

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY 4 March 2014

2014 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 Scrutiny 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 2013/14 just over £530,000 is forecast to be claimed from the WDA for recycling of materials carried out directly by the City Council. This income will be used to support the costs of recycling and waste activities.

3. RECYCLING RATE & WASTE ARISING

- 3.1 Exeter's recycling rate is projected to remain similar to the previous year. The overall quantity of waste collected has not increased despite continued growth in Exeter's population. This indicates that the trend towards reduced waste, explained by the economic downturn, continues.

Year	ECC Recycling & Compost rate %
2006/7	33.86
2007/8	*35.81
2008/9	*36.2
2009/10	*36.2
2010/11	*36.9
2011/12	*36.2
2012/13	34.9
2013/14	35 (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 2below).

Table: 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 system of using National Indicators (NI) to report waste statistics became obsolete on 1st April 2011, although some NI's remain for other areas of local government. Waste NI's were used to record the percentage of household waste sent for reuse/recycling/composting (NI192) and the weight of residual waste (kg per household - NI 192). These statistics are still available through Waste Data Flow and continue to provide a useful tool to LA's to monitor their progress at a local level.
- 3.5 The key reasons for the reduction in kerbside dry recycling tonnages over the last few years 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. To date recycling rates exceed 80% at both the Exton Rd and Pinbrook Rd sites.

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.

- 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 effective if appropriate education and enforcement resources were available.

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 The number of customers joining the Garden Waste Scheme continues to rise (See Table 3below)

Year	Number of households hiring bins
04/05	2385
06/07	4760
08/09	6309
10/11	7020
11/12	7151
12/13	7597
13/14	7885

- 4.3 A further 773 customers subscribe to the service using compostable sacks.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 A review of 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 it easier to remember their collection day. The review also reduced vehicle mileage and collection costs for the 2013 collection season.

Compost bin sales

- 4.6 The sale of cost-price home composting bins continues to slow down as the city approaches saturation point. However, two 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 from this promotion came to 49 with the majority being larger units sold. From April 2013 to date

147 units have been sold, showing that we are on target to sell more than the previous years, 151 units.

- 4.7 To encourage more of a take up on home compost bins, garden waste customers have been offered the opportunity to purchase up to 2 compost bins at a cost of £3 each, collected.

Trade recycling service

- 4.8 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. 10% by weight of material collected from our trade customers is recycled. The service has been extended to now collect mixed recycling and separate mixed glass collections, both of which are expected to increase the customer base and the tonnage recycled.

Bring banks

- 4.9 The removal of duplicate materials collected from kerbside and banks has been in operation for over two years now. Plastic/can banks and the paper banks were removed from the smaller sites as these materials are collected from the kerbside city wide. Paper banks are retained at larger sites such as supermarkets.
- 4.10 There is a full range of glass banks at over 70 sites throughout the city as glass is not collected co-mingled with other recyclates. 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. The recycling team continue to review the service and adjust where required. Currently permission is being sort to add a site close to B & Q, Iceland and Lidl in Alphington.
- 4.11 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. These are serviced by an external company, who are happy with the current use but are not in a position to extend the provision to more sites at present.

Schools and students

- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 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. This year's awards were held on 11 February 2014. The event has been paid for by sponsorship from Express and Echo, Gregory Distribution, Waitrose, Stage Coach and Western Power Distribution and a grant from The Exeter Board fund.

- 4.14 The Recycling Department continues to work with the University's Community Liaison Officer in developing better tailored information for students about refuse and recycling collection. Currently staff are in discussion with DCC Waste staff to see how best resources can be combined to improve communication and then better recycling rates at the University and college in Exeter.

Third Party recycling and material buy in

- 4.15 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 994 tonnes, representing 8% 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

- 4.16 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:

- **Public attitudes to recycling** - the door-knocking campaign about attitudes to recycling was completed in the summer 2012, and is still in use to inform how best to communicate with the residents of Exeter.
- **Clinical waste contamination** - continues to be a problem at the MRF with sharps boxes and syringes appearing in recycled waste; there is on-going work with health colleagues and other organisations to change behaviour and encourage correct to dispose of clinical waste.
- **Fridge calendars** - a city-wide mail out to all household with address specific rubbish and recycling calendar and what to recycling leaflet will commence at the start of March 2014.
- **Events** - such as compost giveaways, Real Nappy Campaign, Recycling Week and MRF tours all contribute to the continuing efforts to inform and promote recycling for residents in Exeter. These have been reduced to the bare minimum as the recycling team has reduced in numbers.
- **Channel shift** - 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, residents are 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 2014/15 & BEYOND

5.1 The key areas that will be focussed on for 2014/15 and beyond are to:

- strive to at least 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 and reduce the clinical waste contamination in the MRF, to reduce stoppages and down-time;
- working more closely with our colleagues in DCC Waste to better encourage waste minimisation reducing the amount of waste being produced, and focus on reducing the larger fractions in landfill waste, especially food waste;
- widen the brief of the waste management supervisors to better assist crews in recycle contamination issues, and waste reduction projects;
- smarter marketing – a city wide mail out of the rubbish and recycling calendar will have an updated rubbish and recycling leaflet reminding residents of all items that can be recycled;
- examining the use of new social media to target ‘hard to get to groups’ and encourage greater recycling, e.g. students;
- to reassure residents that material is sent to reputable processors, we will promote the ‘End Destination Charter’ on recycling;
- ending the free Saturday bulk collections reducing the huge amount of waste to landfill and diverting the materials to other waste stream such as reuse or recycling;
- in order to retain resident confidence with the recycling system it is important to maintain service standards –reliability of collections, responding promptly to ‘our fault’ missed collections, providing new or replacement recycling receptacles promptly;
- base education drives on sound information from surveys and collection data including using the information from the residual waste survey;
- by careful monitoring of bring-site yields, optimise site locations and raise local residents’ awareness in a targeted way where yields are below the expected norm;
- work closely with Housing Services to overcome barriers to recycling in a number of our blocks of flats, by reviewing collection and storage points, providing micro bottle-banks, and engaging with tenants to understand their particular issues;
- in collaboration with DCC Waste, work with the University and Guild to improve recycling with our student population.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1) That Scrutiny Committee Community note the progress that the Council has made to date in implementing the Recycling Plan 2011-16;
- 2) That Scrutiny Committee Community support the ongoing actions planned for 2014 that are described in this report;

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-