

NE Sustainable Waste Conference, Gisborough Hall, 13 October 2009

Issues and Questions Raised

Question to Andrew Smith

Q. Is local energy and waste for energy part of the NE Sustainable Resources Board remit?

Answer - Yes, there is an obvious connection with EfW; need to extract as much as possible first then residual waste be used as fuel or energy.

Questions to Christine Batty

Q1. What are the top areas for making savings for LAs?

Answer - Partnerships and the more integrated they are the greater the efficiencies. Our work has identified this as a key factor, for example, the Somerset partnership, which is across 5 councils, has made major efficiencies.

Q2 (via Q card) Can you update on the progress, timeframe and nature of services to be offered for LA home compost bin provision via WIN following the demise of the WRAP national scheme?

Answer (email response) - Regarding the composter framework we are setting up: The tenders have now been issued following consultation with local authorities regarding the detail of the specification. The framework contract is still on course to be ready for January 1st 2010. We are planning to evaluate the tenders with the help of councils when the tenders have been returned - Julian is going to contact councils that have previously expressed an interest in having an input in this part of the process by the end of November.

All updates will go out through WIN at

http://www.win.org.uk/userfiles/File/Home_composting_framework_update_September09.doc

Questions to Mark Mohun

Q1. In relation to vehicle route optimisation, when measuring stop/start vehicle movement, what allowances are there for bulk waste?

Answer - A service time will be applied to specific addresses/post code areas.

Q2. How long did it take to implement the system and Newcastle CC?

Answer - For someone with GLS skills, it should take up to a week. Once you have your data right, it takes less than an hour to make any subsequent changes.

Q3. What funding was available to inform residents about the change to collection dates, following the introduction of the new system?

Answer - The information dissemination was controlled and managed by the central communications team. 120,000 leaflets were distributed to households and this was complemented by local press advertising and details on the council's website.

Q4. What would happen if a council already has a well established route?

Answer - We would recommend optimising the established service but any changes in collection dates and times that arise would need to be communicated to residents in order to make the system fully effective.

Q5. Will the efficiencies generated ultimately lead to job losses?

Answer - No, not necessarily. At Newcastle, for example, the additional availability of staff time enabled the garden waste service to be expanded through redeployed labour.

Questions to Alistair Wilson

Q1. 70% of teachers said they need capital support by their schools, for recycling projects – can you comment?

Answer - Money provided (for environmental projects) is determined by individual authorities. When the project closes, at Newcastle, the impact from the results will be evaluated and made available. Some LAs are offering kerbside collections at schools by way of contributing to recycling projects.

Q2. How will information be conveyed to Governors to ensure that they have full awareness of what is going on?

Answer - The Sustainable Schools National Framework is looking at this – making information available to all governing bodies nationally. They offer advice and guidance to school governors and teachers and this includes how to incorporate sustainability into schools.

Peter Schofield added: The REIP Children's Services Programme has links into schools which LAs may find of value. LAs can contact REIP for details.

Q3. What is the role of the 3rd sector in these programmes? For example, could the Groundwork Trust be used where no specific officer was available to lead a school focused project?

Answer - External partners, including REIP, play a huge role and are essential for this type of project. Other coordinators will be working in schools undertaking other specific programme areas so it may well be a case of pulling all strands together.

Q4. Does Keep Britain Tidy (formerly ENCAMS) have a role in supporting your campaigning – and should they? Do campaigns like yours need a national focus?

Answer – Yes and we support the working partnerships.

Q5. What outputs are there from the programme?

Answer - External assessors are measuring these. In addition, monitoring processes for waste & litter have outcomes that are inclusive of the impact of the schools campaign. Schools themselves have various budgets - PTAs, outside funding, LAs which contribute to raising awareness of activities which, in turn, feed into the programme outputs.

Question to Peter Schofield

Q. Is there any work being undertaken by REIP to look at setting up regional training programmes for LA staff e.g. driver CPC requirements?

Answer – There was an amount set aside that is as yet unallocated. If there is a requirement by LAs and it can be of benefit to the region, allocation for this purpose would indeed be considered.

Questions to John Barton (via Q cards - answers sent by email)

Q1. Plastic Wheelie Bins are light, cheap and serve a purpose but would it be possible to produce a fire retardant bin? As a brigade, the problem we face are toxic fumes that come off the burning plastic.

Answer - I don't have any direct experience of alternative materials for Wheelie Bins. I guess the only truly fire retardant material would be a metal based bin and I am not aware of any plans to look at these. How significant is the problem? Even if the bin is made from a fire retardant material I guess the contents of the bin would also pose similar hazards.

Q2. 88% GHG is CO2 – is that by volume or by greenhouse impact? “Not Waste – valuable resource” our challenge is to re-educate the business community as to what valuable means – how do we start?

Answer - The percentage is by volume I believe. The bigger question of course is how do we start to change perceptions about waste. Probably in several ways: -

- promoting some of the success stories with these types of projects - nothing quite like a real life case study to demonstrate the benefits of these types of projects
- we need to start to change our language a little - the word "waste" has negative connotations - it implies something that has to be got rid of (at a cost), a nuisance etc. The word "resource" however has very positive connotations - something of value
- much good work has been done by organisations like NISP to identify where one company's waste product can easily become another company's raw material - we need much more publicity around this. We need similar discussions around the residual waste and what value can be derived from it.

The whole process will take some time - we are after all trying to change behaviour and perception - never easy and never quick

Q3. How do we go about convincing the everyday person in our community that this is the way forward?

Answer - Your question touches on what I suspect is the biggest single Climate Change challenge - that is changing behaviour and perception. I think the "recycling" message is getting much more acceptance now with the general public. It is now fairly common practice to do some form of recycling in the home. Of course it doesn't help when there are conflicting press stories about what happens to those recycled materials (ships of plastic to China etc) and these need to be countered with positive stories about real successes here in the North East. The recent press reports from Hilary Benn talking of a path to Zero Waste and the prospect of 6 bins per household and penalties for incorrect use also do not help. What is needed here is a real public information message backed up by incentives for good performance, not penalties. So, I guess to directly answer your question we need: -

- case studies of success stories
- more informed exposure of the issues and arguments to the general public
- something of a medium term vision about where we are going (and why) with this waste agenda

Food Waste workshop – questions to Stephen Didsbury

Q1. Was green waste collected before the scheme began?

Answer - Not unless it was in a green bag. It was decided that both green waste & food waste collections would be combined. Brown kitchen caddies were provided to residents and they were able to buy bags or use newspaper as lining. This was then emptied into green bins along with garden waste.

Q2. Was there any funding support received for the bins?

Answer - No – the scheme was self financing. In the early '90s, once the provision of bins was set in the plans and shown as a cheaper option than the cost of disposal, the budget spend was approved.

Q3. How did residents take to the scheme?

Answer – There were 2,400 homes in the pilot and demand was generated elsewhere in homes not taking part. We received some letters of complaint initially but this was relatively small and we only received 10 complaints when we moved to AWCs. Importantly, confidence that the scheme would work was, by then, well instilled and most people were familiar with collection times. Some streets where there are terraced housing with no storage space for additional bins, were provide with 50L on-street bins which have worked well.

Commercial businesses, schools and residential collections are all undertaken on the same routes as this has shown to be more cost effective running one single contract.

Q4. How well have the collection vehicles performed?

Answer - Very well overall - just some hydraulic issues, expected from wear and tear, and some issues with vehicles collecting fluids but this has been resolved.

Q5. Is there an in-house trade collection service at Bexley?

Answer - Yes – 20% is commercial waste. There are differential prices around 5-10% cheaper than normal commercial waste disposal charges. It will become cheaper to dispose of waste via this system over time.

Q6. Are larger sizes of bin liners available to residents, aside from the caddy bags they can purchase from libraries?

Answer - Composters have been successfully supplied to residents for vegetable peelings etc. Plus, bigger bin liners for other food waste are available at 50p per bag. These are sold at cost.

Q7. How is the waste processed?

Answer - Waste is bulked out at the transfer station and goes through a fine shredding process. Larger woody rejects are then added to help aeration and heating. It then goes outside to mature for 4-5 weeks and finally, it is processed to a mulch.

Q8. Is there a revenue stream to be gained from this?

Answer - Not for the council. However, it is sold on and mixed to meet specific customer requirements.

Q9. What are the collection costs?

Answer - The net costs are shown on my final slide (available on REIP website). Ultimately, it is cheaper to process green waste and waste food than it is to collect it as a part of mainstream waste.

Q10. Are any other LAs running similar schemes?

Answer - We are ahead of our neighbours by some 4 years. Bromley has started separate collecting along with the City of London. They use Bexley's transfer station and pay us a fee for this. If enough LAs initiate such schemes, then a more universal service for Lewisham, Greenwich and others, could be established. The scheme investment is simple, reliable and it works – very much in a similar way to schemes operated in Germany and Italy.

Key points made during general discussion:

Behaviour change is down to marketing.

If you want to achieve high recycling rates, you must collect kitchen and garden waste, and paper.

There are many small, specialist companies who undertake composting efficiently and cheaply – they then market the compost to generate income and this is where they have an advantage.

Bexley has looked at gas (as a bi-product) for vehicles and for supplying heat to a prison – but there is still a processing issue due to cost.

People who operate food factories could divert waste to a centralised facility. Supermarkets could perhaps contribute (as the French do)– although Asda, for example, has its own digester for waste food.

LAs could set up a digester as part of ESSO planning for energy production.

LAs themselves have a big use for compost for parks, to encourage home growers – so there are other non-commercial routes for compost.

Recycling Village workshop – summary of key points

- Staffing and contract management
- Segregation of waste and good signage on site
- Good traffic flow / access controls / segregation of vehicles
- Well signed public and service vehicle access
- Perception and culture

To Beacon and beyond workshop – question to Simon Dale

Q1. Would you go for AWC now in current climate (e.g. e-coli etc)?

Answer – Yes – no other way to reach recycling targets.

General comments in discussion

In-house contracting is important in improving and controlling services.

Staff are required to attend training on 'rest days' every 6 months or so to ensure that key messages are reinforced - this includes corporate training on wider council messages.

In Redcar & Cleveland, since Beacon status was achieved for Waste & Recycling, NI targets have improved however customer satisfaction has fallen.

Consultation is a challenge – go to pubs, bus stops, shops – you can't do enough consultation.

Lots of waste services are outsourced – you need to be in control to run a service well.

Use 'segregated weekly collections' instead of 'alternate weekly collections' – the press like it better!

North Tyneside Council have achieved 94% participation rate since introducing co-mingled bins for paper, cans, plastic bottles, card + in-bin caddy for glass.

Role of ICT Workshop - Neil Golightly

General comments in discussion

Newcastle saw a 12% increase in public satisfaction in refuse collection/recycling

There is an increase in value for money if customer services/CRM team can deal with queries at the 'front end'.

Don't underestimate the value of staff training to build a good relationship with the front line Workers. Ensure money is allocated to it. Get the senior managers/Union reps involved, and do a staff needs assessment before you bring in new technology.

Q: How did the changes go down with the waste collection operatives?

Not well initially, there was a hostile reaction. [See comments above about importance of staff training]

Q: Do the front line staff using the new hand held devices respond to customer/CRM queries direct?

Yes – the PDAs are linked to the customer call centre

Q: Which devices are used?

IPAC and MC35