA enables councils to issue notices under Section 46 requiring residents to present their waste for collection in specific ways - 'for waste which is to be recycled and waste which is not.' It is only after a S46 notice has been properly served that an offence is committed. The legislation states - 'A person who fails to comply without reasonable excuse...shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine...'

The fact that the first prosecution under this provision only occurred in Exeter during 2006 suggests that prosecutions are not straightforward. Indeed Exeter City Council took independent legal advice on three occasions over the interpretation of the legislation and held discussions with Defra before taking a prosecution forward. The prosecution concerned the repeated gross contamination of a recycling container with material that cannot be recycled (by Exeter City Council) contrary to the requirements of a Section 46 notice.

While the prosecution only referred to three instances of contamination, in fact the occupier had been informed on fourteen occasions of contamination and visited by recycling staff twice to explain the recycling system. In this instance it was felt the situation could not be allowed to continue as education and persuasion had clearly failed.

During the trial it was accepted that there was contamination of the recycling container and that this was in breach of a properly served Section 46 notice. However before and during the trial the defence took the approach that it could not be proven that the accused had personally placed the contamination in the recycling bin - it was argued that it was the responsibility of the Council to prove this fact.

The magistrates felt that it was not proven beyond reasonable doubt that the accused had personally caused the contamination and so found the case not guilty.

Enforceable legislation

The recent court case places authorities in a difficult position when it comes to enforcing prosecutions for contamination of recycling. It is virtually impossible to mount a successful prosecution under the EPA unless there is direct evidence of somebody actually placing the contamination into the recycling bin - just placing a full bin out for

collection would not suffice. While fixed penalty tickets could be issued, if they were to be disputed the prosecution would be under the EPA and likely to fail. However if the Council does not collect the waste it is in breach of its EPA requirement to collect household waste. If the waste is collected, it cannot be taken to a sorting plant as this affects the plant operation and potentially has health and safety issues for staff. Effectively existing legislation is unenforceable and gives residents a recycling opt out.

A way forward?

The recent prosecution was only taken with support from Defra and the Minister has promised to consider changes to legislation following the not guilty verdict.

What is needed is enforceable legislation and the following may be a way forward:

- ♦ Make the person who pays the Council Tax (or is registered as exempt) liable for the contents of the bins, or in the case of absentee landlords nominating someone else (with their agreement) This is on the justification that the person who pays the bill is paying for the service, so they should be responsible for ensuring it is properly used.
- ♦ If this does happen it is only fair to place more of a responsibility on the Council to ensure that proper information and education is provided to help people recycle more. Prosecutions should be for gross and persistent contamination only where education has failed - there should be no intention to penalise those making minor, infrequent or genuine mistakes.
- ♦ Change the prosecution to be a civil rather than a criminal offence. This changes the burden of proof from beyond reasonable doubt to the balance of probability.
- ♦ Legislation clarifying the minimum space to be provided to households for waste disposal. This would remove any debate over reasonableness.
- ♦ Stronger guidance to developers to provide proper space for recycling and waste in new developments. In particular trying to avoid situations where properties share communal facilities as these are difficult to properly manage.

If there are problems enforcing present waste collections just wait until pay by weight arrives!

The views expressed in this article do not necessarily represent those of Exeter City Council.

Efficiency in Waste Services

Author: Trish Dalby, Environmental Services Manager, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Operational management leading to efficiency is commonly addressed across four main themes:

- ♦ layout and design;
- ♦ productivity;
- ♦ planning and monitoring; and
- ♦ quality;

We have taken each of these themes to examine what issues waste managers should be addressing to achieve efficiency and value for money in waste services within the regulatory framework of European and national legislation. Such legislation is translated into national, regional and local strategies. It is the waste manager's task to implement these strategies in the most effective way, achieving efficient use of resource and meeting customers agreed requirements, formal and informal, at lowest cost first time every time.

Layout and Design

This is determined by the collection systems dictated by the local waste strategy and geographical constraints. Local strategy should contain clear service standards that stipulate what is required of residents for example, segregation of waste, presentation and timing of collection and a public education programme which ensures as far as possible full co-operation from residents. This role is as much for front-line operatives through a positive and polite customer approach as collections are made as well as the work traditionally thought to be that of recycling officers.

The waste collection function is predominantly cyclical and the determination of fleet and the round frequency and configuration is a function of the Council policy - the method of collection and geographical factors. Critical within this is the requirement to comply with Health and Safety - all waste managers will be aware of the current focus on our industry by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

The location of tipping/delivery points for recycling and waste treatment cannot often be changed without significant capital investment and planning permissions, which for waste are difficult to achieve. This 'constraint' requires consideration in the longer term equation of efficiency.



Productivity

The major costs in waste collection services are labour and plant, including fuel costs; maximisation of these resources is the key to productivity. At the input end of the labour continuum will be:

- ♦ good selection and recruitment processes;
- ♦ continually updated training in health and safety, operations and customer care;
- ♦ compliance with the working time directive and national rules on drivers hours regulations for

- household waste (although on the EU Drivers Hours Regulations for commercial waste);
- ♦ motivation through good communication and staff involvement;
- ♦ a robust sickness policy;
- ♦ levels of pay and terms and conditions;
- ♦ appropriate levels of pool labour
- ♦ awareness of team dynamics in crews - emotional intelligence is a key leadership competency in managers, needing to be exercised, whether intuitive or explicit, at all management and supervisory levels.

Factors to consider are the use of bonus schemes with the problems this creates with single status legislation and flexibility to move between functions, and task and finish schemes with their inherent associations with missed collections and health and safety issues during collection/ landfill and transfer sites.

The 'output' end of the labour continuum will be considered under planning and monitoring

In containing the second biggest area of cost, plant usage, the following focus is required:

- ♦ careful specification of vehicles - fit for purpose over the expected life of the lease term;
- ♦ the term of any lease - this requires accurate and comprehensive repair and maintenance and fuel consumption monitoring;
- ♦ appropriate procurement processes - EU procurement rules will apply to virtually all acquisitions;
- ♦ the operational hours of the vehicles - maximisation of use by double shifting/7day working;
- ♦ appropriate numbers and location of spare vehicles. It may be possible in this area to partner with adjoining authorities to minimise these costs. This may even lead to joint procurement arrangements either locally or regionally;
- ♦ driver training can reduce fuel and repairs and maintenance costs; and
- ♦ an expansion to the traditional view of productivity in selection of vehicles with fuel conservation measure including the use of gas or bio-fuels. These are often more expensive, but if a whole life and sustainability costing model is used then the carbon footprint of procurement choice becomes a relevant factor.

Costs should be continually compared with other providers both in-house and externally to ensure and demonstrate value for money. APSE provides a range of benchmarking tools to facilitate local authority comparisons on an annual basis.

Planning and Monitoring

The intelligent use of geographical information system (GIS) is well established in waste services. However, an effective GIS system is not enough on its own; not to forget that the involvement of the crew on the ground is also critical - a GIS system can't tell you how heavily parked the road is on a particular day. The trick of gaining efficiency is to expand the capability of the system, for instance, to link to the Local Land Property Gazetteer (LLPG). Rather than seeing the LLPG as a local authority national requirement, it is possible to link into this to enable smarter focus of educational or enforcement campaigns as well as maximising efficiency when establishing individual rounds.

Planning also for the future labour market, for example:

- ♦ targeting LGV training with financial penalties if a driver resigns to ensure return on the investment made;
- ♦ offering apprenticeships/graduate opportunities within waste or wider environmental services; and
- ♦ partnership working with local recruitment agencies and neighbouring Authorities to provide a pool of appropriately trained operatives.

Establishing whether we are achieving the tasks required by our communities safely and well is 'part of the day job' for waste managers. Examples of monitoring information gathered and its usage include:

- ♦ Data on missed collections and an explanation of why, round by round promotes an ethos of performance;
- ♦ H&S checks whilst on the ground as well as PPE/training records emphasise the need for vigilance by, and responsibility of, all;
- ♦ Timely and comprehensive vehicle records on repairs and maintenance and fuel consumption can determine driver training requirements, operational problems at the tipping point, lease periods or indeed, if early

lease termination costs provide better value for money than continuing with excessive costs on repairs and maintenance for an individual vehicle.

Quality

This must be a culture rather than a process. As well as internal quality processes, external accreditation can be gained through, for example, Charter Mark, ISO9001, the Institute of Customer Services and Investors In People (IIP).

The focus on quality is now on the 'softer' side of the service, which can be categorised as:

- ♦ Responsiveness;
- ♦ Assurance; and
- ♦ Empathy

This ties into the perception of the service as being of paramount importance on the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and our opening premise that we need to meet customers agreed requirements, formal and informal, first time and every time.

Examples of how we can promote this culture:

- ♦ Customer focussed requirements must be built into the Employee Development Reviews held for every employee at every level;
- ♦ a standard agenda item at all team briefings is customer feedback - both positive as well as negative. All teams receive details of their own and other teams and depots achievement in customer complaints, compliments every month - reinforcing the focus on quality service provision; and
- ♦ a personal interaction with customers where supervisors and managers contact customers directly in person, by telephone or a site visit to resolve issues of complaint or concern on the ground, rather than responding in writing.

Energy from Waste

Author: David Bird, Head of Waste Management, Sheffield City Council

Incineration has for many years been a recognised method of dealing with large volumes of waste in preference to landfill. It is strange that a process which is so well known and used every single day in dealing with deceased human beings, should cause such controversy when applied to waste.

This rather gruesome analogy may not be as fanciful as it seems since cremation has become the preferred method of the disposal of the dead, gaining popularity as burial grounds became scarcer or were filled up and eventually became cheaper than internment. The major difference between incineration and the process now known as energy from waste is that in the one process energy is used to effect destruction, whilst in the other the destruction process itself generates energy which can be captured and used elsewhere.

Sheffield generates in the region of 240,000 tonnes of household waste each year. With our new energy from waste plant we are converting this valuable product into energy and uniquely in the UK are using this energy both for district heating and for electricity generation.

Being one of the pioneers in energy from waste has not been an easy ride for the City Council but we overcame early problems. It became clear, however, that the ageing energy from waste plant was going to need replacing, and this led to the letting of an Integrated Waste Management contract in 2001 with Veolia (formerly Onyx). The deal was simple. Veolia would take control of all the household waste produced in the city and deliver a new energy from waste plant.

In 2006 Veolia delivered a brand new energy from waste plant, built on time and on budget. It consists of an energy recovery facility providing 60 megawatts of thermal energy, supplying the UK's largest district heating system with over 130 connected buildings selling 125 million kilowatt hours of energy, and electrical generating plant with a 19.3 megawatt turbine selling 100 million kilowatt hours of electricity under a NOFFO contract. Veolia's customers for the district heating system include two Sheffield Universities, four swimming pools, three theatres, three art galleries, two cinemas, one radio station, one greenhouse, three hotels, 21 private developments, local authority housing and municipal buildings.

It is estimated that the district energy system produces a range of environmental benefits. As well as the reduced reliance of fossil fuels and energy savings with a stable price being offered, the system delivers low carbon - at least 45% less CO₂ per kilowatt hour than gas, saving over 12,000 tonnes per annum of CO₂. The plant is capable of dealing with 225,000 tonnes of waste per year and is fully compliant with the waste incineration directive.

This is not to say that there was not strong local opposition to the new plant. The public's opinion of waste incineration is stirred by misinformation and playing on fears about emissions. The council commissioned as part of the planning process an independent health review by the Sheffield Health Authority. This review gave a clean bill of health to the old plant and it was clear that the new plant, which would be even better, should not give cause for concern. In the early days there was much local interest and a great deal of information was passed to local residents, activists, councillors and those opposed to incineration. All the results of air quality monitoring are published on the Veolia Sheffield website. The Council believes that the efforts made to explain how the plant works, how emissions are controlled, the level of emissions and what they mean, has helped the local population to understand and accept the benefits of using waste to produce energy.

So where does EfW fit in future waste strategy? Across Europe EfW is an accepted method of disposal. It is even hinted that it is on a par with, if not better than, recycling in some instances. With increased emphasis on climate change, questions need to be asked about the continued push for removal of material from the waste stream for reprocessing and how the carbon footprint of these operations compares with use of waste as a fuel. The world's resources are finite and it makes sense to conserve them by using less, reusing where possible and recycling where practical. The use of

waste to generate energy is in itself a form of recycling. Given that many "recycled" materials do not conserve the natural resource, it would appear that using them to generate energy is a sensible option. Low grade plastics have little economic value and are difficult to recycle back into useable products. Turning them into park benches does little to conserve the oil supply. Then there is the question of energy security. The UK has become a net importer of energy, and there is now debate regarding how to secure the island's energy supplies. Whilst debate has centred upon renewable energy such as wind, wave and solar power and, more controversially, on nuclear energy, very little attention has been paid to EfW.

The UK is currently importing fuel and at the same time is landfilling indigenous renewable fuel in the form of municipal waste, which has a value of around £50 per ton. The 25 million tonnes or so of municipal waste is equivalent of around 5 million tonnes of coal per year. Commercial waste has an equivalence of about 5-10 million tonnes of coal per year and agricultural waste around 15 million tonnes. All these wastes could equate to around 25 million tonnes of coal equivalent per annum at a conservative estimate. Of course to burn the 25 million tonnes of waste would need a large number of energy from waste plants, much more than those envisaged in the recent consultation paper on waste strategy, which only perceives energy from waste rising to deal with around 27% of the municipal waste stream.

Changes to the waste framework directive to define when a waste stops being a waste and can be considered a fuel and recognising that waste is an under used energy resource will continue to drive towards the construction of energy from waste plants. Recycling will continue alongside this move towards energy recovery and eventually a balance will be struck between the economics of waste collection and processing, the conservation of natural resources and the way in which all these processes affect climate change. Ultimately it may be the carbon footprint of everything we do that drives policy more than irrational fears over imagined pollution, conflicting claims to be the greenest available technology or even the powerful economic drivers of handling, treating and disposing of waste. It is now time to stop the arguments about which is better - recycling, energy from waste or a basket of alternative technologies - and to recognise that all these will play a part dealing with the waste produced contributing toward reducing climate change emissions and making best use of an undervalued resource.

Education and Campaigns

Author: Peter O'Connell, Head of Waste Management & Transport, London Borough of Sutton

Campaign Objectives

The London Borough of Sutton recognised that our Waste Management objectives were interrelated and that a holistic approach to services was needed. We believed that an innovative education and publicity campaign was a key requirement to get our messages across to our 180,000 residents and at the same time improve our overall performance.

Our major service objectives were:

- ♦ To increase participation in recycling
- ♦ To increase residents' satisfaction with waste services
- ♦ To reduce costs of waste disposal and recycling
- ♦ To meet our statutory targets for recycling (30%) and LATS.

Our holistic approach, which combined: an educational campaign, ensuring reliable collection services and the development of improved waste treatment arrangements, has helped us achieve all of our objectives. A summary of these are shown in the tables below:

| Those satisfied / very satisfied | 2001 | 2003 | 2005 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Waste Collection (MORI Poll) | 54% | 82% | 88% |
| Recycling Services (MORI Poll) | 82% | 84% | 86% |
| Street Cleaning (MORI Poll) | 60% | 52% | 65% |

| BVPis | 2002/3 | 2003/4 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Recycling/ Composting performance | 19% | 25% | 28% | 29.07% |

| Diversion from Landfill | 2005/6 | 2006/7 | 2007/8 | 2008/9 | 2010/11 |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Permitted allowance | 49,453 | 47,155 | 44,091 | 40,261 | 35,665 |
| Actual/Projected | 43,331 | 35,740 | 36,647 | 34,037 | 32,190 |

| | 2003/4 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Financial Savings from contract negotiation & other measures | £133,000 | £429,000 | £613,000 |

External Public Relations company contract

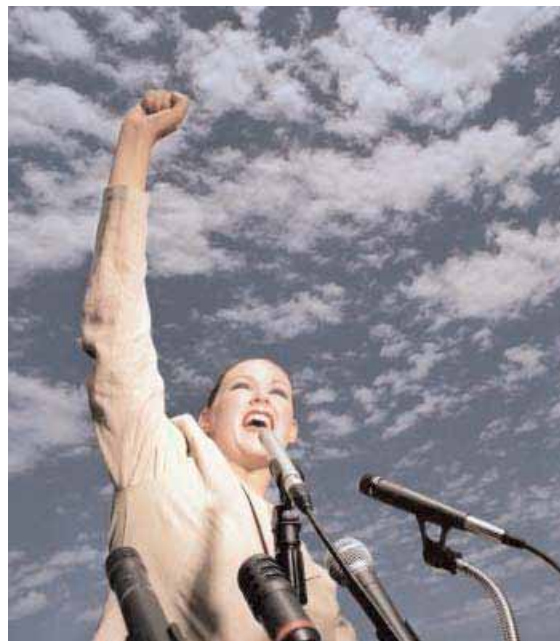
Sutton commenced its educational and publicity campaign by engaging an external public relations company, Trimedia, on a three-year contract. Trimedia was charged with addressing our objectives through a targeted campaign to increase recycling and reduce "contamination". Whilst this would appear to be a stand-alone goal, the knock on effect of cleaner materials and higher tonnages allowed a renegotiation of our waste disposal contract which resulted in lower costs. The increased amount of high quality materials was also responsible for Sutton meeting its 30% statutory recycling target (now up to 32% in August 2006).

Tackling publicity and politics

Publicity can be a sensitive matter and it was considered essential to ensure that support from all political groups was obtained. In order to achieve this we set up a Joint Member "Waste Advisory Board" that met quarterly to steer the campaign over the three year period. The Board was supported by Senior Environment & Leisure Officers with other representatives including the Council's Press Officer, local environmental charities and the Managing Director of one of the borough's shopping centres.

The nuts and bolts of the campaign

Sutton's campaign targeted different groups (residents, schools and businesses) each year but contained core elements to allow some messages to be repeated to all groups at regular intervals. From the very start it was 'branded' so that residents would recognise it and would be constantly reminded of the need to recycle as much as possible. The campaign logo was "Re-Use not Refuse". Trimedia established focus groups to find out exactly what type of information and media residents best reacted to.



The focus groups' discussions centred on three distinct phases:

- ♦ Current habits, awareness and knowledge of recycling
- ♦ "Re-Use not Refuse" campaign itself
- ♦ Future campaigns

The focus groups found that residents had a desire for clear, concise Council branded information, particularly in leaflet form; using a simple yes/no approach to what could and could not be recycled in the domestic recycling bins.

In addition to leafleting, local newspapers were invited to print a variety of articles on, for example, the life cycle of a glass bottle. Posters were also shown during the focus group sessions to see which had the greater impact and were more likely to change residents' behaviour.

As well as the use of focus groups another key element when developing our campaign was information gathered via a waste stream analysis exercise. This provided information on the behaviour of residents across different areas and demographic groups and enabled us to "segment the market" and produce different messages for different groups.

Finally, in order to gain maximum effect and to spread the workload over the three years we produced annual communication plans. These ensured that our campaign was co-ordinated with other local, regional and national campaigns as well as allowing us to link with events such as World Environment Day.

Targeted Communications

Over the course of the three years we made a number of targeted information drops to residents. These were aimed at consolidating existing services and on new services (flats, kerbside glass collections and commercial waste recycling).

With regard to targeted leaflets, we also sent 'Thank You' leaflets to households in roads where we know they are excellent recyclers as we feel it is important to keep these residents engaged. We have also produced annual reminder leaflets for our seasonal garden waste service, general householder leaflets and how to use our Civic Amenity Site. Trimedia has also assisted on external events publicity, such as our toy donation events at Christmas, which ties in with our new emphasis on reuse.

Work with school children was another important part of our campaign. "Pester Power" and the fact that children take the message home was exploited by the development of an education pack for school teachers and this was supported by talks and competitions offered by recycling staff. Work with schools has continued through a local charity, The Centre for Environmental Initiatives, (CEI) and a grant of over £150,000 from the National Lottery through the CRED Fund. In the past year, the CEI's "Seven Wards" Project, which has match funding from Sutton Council, has presented talks, workshops and after school club activities to over 6,000 children in a part of the borough where residents tend to recycle less and contaminate more.

Conclusion

Overall we have improved communications with our residents and linked it with collection services and waste treatment operations to form one waste management "system". This has provided benefits in everything from customer satisfaction through to meeting legislative targets and reducing costs.



GB 11409



GB 11132



GB 14074



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