

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 1 SEPTEMBER 2009

2009 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 the 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 from Devon County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA).
- 2.2 During 2008/9 just over £565,000 were 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:

Table 1

	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
Recycling & composting rate %	17.30	20.74	30.04	33.86	*35.81	*36.2

*From Waste Data Flow

Bench Marking

- 3.2 Graphs 1 & 2 (Appendix II), show Exeter's dry recycling and composting rate in comparison with the other waste collection authorities in its bench-marking group (figures from this group for 08/09 are not yet available).

- 3.3 The high dry recycling rate for Exeter reflects the effectiveness of the co-mingled collection in wheeled bins and the wide variety of materials collected. In contrast, the composting rate for Exeter is low due to an emphasis being placed on home composting, the operation of a fee-paying green waste collection, and the fact that the Council does not provide an organic waste collection as some other councils do.
- 3.4 The Devon County Council area has already reached its joint 2010 target for 50% recycling throughout the county. We have now set a provisional target of 60% by 2014/15 for the county area. Exeter's contribution to achieving this would be a local target of 40% by 2014/15. The targets within the Exeter Recycling Plan are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Recycling Plan Targets

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

- 3.5 The 2009/10 target of 37% will be very challenging, and the 2010/11 target of 40% is unlikely to be achievable under the present collection arrangements. Graphs 3, 4 & 5 (Appendix II) shows the current trends for recycling collected at the kerbside and the overall dry recycling and composting percentages. The increase to 36.2% (Table 1, Appendix II) in the combined recycling and composting rate (NI 192) was achieved from an increase in garden waste collected through new custom rather than increased recycling by existing service users. It is anticipated that this same rate of growth in customer base can not be sustained in 2009/10 and beyond.
- 3.6 The likely causes for the reduction in kerbside dry recycling tonnages last year from 2007/08 include:
- **Light weight of packaging** - 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. It is probable that the total number of items processed by the MRF has remained constant but that the tonnages have reduced.
 - **Paper** represents about 60% of the total tonnage sent for recycling. There has been a strong downward trend in paper being recycled during the last two years; this is due to the increased use of the web for daily news, and the drop in newspaper/magazine sales in the economic downturn (see Graph 6, Appendix II).
 - **Waste Minimisation** – effectiveness of awareness campaigns to reduce all types of waste means that people are more thoughtful about their purchasing, and actively seek less packaging.

Reaching the recycling plan target

- 3.7 The 2009/10 Recycling Plan target of 37% could be reached if sufficient materials can be diverted from the grey waste into the recycling stream. To achieve this, 400 tonnes of new recycling material, equating to approximately 1% on the recycling percentage would need to be diverted from the residual waste to the recycling stream. This is equivalent to only an extra 150 grams of recycling per household per week. The addition of a new temporary member of staff in the Education and

Enforcement Team will help facilitate this by focussing on encouraging those households who are less engaged with recycling to increase the amount they put out.

Waste Arising

- 3.8 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. The City Council has been particularly successful in reducing the total amount of waste collected from 41,010 tonnes in 2002/03 to 38,732 tonnes in 2008/09 (Graph 7, Appendix II). The annual percentage change in household waste is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Year	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
% change on previous year	-2.74%	-2.55%	+0.5%	+0.33%	-0.69%	-0.48%

- 3.9 Waste collected per head of population in Exeter has fallen from 335.6 kg per person in 2006/7 to 326.6 in 2007/8. In comparison to its benchmarking group of other waste collection authorities, Exeter is performing well (Graph 8, Appendix II). The predicted kg/head for 2008/9 is 316kg, reflecting the rise in population, and the reduction in waste generated.

Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme

- 3.10 The key driver for municipal waste management in Devon for the next few years will be the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS). 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.
- 3.11 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 and COMMUNICATION UPDATES

Kerbside 'Recycle for Exeter'

- 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 Council 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 recyclates to the communal recycling bins.
- 4.2 The majority of households have now got up-to-date information stickers on their recycling containers; those remaining households without the new information are being up-dated on an ad hoc basis.

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. The annual price for the hire of a brown bin is £26 for 2009/10, and customers can join at any time. A total of 2118 tonnes of garden waste was collected, (with 488 tonnes of street sweeping leaves) resulted in the 2008/9 composting rate of 6.74%.
- 4.4 The leaves and 300 tonnes green waste from parks and open spaces continue to be composted at the Water Lane facility. The sale of cost price home composting bins slowed during 2008/9 to about 580 units from 1000 in 07/08 when WRAP was promoting the sale through an effective city wide promotion, which has now ended due to the withdrawal of funding for this project. 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. Our actual composting level is therefore much higher than the official figures shown.

Bring Banks

- 4.5 The Council continues to operate an extensive network of 73 bring banks around the City which are very well used by the community. One new site has been developed this year and there is a possibility of two more in 2010/11. 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.

Table 4

	Paper	Glass
	Tonnes	Tonnes
2005/6	541	1854
2006/7	469	2034
2007/8	488	2184
2008/9	423	2209

This table shows how the tonnage of paper has reduced (inline with national trends) but glass has continued to increase.

- 4.7 Due to the substantial amounts of glass being collected via the Council's bring banks, it would not be economically viable to introduce a separate door-step collection service for recycled glass for every household.

Schools Recycling Scheme

- 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, supported by education visits and targeted communications and use of the MRF training room. The 'Green Team' initiative set up in partnership with the Express and Echo and Gregorys Haulage Company has been highly successful. Thirteen primary schools are now

signed up to the programme which encourages schools to 'go greener' with financial rewards as they achieve their goals.

University of Exeter

- 4.9 The University now 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 has been a special emphasis on the end of term problems generated by students leaving their accommodation in the city.

Third Party Recycling and Material Buy-in

- 4.10 Charities, community and voluntary groups continue to collect a significant amount of recyclable materials in the City every year. In 2008/9 this was a total 1198 tonnes, representing 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.
- 4.11 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 recyclate and sold for reprocessing.

Enforcement/Education Officers

- 4.12 The Education and Enforcement section of the Recycling Team currently has two permanent Enforcement/Education Officers who specialise 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. A new externally funded post has been created until March 2010 primarily for waste minimisation issues and with a view to promoting the move of recycling materials from 'grey' waste into the recycling bins and to reduce the incidence of bins on pavements/fly-tipping in back alleys. This important role helps ensure that the quantity and quality of recycled waste is maintained.

Fixed Penalty Notices

- 4.13 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 offence of not complying with the Council's requirement to separate household waste as directed by notice, (e.g. contaminating recycling containers with non-recyclable waste). The FPN allows the offender to pay a penalty in lieu of prosecution for the offence. If the offender does not pay, the council has the option to prosecute for the original offence.
- 4.14 The difficulties of obtaining a prosecution under this legislation were highlighted when the Council lost its case in *ECC v Challice* 2006. In the light of this the use of FPNs was not exercised in 2007/8 or 2008/9. However, this is under review and FPNs are likely to be used more often once the new enforcement officer is in post.

The Communications Plan and Educational Road-Shows

- 4.15 A short-term communication plan, up to March 2010, is being drawn up to ensure that future events include the '150 grams per household per week' message in a co-

ordinated attempt to increase the tonnage of recycling by 400 tonnes and reach the 09/10 target. A focus on increasing the amount of glass recycled will be 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. Increasing the quantity of glass will be most effective due to its weight in comparison with other recycled materials.

- 4.16 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. We will also continue the 'Leave it Loose' campaign to promote the benefits of putting recyclates loose into the bins, rather than in bags which causes difficulties by masking contamination.
- 4.17 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 residents and promote recycling in Exeter.

MRF (Materials Reclamation Facility)

- 4.18 The MRF continues to sort Exeter's kerbside collected recyclates; in 2008/9 this was 8394 tonnes. Of this tonnage, 2362 tonnes were sent to Veolia and Transcycle for further sorting after initial processing at Exeter. The global downturn in the commodity prices had a limited affect on the MRF due to a long term contract for paper which balanced the drop in price for other materials. We are very careful to track our materials to ensure that they are processed appropriately.

Waste Storage Provision in New Developments

- 4.19 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. Many 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.

Domestic collection review of alternate weekly collections

- 4.20 A key finding of the Waste Analysis 2007/8 was that 22% extra residual waste is generated by properties served by a weekly refuse collection compared to those on a bi-weekly cycle. Changing the collection frequency of suitable properties to bi-weekly will increase the volume of recyclates and recycling rate and reduce the volume of residual waste collected; this proposal is currently subject to public consultation.

5. RECYCLING TRADE WASTE SERVICE

- 5.1 This service was introduced in October 2007, initially collecting paper and card, and expanding the range of materials collected to include plastic and metal cans in July 2008. A total of 359 tonnes of trade waste was recycled in 2008/9.
- 5.2 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 material is now collected and sent for reprocessing via the Council's MRF.

6. MAIN CHALLENGES FOR 2009/10

6.1 The main challenges for 2009/10 are to:

- Increase recycling by 400 tonnes to reach the target of 37%
- Review the 2009/10 target as reaching it may not be possible under the present collection systems
- Further promote the issue of proper disposal of clinical waste and its effect on the operation of the MRF
- 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.

6.2 The priorities for recycling in the short-term are contained in Appendix I: Proposed Improvement Plan for Recycling Rates 2009/10.

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 improvement plan

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

S:LP/Committee/909SCC5 v2
19.8.09

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

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

2006-11 Recycling Plan