

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY  
31 AUGUST 2010**

**2010 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 2009/10 just over £571,000 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. A further £42,000 was claimed by the voluntary groups for the material they collected, which added to the total recycled in Exeter. Sales of materials from the MRF and bring banks raised £640,000. This was despite the economic down-turn which has affected consumer purchasing and reduced the amount of packaging available for recycling.

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 illustrated below in Table 1.

**Table 1**

	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/5</b>	<b>2005/6</b>	<b>2006/7</b>	<b>2007/8</b>	<b>2008/9</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
ECC recycling & composting rate	17.30%	20.74%	30.04 %	33.86 %	*35.81%	*36.2 %	*36.2 %

\*From Waste Data Flow

3.2 When compared against similar-size local authorities in our comparator group (Graphs 1 & 2, Appendix I), the following inferences can be drawn about Exeter's recycling:

- The high dry recycling rate reflects the efficiency of the co-mingled collection in wheeled bins and the wide variety of materials collected.
  - The low composting percentage is due to the council not providing a free organic waste collection service and the relative convenience of the Recycling Centre in Marsh Barton for people to take their green waste to.
- 3.3 Devon County Council has already exceeded its 2010 target for recycling, composting and reuse of 50%, achieving 52.5%. It is now aiming for 54% in 2010/11, 56% in 2011/12 and 57% in 2012/13. Exeter's contribution to achieving this is a local aspiration target of 40% by 2014/15, although the current Exeter Recycling Plan already has a target of 40% for 2010/11 (see Table 2 below).

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

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

- 3.4 The 2009/10 target of 37% was not reached with 36.2% being recorded as an outturn. Appendix I contains graphs showing the profile of waste recycled (which includes composted green waste collected) and the percentage of waste composted and recycled. Graphs 3, 4 & 5 of Appendix I, show that whilst the amount of green waste collected and composted has grown year on year, the amount of dry recyclables collected peaked in 2007/09, with reductions in overall tonnages in the last 2 years.
- 3.5 The 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. Observation in the MRF shows that the volume of items processed by the MRF has remained constant but the weight has reduced.
  - **Paper** represents about 60% of the total tonnage sent for recycling. There has been a strong downward trend for paper tonnages during the last two years. (Graph 6, Appendix I) This could be due to increased use of the web for daily news, and a reduction in the purchasing of magazines, newspapers, etc. due to the economic downturn.
  - **Waste Minimisation** – the effectiveness of awareness campaigns to encourage reduction of all types of waste, are having impact.

### Waste Arising

- 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 land-filled. Moving up the waste stream and avoiding the initial production of waste is the best environmental option overall. The total amount of waste collected has shown a reduction of 1.48% from 2008/09 to 2009/10. This is illustrated in Graph 7, Appendix I, and is in line with the national trend of waste reduction. Waste collected per head of population in Exeter has fallen from 335.6 kg per person in 2006/7 to ??? in 2009/10.

### Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS)

- 3.7 The key driver for municipal waste management in Devon for the next few years will be the LATS scheme. LATS places limits on how much biodegradable municipal

waste can be land-filled in Devon, setting diminishing amounts for each year until 2020. By 2020 only 35% of the amount of biodegradable waste land-filled in 1995 will be allowed, and for each tonne land-filled 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.

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

#### **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, and delivered according to ECC policy. Households with wheeled bins are not allowed boxes as well unless they are in flats or similar properties where the use of boxes encourages residents to take recycling to the communal recycling bins. Most households have now got up to date information stickers detailing acceptable recyclates, those remaining households without the new information continue to be updated on an ad hoc basis.

##### **New reject stickers on recycling containers.**

- 4.2 As a result of a WRAP (Waste Resources and Recycling Programme) project on reducing the contamination into the MRF new reject stickers have been printed. Householders who contaminate their recycling containers can no longer present the contaminated container for the next grey waste collection. They now have the option of removing the contamination and presenting it for the next recycling collection or opting to pay £13.50 for a special collection when it is collected and sent to landfill.

##### **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. The price for the hire of a brown bin was increased from £25 in 2008/9 to £30 for 2009/10. In previous years we had a sliding scale of charges as the year progressed, with a £10 fee from September onwards. From April 2009 new customers paid the whole £30 for a 12 month period irrespective of when they joined the scheme. This has helped to streamline the invoicing and reduce peaks in demand, as well as encouraging customers to remain with the scheme for the full year. Graph 8, Appendix I, shows the growth in garden waste collected, alongside the growth in customer base (Table 4).
- 4.4 In addition to households renting bins, biodegradable sacks are available from selected outlets throughout the city. Approximately 30,000 bags were sold in 09/10 at a cost of 60 pence per bag. However, the disadvantage of this system is that all roads must be visited on the relevant collection day in case a bag is put out by a resident; the cost-effectiveness of this option will be examined, with the possibility of replacement by the hiring of re-usable bags over the year.
- 4.5 The sale of cost price home composting bins has slowed down during 2009/10 to about 390 units (from 1000 in 2007/08 when WRAP was promoting the sale through an effective city wide promotion). Although organic material 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. Unfortunately DEFRA has recently decided not to allow inclusion of waste composted at home to be brought into future recycling

figures, on the basis that some of this garden/kitchen waste would have been diverted from landfill by way of garden waste/kitchen waste collection schemes.

- 4.6 The leaves and green waste from parks and open spaces continue to be composted at the Water Lane facility, and this will continue throughout 2010 under the present licensing scheme. However, when the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 come into force on the 1 October 2011 this will necessitate a change to the present system. The new permission will only allow 500 tonnes of material on site at any one time. This will prevent use of the site to produce compost from the parks waste, and as a consequence the Parks and Open Spaces team are reviewing how their green waste is managed with a view to shredding more material at the point of production.

### **Bring Banks**

- 4.7 The Council continues to operate an extensive network of about 70 bring banks for glass and paper around the City, which are well used by the community. No new sites have been opened in 2009/10 but plans are in progress for one in 2010/11 at Commercial Road. With the exception of book, textile and shoe banks (and small glass banks in difficult-to-access locations), all are serviced by the Council.
- 4.8 The two main materials collected via bring banks are paper and glass. Table 5 shows how the tonnage of paper has reduced (in line with national trends) but glass has continued to show a slight increase.

**Table 5**

	<b>Paper</b>	<b>Glass</b>
	Tonnes	Tonnes
2005/6	541	1854
2006/7	469	2034
2007/8	488	2184
2008/9	423	2209
2009/10	354	2243

### **Schools Recycling Scheme**

- 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's Haulage Company has been highly successful. Over 25 schools are now signed up to the programme which encourages schools to go greener with financial rewards as they achieve their goals. Nick Baker, naturalist and TV personality, is actively supporting this initiative and agreed to be the Green Team President for 2010.
- 4.11 Denis the Dustcart was awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize in the Best Communication Initiative category at the Annual Waste Management Trade Show in Torbay. To attract the attention of the schools the Express and Echo has set up a blog for Denis the Dustcart

### **University of Exeter**

- 4.12 The University employs a Student Liaison Officer who works with the students living in the City on issues of noise and anti social behaviour, including the correct use of

the refuse and recycling collection service. There is a special emphasis on the end of term problems generated by students leaving their accommodation in the city. A leaflet was produced for the students detailing the services available for quick and easy disposal of their waste at the end of the academic year.

### **Third Party recycling and material buy in.**

- 4.13 Charities, community and voluntary groups continue to collect a significant amount of recyclable materials in the City every year. In 2009/10 this was a total 906 tonnes, representing about 3% of the recycling rate. The Council continues to purchase such material directly from groups and also pays recycling credits to reflect the saving in disposal costs.
- 4.14 Other recyclable materials (glass, cardboard and paper) also continue to be purchased from other councils and a small number of commercial waste management companies. These materials are stockpiled alongside other recyclates and sold for reprocessing.

### **Enforcement/Education Officers**

- 4.15 The Recycling Team currently has one permanent Enforcement/Education Officer who specialises in enforcement. Another officer on a temporary contract has a lead role with the schools and university on recycling and waste issues; this is primarily focussed on the Green Team campaign. All staff work 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 maintained.

### **The Communications Plan and Educational Road shows**

- 4.16 Planned events and communications included the '150 grams per household per week' message to increase the tonnage of recycling by 400 tonnes, which was the amount needed to reach our target. Increasing the amount of glass recycled was seen as the most effective message, as the Waste Audit (2007/8) shows that approximately 19kg of glass is thrown away each year by the average household. The communication plan has now been extended to March 2011. Other campaigns included the following:
- Clinical waste continues to be a problem at the MRF with stoppages equivalent to over a week in lost time during the last 12 months. (3 minutes is allowed for removal for each incident of clinical waste contamination). To counter this, we have worked extensively with the PCT, district nurses and pharmacies to encourage better disposal methods.
  - The Leave it Loose campaign to promote the benefits of putting recycling loose into the bins, and avoid problems at the MRF has been effective and there has been a noticeable reduction in problems associated with bagged recycling.
  - Road shows, school fetes, compost giveaways, Real Nappy Campaign, play-days, Recycling Week events and MRF tours all contribute to the continuing efforts to inform the residents about recycling in Exeter.
  - The South West Love Food Hate Waste campaign in October was recognised with a national award. We contributed with supporting road shows during this period.
  - WRAP (Waste Resources Action Programme) ran a project in Exeter to look at effective ways to reduce contamination into the MRF. This involved a city wide mailing, door-stepping in areas known to contaminate their recycling and

the suggestion that the reject sticker could be more effective if it was reworded.

- Communication planning for the impending changes to the refuse and recycling collections due to start in September 2010 has taken a large proportion of time in the latter part of the year.

### **MRF (Materials Reclamation Facility)**

- 4.17 The MRF continues to recycle Exeter's kerbside collected recyclates. In 2008/9 this was 8394 tonnes, but the tonnage for 2009/10 had reduced to 7915. Of this tonnage, 2300 tonnes were sent a new sorting facility (a Super MRF) at Southampton for further sorting after initial processing at Exeter, making a considerable saving on transport costs as this recycling previously went to the London area.

### **Domestic Collection**

- 4.18 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 often means new developments have communal facilities that are 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.
- 4.19 A review has resulted in the implementation of changes to the collection of refuse and recycling. Approximately 14,000 of the 18,000 properties on weekly collections will move to fortnightly refuse collections from September 2010, with predicted annual saving of £84,000. From previous studies undertaken, the yield of recyclates from these 14,000 dwellings should increase in the region of 20% overall. In conjunction with this change, the collection rounds have been extensively remodelled into more efficient routes based in five zones.

### **Recycling Trade Waste Service**

- 4.20 This service was introduced in October 2007, initially collecting paper and card, and expanded to include plastic and metal cans in July 2008. A total of 425 tonnes of trade waste was recycled in 2009/2010 an increase of 65 tonnes from 2008/2009.
- 4.21 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 waste is being sent to landfill.

## **5. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR 2010/11**

- 5.1 The main challenges for 2010/11 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;
  - review the 2010/11 target as reaching it looks unlikely under the present collection systems and trends in waste production.
  - explore ways to reduce the number of stops on the MRF line due to clinical waste contamination.
  - continue to encourage waste minimisation to reduce the amount of waste being produced, especially food waste;
  - increase the quality of materials collected for recycling by continuing to reduce the contamination levels;

- 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.

5.2 The priorities for recycling in the short-term are contained in Appendix 2: Proposed Improvement Plan for Recycling Rates 2010/11.

**6. RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that Scrutiny Committee Community note the progress that the Council had made to date in implementing the Recycling Plan 2006-2011;
- 2) that Scrutiny Committee Community support the Recycling Improvement Plan for 2010/11.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

S:PA/LP/Committee/810SCC10  
16.8.10

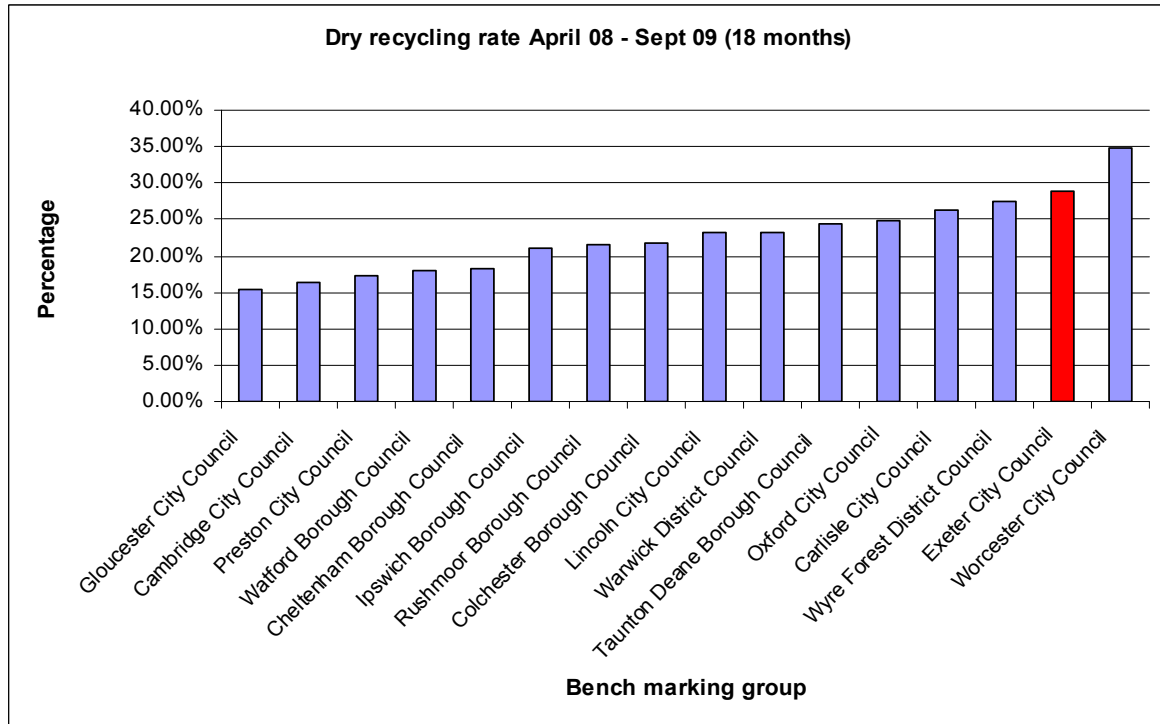
COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

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

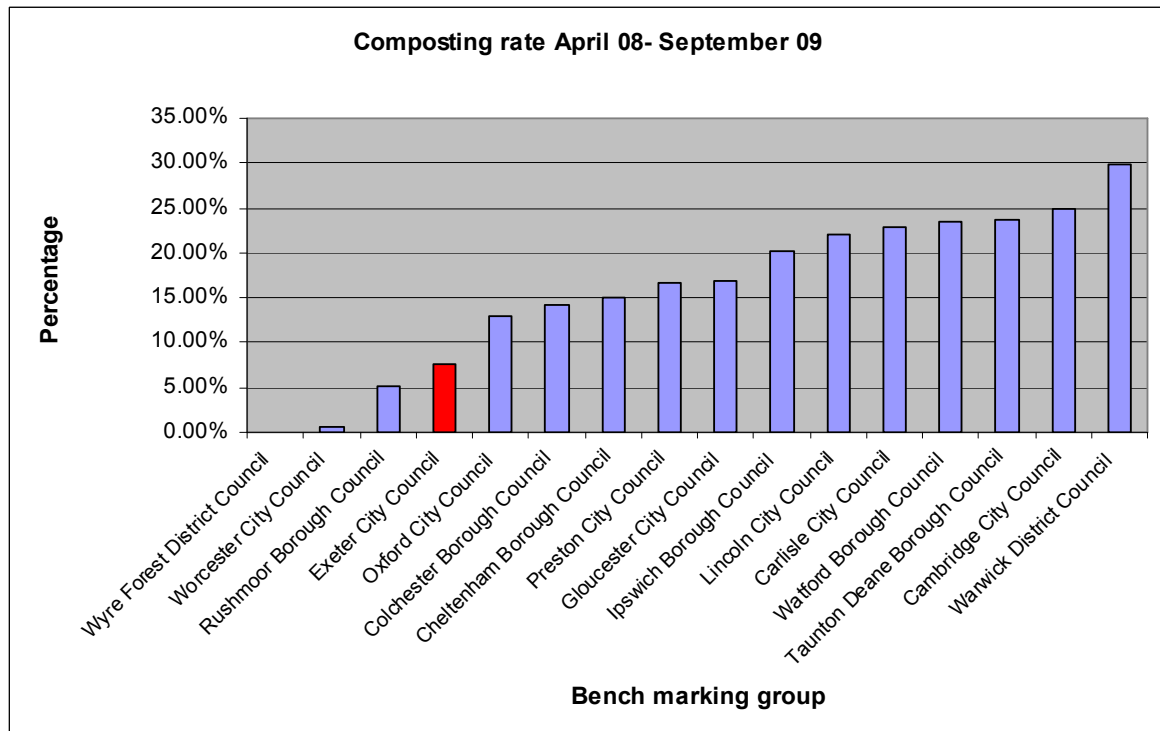
2006-11 Recycling Plan

# APPENDIX I

Graph 1

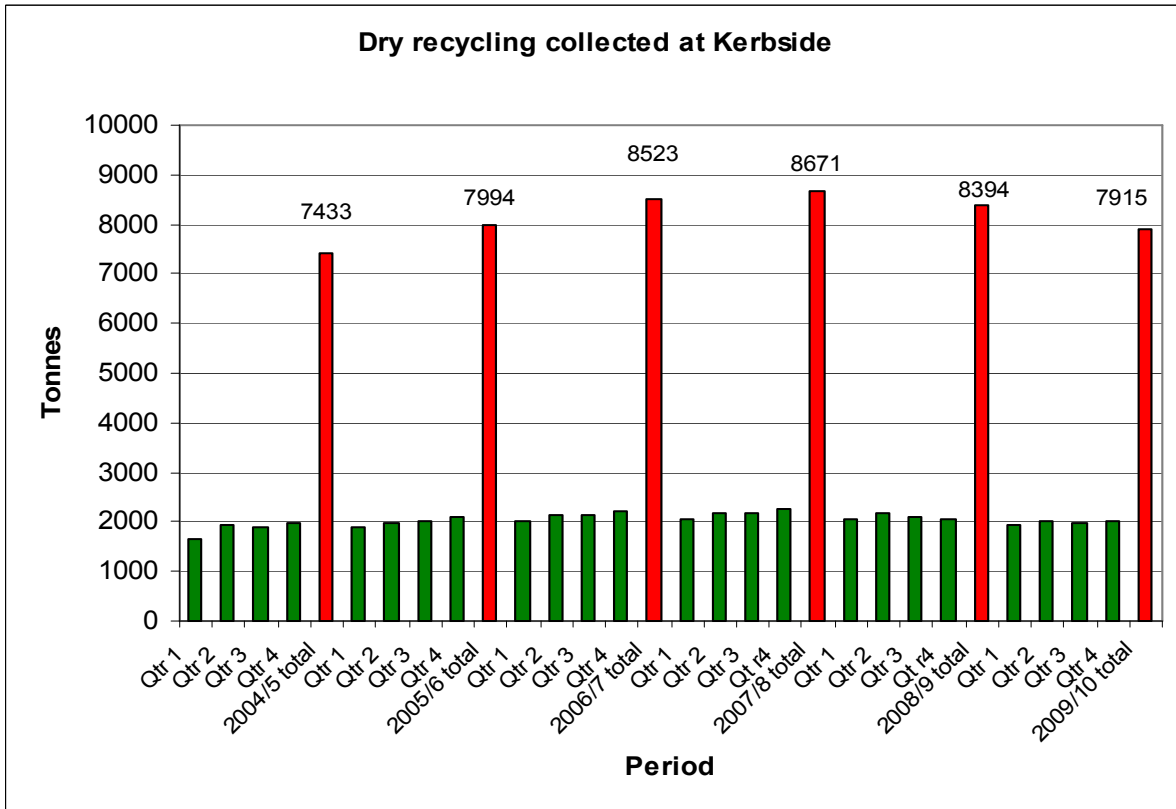


Graph 2

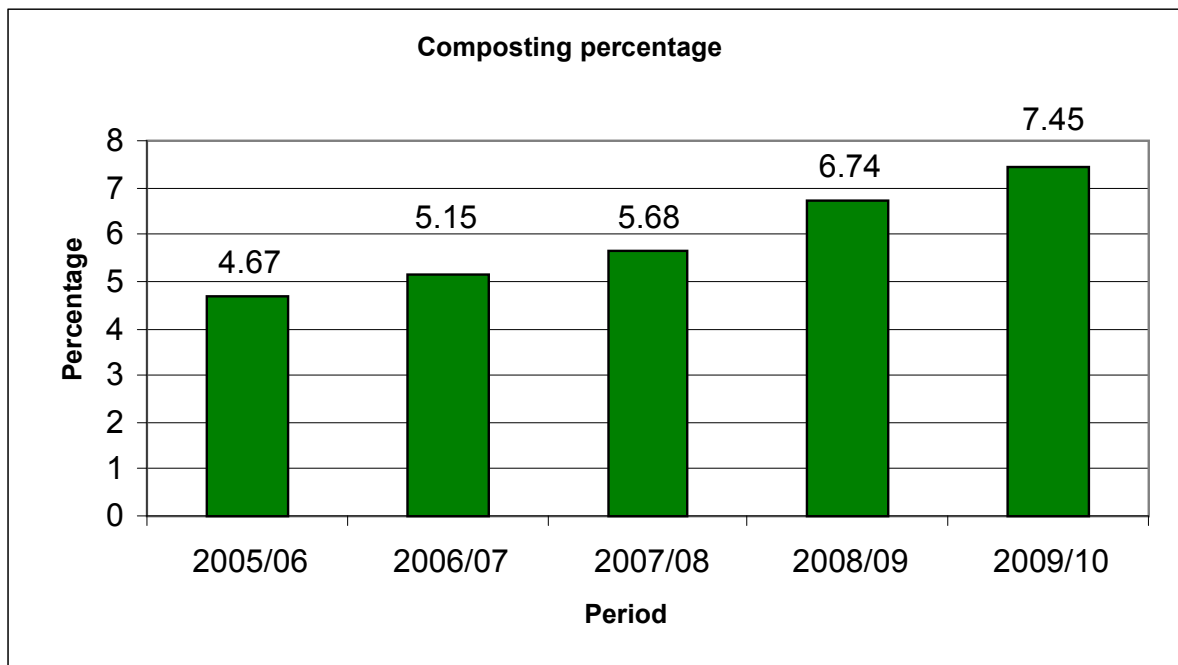




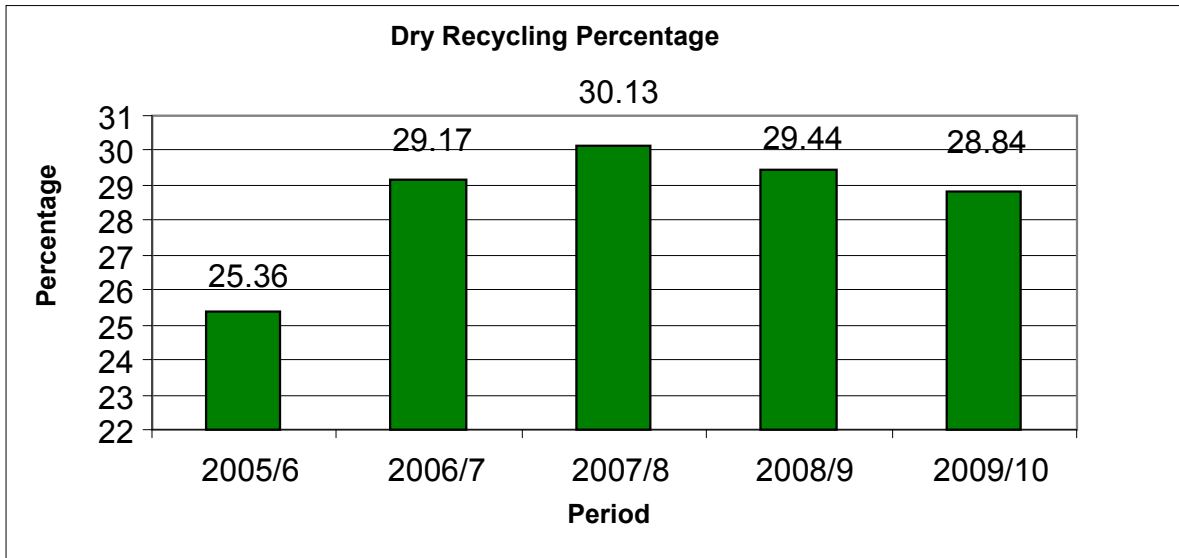
Graph 3



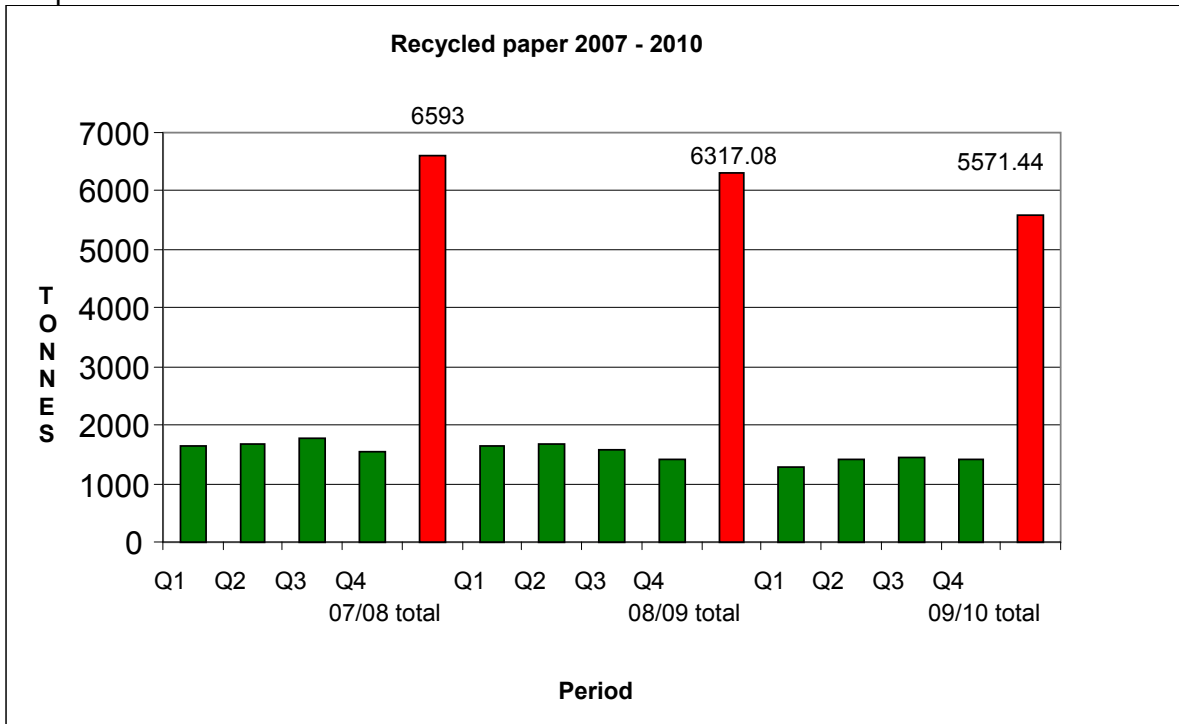
Graph 4



Graph 5



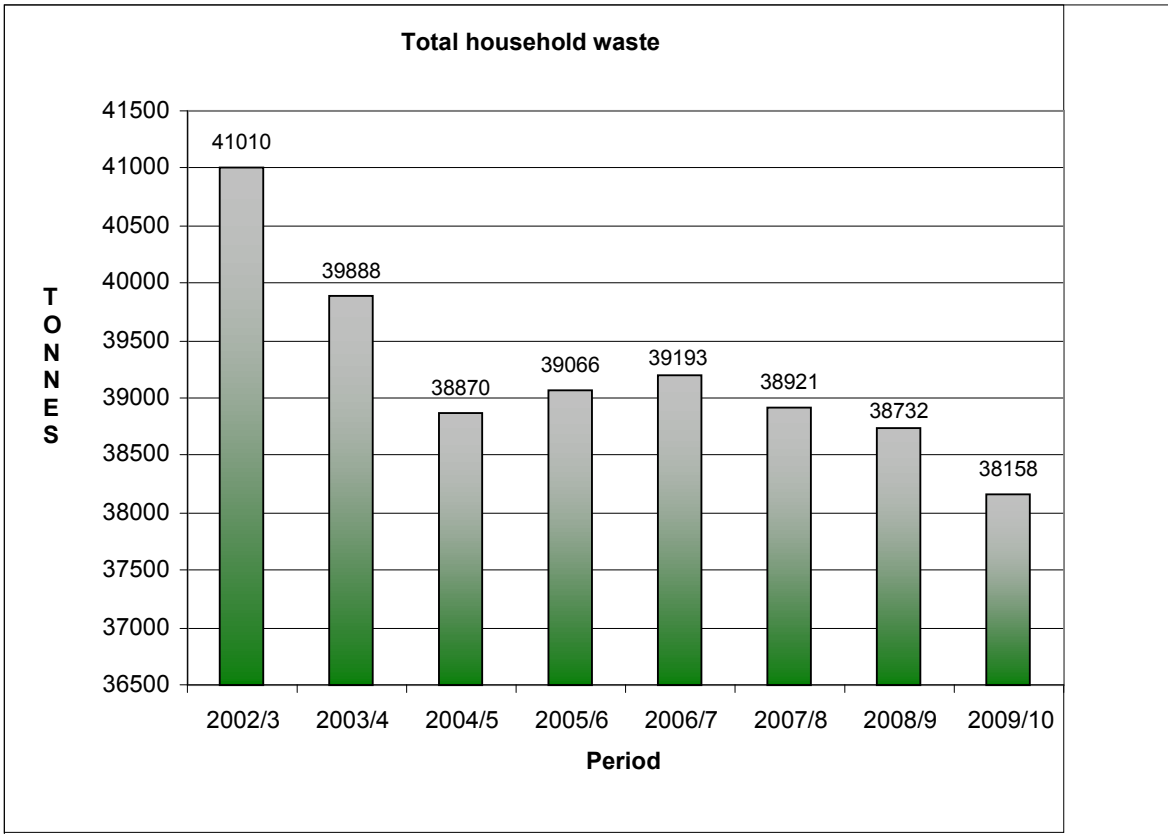
Graph 6



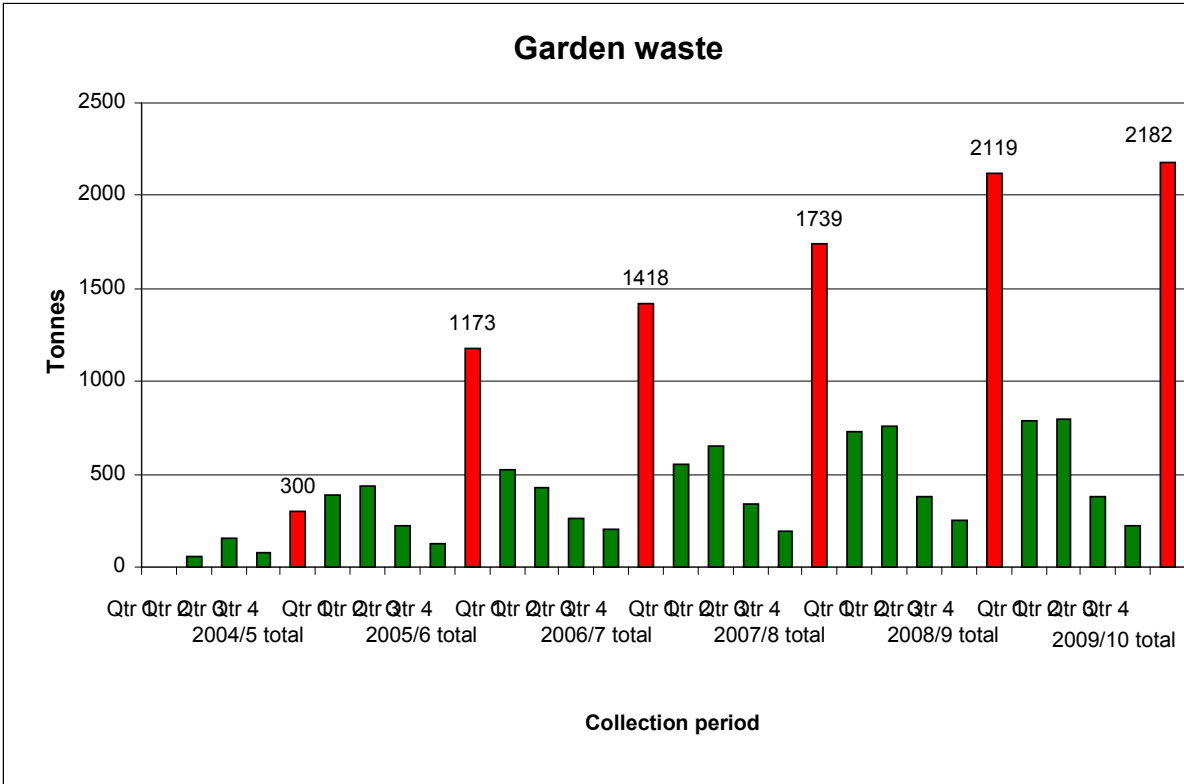
**Table 3: Change from previous year for non-recycled waste**

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
<b>Change on previous year</b>	-6.05%	-6.6%	-11%	-5.36%	-3.24%	-1.57%	-1.3%

Graph 7



Graph 8



**Table 4 Numbers of households renting garden waste bins**

Year	Number renting bins
04/05	2385
05/06	3493
06/07	4760
07/08	6057
08/09	6309
09/10	6459