

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY 28 MAY 2013

2013 REVIEW OF RECYCLING PLAN (2011-2016)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates Scrutiny Committee Community on progress with the Recycling Plan since its approval in 2011 and seeks ongoing support from this committee for recycling initiatives.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Exeter City Council is the Waste Collection Authority (WCA) for Exeter and has responsibility to arrange and manage recycling and composting programmes for household waste collected in Exeter. The avoided disposal cost of material diverted from landfill by or through the recycling activities of the City Council is claimed as a recycling credit from Devon County Council (DCC) as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA).
- 2.2 During 2012/13 just over £621,000 was claimed from the WDA for recycling of materials carried out directly by the City Council. This income was used to support the costs of recycling and waste activities.

3. RECYCLING RATE & WASTE ARISING

- 3.1 Exeter's recycling rate has dropped slightly. This is accounted for by a drop in tonnage collected for recycling of 500 tonnes and an increase in waste sent to landfill of 400 tonnes. The overall quantity of waste collected has not increased despite continued growth in Exeter's population. This indicates that the trend towards reduced waste continues. There are a number of reasons for this, including a reduction in consumer purchasing and an on-going reduction in packaging.

Table 1

	06/7	07/8	08/9	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
ECC recycling & composting rate %	33.86	*35.81	*36.2	*36.2	*36.9	*36.2%	34.9% (estimated)

*From Waste Data Flow – this varies slightly from the DAWWRC statistics due to different accounting systems for the MRF stockpile.

Targets

- 3.2 There are currently no local recycling targets, but the UK as a whole is committed to achieving a 50% recycling rate by 2020 as set out in the EU revised Waste Framework Directive 2010. In addition the Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Devon sets targets of 60% by 2020 and 65% by 2025.

- 3.3 Exeter's contribution to achieving this is a local aspiration target of 39% by 2014/15 (Table 2 below).

Table 2: Recycling Plan Target for % of Household Waste Recycled

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Target	37	37.5%	38%	39%	40%

- 3.4 The 2012/13 target has been missed. The only service to show an increase in material collected for recycling was the garden waste scheme, which grew by 151 tonnes. However, this has been offset by reductions in the material collected through 'Recycle From Home', recycling banks and voluntary groups.

- 3.5 The key reasons for the reduction in kerbside dry recycling tonnages include:

- **'Light weighting' of packages** - all packaging companies are aiming to reduce their carbon footprint and one way this can be achieved is to make the packaging lighter. This saves money and carbon on transport as well as production costs.
- **Paper** represents about 60% of the total tonnage sent for recycling. There has been a strong downward trend for paper tonnages during the last three years. This could be due to increasing preference for internet news format over print, and a reduction in the purchasing of magazines, newspapers, etc. due to the economic downturn.
- **Waste Minimisation** – the effectiveness of both national and the local 'Don't let Devon go to waste' awareness campaigns to encourage reduction of all types of waste are having impact. However, there is still an ongoing need to advise residents of what materials can be recycled and the benefits to the environment and society in so doing.

Recycling centres

- 3.6 Devon County Council's recycling centres continue to recover a high percentage of waste brought in by the public. As at February 2013, recycling rates were 77% at Exton Rd and 83% at Pinbrook Rd.

Potential to improve recycling rates

- 3.7 The analysis of Exeter's residual waste, which took place in April 2012, gives some guidance on where improvements in waste reduction and recycling could be achieved.
- 3.8 Food waste accounts for 35% (by weight) of household waste sent to landfill. In other Devon districts where food waste is collected as a separate material every week, the food waste proportion is between 15% (East Devon) and 23% (West Devon). A well-used food waste collection can add several percentage points to a council's recycling rate. In the absence of a food waste collection, then this fraction can be partially reduced by educational drives to avoid food waste, and to encourage composting appropriate food waste at home.
- 3.9 More than a third of the household waste currently sent to landfill could, if properly separated, be dealt with using the Council's existing 'Recycle From Home' scheme, recycling banks or the garden waste service. Therefore, increasing participation in

existing schemes could be made more effective if education and enforcement resources were strengthened

4. SCHEME AND COMMUNICATION UPDATES

Kerbside

- 4.1 Kerbside recycling continues to be available to all households in Exeter. Wheeled bins, boxes and bags for recycling are available on request; households that are high recyclers may request additional receptacles.

Garden Waste Collection Scheme

- 4.2 In 2013, garden waste customers were able to renew their subscriptions online via the Council's web site, and this was the option used by over half our customers. The number of customers joining the Garden Waste Scheme continues to rise (See Table 3 below).

Table 3

Garden waste customer base	
Year	Number renting bins
04/05	2385
06/07	4760
08/09	6309
10/11	7020
11/12	7151
12/13	7597 *

* A further 755 customers subscribe to the service using compostable sacks.

- 4.3 A review garden waste collection rounds took place in 2012/13. As a result, more than 90% of customers have their garden waste collected on the same day as their green or grey bin, making easier to remember their collection day. The review has also reduced vehicle mileage and collection costs for the 2013 collection season.

Compost bin sales

- 4.4 The sale of cost-price home composting bins continues to slow down as the city approaches saturation point. However, three one-day composting bin sales took place during spring 2013, accompanied by an advert and editorial coverage in the Express and Echo during May. Sales figures as a result of this promotion were not available when this report was finalised.

Trade recycling service

- 4.5 The trade waste recycling service has around 500 customers, but has dropped by 30 over the last 12 months. About 400 tonnes of good quality recycling is collected per annum; 65% is card, 25% paper and 10% plastic which is processed through the MRF and bulked up with the kerbside collected materials for sale to re-processors.

Bring banks

- 4.6 Changes have been made to the Bring Bank operation with the removal of all the plastic/can banks and the paper banks from the smaller sites as these materials are collected from the kerbside city wide. However, paper banks are retained at larger sites such as supermarkets and a paper bank was newly installed at Waitrose in April.
- 4.7 There is a full range of glass banks at over 70 sites throughout the city as glass is not collected co-mingled. With the exception of book, textile and shoe banks (and small glass banks in difficult-to-access locations), all are serviced by the Council. At 18 of the 70 bottle bank sites, smaller 1100-litre banks are used due to restrictions on space and vehicular access. The arrangement for emptying these banks was taken in-house in May 2013, using the council's existing resources.
- 4.8 Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) bring banks for small electrical appliances (e.g. hair-dryers, electric toothbrushes) have been installed at four of the major supermarket sites.

Schools and students

- 4.9 A free recycling service continues to be offered to all schools within Exeter. In addition to the actual collection of materials, the Council also provides an educational support service to all participating schools and colleges, including education visits and targeted communications and use of the MRF training room.
- 4.10 The Green Team initiative set up in partnership with the Express and Echo and Gregory Distribution Company has proven to be a successful way of engaging school-children and it has sponsorship for a further year. The successful Green Team awards were held in October 2012, attended by over 200 students and staff. The next awards will be held in February 2014, to fit better with the academic year.
- 4.11 The Recycling Team has been working with the University's Community Liaison Officer in developing better tailored information for students about refuse and recycling collection, as this specific group has particular advice needs beyond that for general households.

Third Party recycling and material buy in

- 4.12 Charities, community and voluntary groups continue to collect a significant amount of recyclable materials in the City every year. In 2012/13 this was a total 865 tonnes, representing 7% of all material collected for recycling. The Council continues to purchase such material directly from groups and also pays recycling credits to reflect the saving in disposal costs. Like other recycling schemes, this figure has dropped over the last year due to likely factors such as 'light weighting' of packaging and a decline in newspaper readership.

Communications and events

- 4.13 Communicating the message on recycling and waste minimisation to residents and businesses is an important tool to engender changed behaviour. Some of the proposed and completed projects include:

- a door-knocking campaign about recycling – residents were asked in summer 2012 to respond to a series of questions about how effective the present systems of communication are. Some of the useful findings are:
 - 96% of people who said they had received a recycling calendar in the post found it useful;
 - 78% preferred receiving information as a leaflet, with email being the second most popular choice;
 - 39% of respondents said they have used the ECC web site to find out about their waste and recycling collections
- clinical waste continues to be a problem at the MRF with on-going work with the Primary Care Trust and other organisations to spread the message regarding the correct way for clients to dispose of clinical waste;
- road shows, school fetes, compost giveaways, Real Nappy Campaign, Recycling Week events and MRF tours all contribute to the continuing efforts to inform and promote recycling for residents in Exeter.
- For enquiries about waste and recycling collections, visits to the ECC web site now outnumber telephone calls by around two to one. Developing the web site enables us to improve the accessibility of the service. For example, as well as renewing their garden waste subscriptions online, by the end of 2013 residents will be able to request new containers and report a missed collection and receive an instant response to the enquiry based on our real-time waste collection data. During episodes of severe weather, householders can also visit www.exeter.gov.uk/snow to check whether their bin collection in street has been affected.

5. MAIN ACTIONS FOR 2012/13 & BEYOND

5.1 The key areas that will be focussed on for 2013 and beyond are to:

- maintain the recycling rate as the economic climate continues to affect purchasing choices and companies strive to reduce the weight of their packaging;
- continue to address the clinical waste contamination in the MRF;
- continue to encourage waste minimisation to reduce the amount of waste being produced, and focus on reducing the larger fractions in landfill waste, especially food waste;
- increase the quality of materials collected for recycling by continuing to reduce the contamination levels;
- maintain a high-quality collection service, taking into account rising fuel costs and the financial pressures on Exeter City Council;
- base education drives on sound information from surveys and collection data including using the information from the residual waste survey;
- increase the range of materials collected at the refreshed bring bank sites, and enhance customer use by attention to the cleanliness of sites.

6. RECOMMENDED:

That Scrutiny Committee Community

- 1) note the progress that the Council has made to date in implementing the Recycling Plan 20011-16; and

- 2) support the ongoing actions planned for 2013 that are described in this report.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT

S:PA/LP/ Committee/513SCC3
3.5.13

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:**