

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY
29 MAY 2012**

2012 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 from Devon County Council (DCC) as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA).

2.2 For 2011/12 just over £574,000 will be 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 £45,500 will be claimed by the voluntary groups for the material they collected, which adds to the total recycled in Exeter. Sales of materials from the MRF and bring banks raised approximately £965,000; this was despite the continuing economic down-turn which has affected consumer purchasing and reduced the amount of packaging available for recycling.

3. WASTE ARISING AND RECYCLING RATE

Recycling/Composting Rates

3.1 Exeter is maintaining a steady recycling rate. Although the continuing downturn in the economy and the consequent reduction in consumption produced fewer materials to collect and process, the recycling rate is maintained as there is also a corresponding reduction of waste sent to landfill.

Table 1

	05/6	06/7	07/8	08/9	09/10	10/11	11/12
ECC recycling & composting rate %	30.04	33.86	*35.81	*36.2	*36.2	*36.9	36.19% estimate

*From Waste Data Flow

3.2 When compared against similar-size local authorities in our comparator group (Graphs 1 & 2, Appendix I), it appears that the relatively high dry recycling rate reflects the efficiency of the co-mingled collection in wheeled bins and the wide variety of materials collected. However, the low composting percentage is a direct result of the council charging for garden waste collection, rather than offering a free service for all.

Targets

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 Devon County Council has already exceeded this target and achieved 55.22% for 2010/11. Final statistics for 2011/12 are not yet available but it is likely to show an increase and DCC is now aiming for 57% in 2012/13. Exeter's contribution to achieving this is a local aspiration target of 39% by 2014/15 (see 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%	

- 3.5 The estimated 2011/12 recycling rate of 36.19 shows a fall on last year's 36.9% and misses the target of 37%. As outlined above the recession has had a large impact on the amount of packaging available for recycling. Appendix I contains graphs showing the composting % (leaves and garden waste), dry recycling %, and tonnes of garden waste collected. Graph 4 shows that, the amount of dry recyclables collected peaked in 2007/09, with reductions in overall tonnages in the last 4 years, whilst the amount of garden waste collected and composted remains constant.
- 3.6 The system of using National Indicators (NI) to report waste statistics became obsolete on 1st April 2011, although 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 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.
- 3.7 Graph 3 of Appendix 1 compares Exeter's high recycling performance to that of similar cities with Waste Collection Authority status. This benchmarking group is a more useful comparison group than the rural Devon authorities, whose recycling rates tend to be boosted by high tonnages from organic kitchen and garden waste collections.
- 3.8 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.
 - **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. (Graph 7, Appendix I) This could be due to increased use of the intranet 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 it is believed.

Waste arising

- 3.9 A critical issue for 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 1.9% from

2010/11 to 2011/12. This is illustrated in Graph 8, Appendix I, and is in line with the national trend in waste reduction which is showing an average decrease of about 3%.

- 3.10 Waste collected per head of population in Exeter has fallen from 335.6 kg per person in 2006/7 to 301kg by November 2011 (Graph 3 Appendix 1). Exeter is highly successful in this measure and has the 7th lowest figure for waste collected/head in England

Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS)

- 3.11 The Waste and Emissions Trading (WET) Act 2003 set a framework to limit how much biodegradable municipal waste can be land-filled each year with diminishing amounts until 2020 to achieve the Landfill Directive objectives. By 2020 only 35% of the amount of biodegradable waste land-filled in 1995 will be allowed.

LATS was established under the WET Act to facilitate this by allowing WDAs to buy or sell their landfill allowance depending on their situation. The Waste Review carried out by the Government during 2011 has announced the ending of LATS after the 2012/13 scheme year.

Previously LATS has been the key driver for municipal waste management in England and Wales. The escalating land fill tax (£64 in 2012) is considered to be an adequately effective mechanism to control and reduce biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill. The LATS allowances and penalties were the responsibility of Devon County Council as they applied to Devon as a whole.

- 3.12 The UK met its 2010 landfill target and is currently in line to reach the 2013 target. Exeter's Energy from Waste plant, due to be completed in 2014, will divert all Exeter's non-recycled waste away from landfill. This will ensure the 2020 landfill diversion target is achieved at a local level and avoiding any possible fines for land filling waste

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 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

- 4.3 The garden waste scheme is undergoing changes to streamline the kerbside collection. The sale of biodegradable bags is now limited to two outlets – the Civic Centre and Oakwood House. Bags are also available by post with a small charge to cover the postage. All customers are asked to register annually to enable the collection crew to target their rounds more effectively.
- 4.4 The review of the garden waste scheme is now under way to enable new routes to be established. This is predicted to result in the need for less resources and a reduction in miles travelled as wasteful journeys along streets with no garden waste customers, will no longer take place.

Compost bin sales

- 4.5 The sale of cost-price home composting bins continues to slow down as the city approaches saturation point. 300 composters were sold during 2010/11 and 200 in 2011/12 compared to 1000 in 2007/08, when the Waste and Resources Action Programme 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.

Trade recycling service

- 4.6 The trade waste recycling service continues to be successful and is maintaining a steady customer base of approximately 500, (515 in 2010/11). 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

- 4.7 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.

There is a full range of glass banks at over 70 sites throughout the city as glass is not collected co-mingled, and a new site for glass at Commercial Road was opened in 2011. With the exception of book, textile and shoe banks (and small glass banks in difficult-to-access locations), all are serviced by the Council.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) bring banks for small electrical appliances (e.g. hair-dryers, electric toothbrushes) are due to replace many of the plastic/can banks in the coming months.

Schools and students

- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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, although its continuation is currently under review.

- 4.10 The service has been working with the University's Community Liaison Officer in developing better tailored information for students about refuse and recycling collection.

Third Party recycling and material buy in

- 4.11 Charities, community and voluntary groups continue to collect a significant amount of recyclable materials in the City every year. In 2011/12 this was a total 904 tonnes, representing about 7% 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.

Enforcement/Education Officer

- 4.12 The Enforcement/Education Officer continues to address the issue of contaminated recycling reported by the collection crews. The introduction of the 'in-cab' technology in the collection vehicles has made this more accurate and efficient. Problems are initially addressed with a letter explaining the recycling system in Exeter. If the problem continues a visit to the resident follows. By this method contamination levels have been maintained at a relatively low level.

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 ongoing and proposed projects include:
- a door-knocking campaign about recycling in June – residents will be asked to respond to a series of questions about how effective the present systems of communication are. The results of the project will be used to improve the cost-effectiveness of our communication plans and make best use of available resources;
 - 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;
 - a Devon wide waste audit of landfill waste has just been completed and headline results show that in Exeter 35% of the rubbish collected is kitchen organics but only 4% is glass, showing how effective the bring bank system is at targeting glass;
 - 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.

MRF (Materials Reclamation Facility)

- 4.14 The MRF continues to sort and sell on Exeter's kerbside collected recyclates. In 2011/12 this was 7529 tonnes, compared to 7754 tonnes in 2010/11 (Graph 4, Appendix 1). Of this tonnage, 1967 tonnes of first pass material (i.e. material that had already been processed once in the MRF) was sent to other more modern MRFs for further sorting. This enables us to extract extra value from the recyclable material stream that would otherwise go to landfill.

5. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR 2012/13

5.1 The main challenges for 2012/13 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 our education drives on sound information from surveys and collection data;
- increase the range of materials collected at our refreshed bring bank sites, and enhance customer use.

6. RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that Scrutiny Committee Community note the progress that the Council had made to date in implementing the Recycling Plan 2011/16;
- 2) that Scrutiny Committee Community support the Recycling Improvement Plan for 2012/13.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT

S:PA/LP/Cttee/512SCC4 v2
26.4.12

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

2011-2016 Recycling Plan

<http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=10042&detailid=3649>