

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY
2 SEPTEMBER 2008

2008 REVIEW OF RECYCLING PLAN (2006-2011)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates Scrutiny Committee Community on progress with the Recycling Plan since its approval in 2006 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 from Devon County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA).
- 2.2 During 2007/8 just over £538,000 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.
- 2.3 As an authority rated 'excellent' for waste services by the Audit Commission, Exeter City Council is exempted from the requirement to provide a Recycling Plan. However in the interests of good quality service planning, a Recycling Plan is produced, reviewed and updated as appropriate.

3. WASTE ARISING AND RECYCLING RATE

Recycling/Composting Rates

- 3.1 Exeter City Council has a nationally set recycling/composting target of 30% and progress towards and past this target is as follows:

	2003/04	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8
Exeter City Council recycling/composting rate	17.30%	20.74%	30.04%	33.86%	35.05%

- 3.2 Additionally the City Council supports the aspirations of the Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Devon that originally set a locally agreed recycling / composting target of 40% by 2010 which is the figure from the Governments Waste Strategy for England 2007. The Exeter Recycling Plan sets out how the City Council intends to reach this target, which excludes materials recycled from the Civic Amenity and Recycling Centre at Exton Road.
- 3.3 In March 2007 the Devon wide target within the Municipal Waste Management Strategy was revised by Devon County Council to 50% which meant that the contribution by local authorities would also need to increase to 41.5%. This change does not automatically require an amendment to the Exeter Recycling Plan as this target refers to Exeter as a whole and so includes materials passing through the

Civic Amenities and Recycling Centre at Exton Road, which would give a combined recycling rate of 45.79% for 2007/8

- 3.4 The present targets within the Exeter Recycling Plan are as follows:

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Target	31%	33%	35%	37%	40%

Members will note that we have already exceeded our 2008/09 target.

- 3.5 The costs and benefits of increasing the targets within the Exeter Recycling Plan will be reviewed soon when work begins to update the Plan.

Waste Arisings

- 3.6 A critical issue for general waste management is to control the total amount of waste generated, irrespective of whether it is recycled or landfilled. Avoiding the initial production of waste is normally the most advantageous outcome for the environment.

- 3.7 The City Council has been particularly successful in keeping the total amount of waste collected fairly stable against a national background of increasing waste arisings as detailed in the following table.

Exeter City Council	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8
Total household waste collected (tonnes)	39888	38870	39066	39193	38922
Change on previous year	-2.74%	-2.55%	+0.5%	+0.33%	-0.69%

- 3.8 As the population has increased throughout this period this effectively means the waste produced per head of population has actually fallen. The figure for residual waste per head of population (assuming a population of 119600) was 250 kg (2007/8), comfortably below the proposed statutory target of 310 kg by 2010. While it is difficult to quantify the respective impacts of different factors, the side waste ban (instigated 2004), alternate week collections, ease of recycling and education/awareness campaigns are all likely to have made significant contributions.

- 3.9 The successful Green Shopping Campaign launched in 2007 in association with the Express and Echo, EDF Energy and Tidy Exeter Group made a significant contribution to this. The aim was to reduce the number of single use plastic bags used in Exeter by 25% during the year. To achieve this over 22,000 reusable jute shopping bags were given away to shoppers during the last 12 months, diverting an estimated 25 million bags from landfill, but also helping to raise the issue of waste minimisation amongst the public.

Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS)

- 3.10 The LATS scheme remains the key driver for municipal waste management in Devon for forthcoming years. LATS places limits on how much biodegradable municipal waste can be landfilled in Devon, setting diminishing amounts for each year until 2020. By 2020 only 35% of the amount of biodegradable waste landfilled in 1995 will be allowed, and for each tonne landfilled over this amount a fine of up to £150 per tonne will be levied. The LATS allowances and penalties are the responsibility of Devon County Council as they apply to Devon as a whole, though the responsibility will transfer to Exeter if it is granted unitary status.

- 3.10 The implementation of the LATS scheme is one of the reasons that the County Council is proposing a new Energy from Waste plant for Exeter, as material that has passed through such a plant will have its entire biodegradable component removed.

4. SCHEME UPDATES

Kerbside 'Recycle from Home' Scheme - Recycle for Exeter

- 4.1 The use of 'Recycle from Home' logo has been replaced (where practical) with 'Recycle for Exeter' using a well-recognised recycling logo that is used on all the national WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) campaigns. All the properties in the City continue to be able to participate in the kerbside recycling scheme.

Information Stickers on recycling containers

- 4.2 There is an ongoing project to provide new information stickers on all household recycling containers throughout the city. This is needed as many of the older containers have no information at all, some have illegible information and some have incorrect information caused by changes to the list of materials accepted for recycling. Having well labelled recycling containers increases the chances of residents putting the correct materials in the container.

Garden Waste Collection Scheme

- 4.3 The garden waste collection scheme continues to be operated by two collection vehicles covering every participating household in the city once a fortnight. Materials are stockpiled at Water Lane, before being shredded and taken to local farms for composting and eventual use. Fees for the 2007/8 collection season remained the same at the 2006/7 level, but late joiners had a discounted rate of £10.00 from August 2007. This proved popular and over 400 joined the scheme for the last 6 months of the season. Over 5,000 households are now renting brown bins and the remainder have access to biodegradable sacks that can be purchased from local retailers. During 2007/8, 2200 tonnes of garden waste were collected and composted. The price of the collection service was raised to £25.00 for the 2008/9 season, to better reflect the cost of the service.
- 4.4 Around 500 tonnes of leaf fall (predominantly from street sweepings) and green waste from parks and open spaces continue to be composted at the Water Lane facility. Home composting is further encouraged by the sale of the subsidised composting bins, with over 1000 additional bins being sold by cleansing services and partners WRAP in 2007/8. Although putrescible waste removed via this route does not count towards our recycling figures this is the most sustainable way of dealing with this fraction of the waste. DEFRA is currently considering ways of measuring waste composted at home so that it can be brought into future recycling figures.

Bring Banks

- 4.5 The Council continues to operate an extensive network of 70 bring banks around the City which are very well used by the community. With the exception of book, textile and shoe banks (and small glass banks in difficult-to-access locations), all are serviced by the Council.
- 4.6 The two main materials collected via bring banks are paper and glass. The paper tonnage collected rose from 469.3 tonnes (2006/7) to 488.82 tonnes (2007/8); the paper in the kerbside fell slightly during this period. The glass tonnage collected increased from 2034.42 tonnes (2005/6) to 2184.66 tonnes (2007/8); glass not

being accepted in kerbside collections due to issues of cross-contamination and different handling requirements.

Schools Recycling Scheme

- 4.7 A free of charge 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, supported by education visits and targeted communications and use of the MRF training room. Working with the Council education officer three schools started Eco clubs and were supplied with sweat-shirts sponsored by Viridor Waste Recycling.

University of Exeter

- 4.8 The Council does not collect waste from the University and so the focus of the recycling work with the University is to providing recycling information to students when they move off campus and live in the city community. Each student house was sent information on recycling at the start of the academic year. During 2007/8 the Council was involved in the Exeter University Green Fair, promoting recycling to the students and also with the Greensociety. Mugs made from recycled plastic were sponsored by European Metal Recycling and given out at university events promoting recycling.

Third Party Recycling

- 4.9 Charities, community and voluntary groups continue to collect a significant amount of recyclable materials in the City every year (1075 tonnes 2007/8). The Council purchases such material directly from groups and also pays recycling credits to the groups to reflect the saving in disposal costs.
- 4.10 Other recyclable materials (glass, cardboard and paper) are purchased from other Councils and a small number of commercial waste management companies. These materials are stockpiled alongside other recycle and sold for reprocessing.

Enforcement/Education Officers

- 4.11 The Council currently employs three Enforcement/Education Officers who promote waste minimisation and recycling. Their main duties are to assist the public in their use of recycling schemes and to ensure that the green bin is being used in the correct manner and it is not being contaminated by non-recyclable material. This important role helps ensure that the quantity and quality of recycled waste is continually improved. During 2007/8 one of the officers has been leading the information stickering project, providing updated labels on recycling bins.
- 4.12 Fixed Penalty Notices - Under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 Councils were granted powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for offences under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This includes the s46 offence of not complying with the Council's requirement to separate household waste as directed by the Council, (e.g. contaminating recycling containers with non-recyclable waste) The FPN allows the offender to pay a fine in lieu of prosecution for the offence. If the offender does not pay, the council has the option to prosecute for the original offence.

The difficulties of obtaining a prosecution under s46 EPA were highlighted when ECC lost its case in *ECC v Challice* 2006. In the light of this we did not issue any FPNs in 2007/8 but this is under continual review and it is expected that they will be issued during 2008/9.

- 4.13 The Education and Enforcement Officers working procedures are regularly reviewed to ensure that their time is spent in the most efficient way, with continued close liaison with the collection crews, their supervisors, and other front line staff. The collection crews are the true 'front line' in setting the standard for clean recycling, as they have the opportunity to open the lid and look in the bin before emptying it. Contamination is then reported back to the Education and Enforcement Officers. The MRF staff also closely monitor the standard of material delivered by the crews so action can be taken when material arrives that is below standard.
- 4.14 Despite this there continues to be a problem with clinical waste and food-contaminated recyclable waste, much originating in the bottom of wheelie bins or from communal recycling systems. Ways to address this issue continue to be explored, but clearly education, enforcement and engineering (to make it easier for people to recycle) all have a vital part to play.
- 4.15 Education events - road shows, school fetes, compost giveaways, Real Nappy Campaign, play-days, and MRF tours all contribute to the continuing efforts to inform residents about recycling in Exeter.

MRF (Materials Reclamation Facility)

- 4.16 The MRF started operations in September 2001 and since then all remaining residential properties have been added to the kerbside recycling scheme. The facility was constructed at a cost of £1.7 million and has a current operating capacity of around 8,500 tonnes per year. Since the plant opened, recycling material tonnages have risen constantly. In March 2007 a TiTech optical sort was installed. This equipment is designed to mechanically remove plastics from the paper line. This ensures that the paper is sold on for reprocessing with minimal contamination and the plastics removed are also available for sale to reprocessors.

A review of the MRF operations is due later in 2008.

Waste Storage Provision in New Developments

- 4.17 The recycling team continue to comment on the provision for waste management in all new development in the city, from a house conversion into flats to large housing estates. Such is the high density of new developments that the ideal of sufficient accessible storage facilities for individual properties can seldom be achieved. This means many new developments have communal facilities not ideally placed, limiting the scope to link waste to individual households and hence address any issues over quality or quantity of recycling or waste.

Waste Analysis

- 4.18 Funding was secured from DEFRA to cover the costs of a waste analysis from Exeter properties, reported in 2005/06. This covered three seasons; the final summer season was completed in July 2007. The addition of this extra information did not change the key findings which were:
- 20% extra residual waste is collected from properties served by a weekly refuse collection.
 - 80% of available paper is being captured for recycling, compared to 33% of plastic and 60% of cans.
 - 19kg of glass is thrown away on average by each household each year.

This information is being used to help inform the Council's communications in response to the many media requests received.

5. RECYCLING TRADE WASTE SERVICE

This service was introduced in October 2007, initially collecting paper and card, with a view to expanding the range of materials collected in the future. A collection of plastic and metal cans was introduced in July 2008 following a survey of customer needs. A total of 131 tonnes was recycled in 2006/7, and diverted from landfill.

The introduction of a trade waste recycling service does not affect the recycling rate in Exeter as trade waste is classified as Municipal waste – not Domestic. However, it does mean that less of Exeter's Municipal waste is being sent to landfill as this recyclable material is now collected and sent for reprocessing via the Council's MRF.

6. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR 2008/9

Pending the review of the Recycling Plan the current priorities for recycling in the short-term are contained in Appendix I: Proposed Improvement Plan for Recycling Rates 2008/09.

6.1 The main challenges for 2008/9 are to:

- Reduce the levels of contamination in the recycling, with a continued focus on the reducing contamination by clinical waste - we will explore whether we should charge to collect grossly contaminated recycling;
- Further encourage waste minimisation to reduce the amount of waste being produced, especially food waste;
- Further improve household participation and increase the quantity of material that is recycled through collection schemes;
- Increase the quality of recyclate collected;
- Encourage greater participation in the garden waste collection scheme and the promotion of home composting to divert organic waste from landfill; with a special focus on diverting appropriate food waste into compost.

The focus of all these activities is to make the current system operate even more efficiently and effectively.

7. RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that Scrutiny Committee Community acknowledge the positive progress that the Council had made in implementing the Recycling Plan.
- 2) that Scrutiny Committee Community support the Recycling Plan and the accompanying action plan pending the review of the Recycling Plan.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

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

2006-11 Recycling Plan