

**RESPONSE FROM CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL (CCBC) ON
THE CONSULTATION ON THE ENQUIRY INTO RECYCLING IN WALES**

RECYCLING IN WALES/RECYCLING IN CAERPHILLY

**Explore Reasons for and Impacts of Variations in Local Authority
Household Waste Recycling Practice in Wales**

Wales has a diverse mix of Local Authorities in terms of their population, socio-economic conditions and land status. Caerphilly County Borough is a “Valleys” Authority characterised by densely populated settlements interspersed with large areas of countryside. The Authority has developed a service that meets the needs of all stakeholders and is crucially achieving the key objective of continuous increases in the amount of materials diverted from landfill.

**To what Extent Local Authorities’ Recycling Practice Aligns with the
Welsh Government’s Municipal Waste Sector Plan Collections Blueprint,
and to Explore Barriers and Enablers to Adherence**

CCBC has tried a range of systems from source segregation through to the various comingled options. CCBC is now at the stage where it operates a system that suits the needs of its locality. The present service enables the Authority to meet the statutory recycling targets and at the same time satisfies the majority of residents and other stakeholders.

**Assess the Availability of Information and Guidance to Householders
about why and how they should be Recycling, and to Explore Potential
Barriers and Enablers to Improving Recycling Rates**

Caerphilly has developed a robust and comprehensive communications campaign to ensure that all residents are provided with the information and guidance they need to participate in the range of collection services.

Explore Local Authority Reactions to the Recently Published Waste Regulations Route Map and the Potential Impacts and Implications of this on Recycling Practice Across Wales

Caerphilly has always configured its frontline collection services to tie in with the requirements of its end markets. Caerphilly continues to be alert to the dynamics of the waste industry and will endeavour to comply with the ever more stringent requirements where practical.

Gain Greater Understanding of the Relationship Between Recycling Collection Practice and Recycling Rates

CCBC acknowledges that each Welsh Local Authority has different operating conditions to suit their local demography and their proximity to local disposal routes – there is no ‘one size fits all.’ People of Caerphilly can recycle wherever they work, rest and play and the Authority has proved that its current collection methods are the most suitable for its stakeholders as evidenced by continuous increases in recycling, exceeding Welsh Government recycling targets, and continuous improvement in customer satisfaction and participation rates.

1.) Setting the Scene

In 1998 Caerphilly County Borough Council introduced recycling collection services for the public. This regime was implemented in selected pilot areas across the County Borough initially delivering to 14,000 properties. The system consisted of the use of green 55 litre boxes for the placement of separated household materials.

2.) Developing a recycling service

The collection vehicles used were compartmentalised allowing an army of operatives to separate out the range of household recyclables. This collection system operated on a fortnightly basis. This was a revolutionary new service and like many other Local Authorities Caerphilly experienced many challenges.

This new collection system proved to be very labour intensive, time consuming, compounded by safety and capacity issues and generally proved to be quite an inefficient collection system compared to established services like refuse collection. In addition, the service suffered from low levels of public participation, limited coverage across the County Borough and inadequate collection frequencies.

Due to all these problems the Authority received a constant stream of complaints regarding:

- The frequency of collections (fortnightly was not sufficient)
- Insufficient storage (the boxes were too small)
- Capacity issues
- Materials being contaminated

- Containment issues (recyclables were subject to the vagaries of the weather, scavenging animals and littering)
- Burden on the public to separate at source
- Traffic congestion as a result of longer loading times on the highway

At the same time the Authority introduced a garden waste collection service on a fortnightly basis. This proved a very popular addition to the suite of frontline public services. However, this was only a seasonal service (operating between April and September) and there was a clamour from residents to increase the frequency of collections.

3.) Listening to local voices and meeting the needs and aspirations of its customers

As part of the Authority's continuous improvement process, Caerphilly has listened to the views and concerns of residents, elected members and partners and to this end trialled new ways of working that have been fine-tuned and currently operate today. These include:

- Weekly dry recycling (comingled)
- Weekly Food and Garden collection all year round
- Household Waste Recycling Centres (open all year round including weekends)
- Recycling on The Go! (24-hour facilities in a range of public places).

In 2007 the Authority trialled a weekly kerbside collection with wheeled bins. This pilot resulted in an immediate and dramatic increase in the public participation rate

and the tonnage of recyclable materials collected. Significantly, the council also received a stream of positive feedback from residents participating in the new scheme/trial and there followed many requests for this system to be rolled out across the County Borough. This happened in 2009.

4.) Continuous improvement

Public Participation

Following the major change to the collection regime the recycling performance has continuously improved with more people being encouraged to do their bit. For example, participation rates have increased significantly and have continued to improve (see table below).

| Year | Participation Rate |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 2007/08 | 49% |
| 2008/09 | 57% |
| 2009/10 | 66% |
| 2010/11 | 70% |
| 2011/12 | 75% |
| 2012/13 | 78% |

Recycling Tonnage

In line with the increase in public participation, the amount of recyclable material diverted from landfill has also increased proportionally.

| Year | Tonnage (kerbside dry recycling) |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 2005/06 | 4,768 |
| 2006/07 | 6,236 |
| 2007/08 | 8,229 |
| 2008/09 | 9,621 |
| 2009/10 (weekly co-mingled wheel bin service introduced) | 16,286 |
| 2010/11 | 17,635 |
| 2011/12 | 20,106 |
| 2012/13 | 22,283 |

Recycling Percentages

The percentage of waste recycled has also increased year on year. In 2012/13 the Authority was just 1% shy of achieving the Welsh Government's 2015/16 statutory recycling target of 58% by i.e. achievement some 3 years early.

| Year | Recycling Percentage (%) | Welsh Government Target |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2007/08 | 32% | 25% |
| 2008/09 | 32% | |
| 2009/10 | 44% | 40% |
| 2010/11 | 51% | |

| | | |
|---------|-----|-----|
| 2011/12 | 55% | |
| 2012/13 | 57% | 52% |

Satisfaction Rates

The recycling collection systems are geared towards busy, modern-day lifestyles and this is reinforced by public satisfaction levels which increased following the service change and remain constantly high and increasing. Since 2007 public satisfaction with recycling services has increased progressively. This is evidenced by the feedback received from biennial public satisfaction surveys (see table below).

| Year | Public Satisfaction |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 2007 | 84% |
| 2009 | 88% |
| 2011 | 94% |
| 2013 | 95% |

In addition, the feedback from the public during door knocking sessions and road show events is generally very positive and constructive reinforcing the above satisfaction data.

5.) Rewarding Professionalism & Excellence

The Waste Management team at Caerphilly are enthusiastic, citizen focussed professionals experienced in all aspects of the sector. These attributes have helped

them develop an exemplar service that stands up to scrutiny and compares favourably to any other local authorities across the Country. This is a bold statement but is evidenced by the recognition they have received recently from a number of respected organisations that have bestowed a number of awards upon the Authority for their high performance levels, communication work and innovative developments in resource efficiency and frontline public recycling.

Caerphilly CBC has attained the following awards:

- Apse Service Awards – Waste Management and Recycling Service Team of the Year 2012 & 2013
- Larac Awards – Best Improved Recycling Rates (Target Success) 2012
- Chartered Institution of Waste Management – Local Authority Waste Hierarchy champions 2013
- Plant and Waste Recycling Show (PAWRS) – Food Waste Award 2012 and Local Authority of the Year 2013
- Zero Waste Awards – Waste hierarchy and minimisation campaigns 2012, 2013 and 2014
- CA Site of the Year Award 2012 (Lets Recycle.com)

6.) Sharing with Others

Whilst awards are important particularly the feel good factor they can generate to residents and staff alike, it is worth noting that our peers including neighbouring Authorities and third sector bodies communicate with staff regularly to see how Caerphilly functions and the waste team are always willing to share

experiences and practices to help create a better environment for us all. This is reinforced by a number of events that have been arranged to promote good practice, for example bodies including WRAP, CIWM, WLGA and LARAC have hosted seminars here.

7.) Closing the Loop

In line with Welsh Government's ambitions Caerphilly CBC has sustainable development as a guiding principle to all that it does. To this end, its procurement process and general day-to-day working systems do as much as practicable to ensure that the Authority avoids waste and reuses materials etc as per the waste hierarchy as well as buying products with a high recycled content. For example, the Highways department use kerbs made of recycled plastic and have used recycled glass in a number of construction schemes. In addition, the Parks department use compost created from our own organic waste in their parks and open spaces.

8.) Constant changes of waste composition

The packaging industry is constantly looking at ways of refining the composition and structure of containers for environmental and financial gain. It is interesting to note that over the last 15 years container packaging has evolved considerably and there is now a propensity of plastic containers in place of glass bottles and jars in the waste composition. Plastic containers are likely to continue to be more popular with retailers and freight companies and with this in mind, it seems likely that the proportion of the heavier packaging materials (such as glass and

metal) in the waste stream will continue to diminish. Therefore, Caerphilly recognises that it needs to continue to monitor its waste/recycling stream to ensure that appropriate reprocessing points remain available.

9.) Communications

Integral to the operational elements of the service is the communication of user information and awareness messages. The Authority has relentlessly shaped and fined-tuned the information to customers to ensure that everyone is singing from the same song sheet and not compromising the progress achieved to date (see attached Appendix 4 and 5 public information leaflets). The Authority realises the importance of continuing to engage and retain the support and commitment of its service users.

To this end the communications team regularly issue bulletins in the local press, update the corporate website and social media, report on performance and topical issues affecting waste and resource management. Complimenting this media work, the Waste team run a regular programme of road show events and door knocking exercises to reinforce the cleaner greener corporate and national campaign messages.

10.) Financial Implications

Caerphilly has worked towards a kerbside recycling regime that is proven, robust, safe and efficient. This has involved major investment in vehicles, communication and training. The positive outcome of this is that Caerphilly is ranked as the 9th

lowest cost Authority in the country. More importantly, Caerphilly has been ranked 1st in Wales for the capture rates per household for kerbside recycling (WLGA Waste Finance Report 2012-2013).

Therefore, any future changes to recycling schemes will impact significantly on the Authority's precious finances at a time when budgets are extremely limited. New systems will require major investment in new vehicle and reprocessing technologies. This will be difficult and indeed could be impractical to implement.

It is acknowledged that the end points for recycle are subject to change and the market price for materials is constantly fluctuating. Moreover we are under no illusion that the waste sector is continuing to research, invest, develop and refine technologies to mechanically separate materials and make system improvements that will inevitably make the industry more sustainable and economically practical and make the sorting process less onerous and less complex for all.

11.) Conclusion

Caerphilly Council is an area in the heart of Industrial South Wales. It is heavily urbanised and has a significant amount of deprivation in its communities. The introduction of recycling was challenging, but gradually the Authority has developed its service and configured it to meet the needs of its residents, workforce and end market users.

Appendix 2

This was no mean feat and allowed the Authority to reap the rewards of public engagement in recycling. Presently, the service is user friendly and delivers to all its residents in rural and urban areas and now lends itself to being sustainable in terms of finance and frontline operations. This comprehensive suite of services is more popular than ever before and crucially it is sustainable in terms of finance and frontline delivery. In short, the people of Caerphilly “can recycle wherever they work, rest and play,” as set out in the ‘Towards Zero Waste’ mission.

The national table below clearly demonstrates the progress made in public recycling services at Caerphilly. Indeed it is significant to note that Caerphilly continues to be the top performing Authority in the “Valleys” region and moreover compares very well to other Welsh local authorities. Caerphilly has continued to achieve the progressive Welsh Government statutory targets whilst maintaining compliance with relevant environmental and health and safety

legislation.

Municipal waste reuse/recycling/composting rates by local authority (a)

| | Per cent | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | |
| | | | | | Old definition (b) | New definition (c) |
| Isle of Anglesey | 45.9 | 51.2 | 55.8 | 57.1 | 55.2 | 55.2 |
| Gwynedd | 36.7 | 43.0 | 45.9 | 48.1 | 51.2 | 51.2 |
| Conwy | 38.7 | 37.3 | 40.2 | 48.1 | 56.5 | 56.4 |
| Denbighshire | 33.7 | 52.5 | 56.8 | 55.7 | 57.4 | 58.0 |
| Flintshire | 42.4 | 43.2 | 47.1 | 48.3 | 50.6 | 54.9 |
| Wrexham | 37.4 | 41.0 | 48.8 | 53.3 | 53.0 | 52.8 |
| Powys | 41.3 | 39.7 | 37.7 | 42.6 | 51.2 | 50.9 |
| Ceredigion | 48.7 | 48.5 | 51.4 | 58.4 | 56.0 | 53.6 |
| Pembrokeshire | 38.9 | 44.3 | 48.9 | 50.0 | 52.9 | 53.1 |
| Cardiff | 33.8 | 40.1 | 43.4 | 49.3 | 54.3 | 53.8 |
| Swansea | 32.1 | 34.9 | 40.5 | 45.2 | 48.4 | 47.9 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 34.9 | 37.1 | 44.0 | 43.9 | 48.3 | 48.3 |
| Bridgend | 38.4 | 33.5 | 48.0 | 56.3 | 57.1 | 57.1 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 40.4 | 41.2 | 43.8 | 52.4 | 54.5 | 54.5 |
| Cardiff | 34.5 | 38.3 | 41.6 | 51.2 | 49.1 | 52.2 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 37.2 | 36.9 | 44.7 | 47.3 | 45.7 | 46.2 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 31.6 | 35.7 | 36.4 | 43.2 | 49.2 | 49.1 |
| Caerphilly | 36.5 | 47.3 | 53.7 | 59.1 | 56.2 | 57.1 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 25.0 | 29.2 | 35.5 | 42.3 | 53.0 | 51.2 |
| Torfaen | 49.0 | 47.5 | 46.7 | 47.5 | 47.1 | 47.1 |
| Monmouthshire | 38.5 | 40.9 | 48.6 | 55.3 | 55.7 | 55.5 |
| Newport | 38.2 | 40.7 | 45.7 | 48.2 | 49.2 | 49.2 |
| Wales | 37.5 | 40.5 | 45.3 | 50.0 | 51.7 | 52.3 |

Source: WasteDataFlow

Appendix 2

The Council has worked tirelessly to establish a sustainable and practical solution to the waste mountain. Reconfiguring services at this juncture is likely to be a retrograde step and there is major concern amongst officers and elected representatives that introducing a new regime will do irreparable damage to the recycling cause in terms of performance against targets. Moreover, it would be perceived by many in the borough as a blatant waste of money and resources to change a service that is operating extremely well and proving popular with all stakeholders. There is also significant concern among the controlling Labour administration that forced service changes against the wishes of citizens may have political implications with citizen views which will be expressed via the ballot box in the forthcoming elections.

The council acknowledge that there is room for improvement (particularly concentrating on targeting the minority of persistent non participants). However the Authority is concerned, particularly given the genuine positive feedback from residents that any change in dynamics will have a detrimental effect on the service and in turn the reputation of the Local Authority and Welsh Government as resource focussed and efficient organisations. Where central prescription prevails then the Welsh Government should provide assurance to Local Authorities that if their recycling performance reduces and they fail to achieve the statutory targets then there will be no fines levied.

In particular, central prescription over collection methods, disregards the wider duties set out in regulation 2 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 which include: strategic effectiveness; service quality; service availability;

fairness; efficiency; and innovation; whilst focusing on sustainability alone. Furthermore, it ought not to be automatically assumed that the separate collection of waste promotes or improves the environmental well-being of Wales (section 60 of the Government of Wales Act 2006). On the contrary, the restrictive and prescriptive enforcement of separate collection by Welsh Government may be acting contrary to this power and/or the intentions of section 60.

It is Caerphilly's understanding that for the purposes of deciding how to: fulfil their duties as an improvement authority; when making arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions (section 2(1)); and, when setting its improvement objectives (section 3(1)), they must consult representatives who live, pay rates, use or are likely to use services and have an interest in the Authority's area. The local agenda and social impact consideration should not be overridden by sustainability considerations. It is therefore crucial that the views of the residents of the county borough on service delivery are taken into account and that central prescription must never take priority over the ability to make local service choices.

It is also worth noting that Caerphilly has recently come out top of the Welsh Government's *National Survey of Wales* which further demonstrates the satisfaction with the citizen focussed services delivered by the Authority. Consequently, given all of the issues outlined above, the Authority is firmly of the opinion that Local Service choice (as long as it achieves agreed outcomes) should

be allowed to prevail and that Local Authorities should not be constrained by Central Prescription over service delivery.

12.) Things to be Proud of

- National Awards
- Amount of Recycling material diverted from landfill
- Participation levels
- Increasing public satisfaction levels
- Recognition in the 2014 WG "National Survey of Wales"
- Household Waste Recycling Centres
- Recycling on the Go! Facilities
- Campaign work on public recycling, waste minimisation and resource efficiency
- Over 10, 000 bags for life issued (and pledges signed)
- 12,000 composter bins issued to residents
- Professional team/workforce