Daventry District Council

Facts and figures

BVPI for recycling and composting (%) - 43% (2001/02)
Number of households in the authority - approx. 30,000
Type of good practice - kerbside recycling and composting

Scheme Outline

Introduction of wheeled bins

Daventry District Council was formed as a result of the local government reorganisation of 1974. Three authorities: Daventry Borough Council; Daventry Rural District Council and Brixworth Rural District Council were amalgamated to form Daventry District Council.

One of the issues that arose from the amalgamation was that each of the former authorities had operated a different waste collection service. The newly formed district authority addressed this issue in the mid 1980’s and went about introducing a weekly refuse collection service using 240 litre grey wheeled bins across the district.

Although initially there were those against the introduction of the wheeled bins, residents were eventually sold on the idea when they were advised that any spare capacity in the wheeled bin could be used for the disposal of garden waste. In a mainly rural authority a free weekly collection of garden waste was seen as an excellent service.

Operational details

The Introduction of Kerbside Recycling

From the introduction of the wheeled bins, the waste collection system did not alter until the mid 1990’s. Although a number of small bring sites had been introduced in the early 1990’s there were no significant recycling facilities. The publication of ‘Making Waste Work’ in 1995 with its aspirational target for 25% of household waste to be recycled by 2000, lead the Members and officers at Daventry District Council to look at the options available for kerbside recycling.

After investigating the steps other authorities had taken, the authority took the decision to introduce a weekly kerbside collection of dry recyclables from two kerbside boxes. The ‘red and blue box scheme’ enabled residents to recycle newspapers, magazines and other unwanted paper as well as unwanted clothing and shoes through the red box and plastic bottles, steel and aluminium cans and glass bottles and jars through the blue box. Those residents who wished to participate were provided with the two boxes free of charge and their recyclable items were collected on a weekly basis from their kerbside. The recyclate collected was then delivered direct from the kerbside into the MRF in Milton Keynes, some twenty-five miles away. Initial take up for the red and blue boxes was approximately two thirds, however
subsequent developments made the authority question how many of those initial requests for boxes were from people who wanted to recycle — no analysis of put-out rates was ever conducted at this time.

By 1997/98 Daventry District Council achieved a 9% recycling rate, reprocessing just under 2,500 tonnes of materials collected through the red and blue box scheme. The growth in popularity of the red and blue box scheme meant that it was becoming increasingly difficult operationally to be able to complete the collection rounds and deliver the recyclate into the MRF at Milton Keynes. It was at this time, that the go-ahead was given to invest in a small MRF and transfer station within the town for the authority’s use.

Kerbside Collection of Compostable Waste

In 1998 the authority, still with the aim of meeting the aspirational target of 25% recycling by 2000, took the step to introduce a collection of compostable waste to 5,500 households in the east of the district.

The trial involved the distribution of a second 240 litre wheeled bin to all properties in the area. The collection of the brown bin containing garden waste as well as organic kitchen waste was to alternate with the collection of the grey wheelie bin containing the residual waste.

To support the trial, Daventry District Council secured landfill tax funding and employed Waste Watch to run a communication and education programme alongside the introduction of the organic waste collection.

The green waste trial ran from August 1998 for twelve months. The aim of the trial was to assess the potential for providing a kerbside organic waste collection service for the whole of the district by evaluating the recycling rates achieved by a fortnightly collection service.

Waste Watch had three main tasks as part of the trial:

- To maximise participation in the trial, while at the same time keeping the contamination in the recyclable materials down to a minimum. This then had to be maintained for the duration of the trial.
- To undertake research into communication methods and to assess whether continued contact and support was the key to achieving and maintaining higher diversion rates.
- And finally, to monitor householder’s perceptions of the trial and to get feedback on the usefulness of the communication methods used.

The communication programme designed and performed by Waste Watch had a number of elements but in essence was there to provide information and advice to householders and to stimulate interest in the trial. Surveys were carried out throughout to ascertain the householders’ perception of the trial and to obtain feedback on the communication methods used. Although initially there was some confusion and concern over the change in service, generally it was received and managed well. This was highlighted through the responses received to doorstep, postal and telephone surveys:

- 98% thought that recycling kitchen and garden waste was a good idea
- 90% of householders thought that the scheme was manageable
- Operational information such as lists of the targeted materials and collection dates was found most useful

Analysis of the waste stream was undertaken at different stages in the trial to monitor changes in householders waste segregation / disposal habits. Although a staggering 52% of the waste put out for collection in the trial area was being recycled (May ’99), the waste analysis showed that with 100% participation this could have been nearer 70%.
The introduction of the organic waste collection in the trial area resulted in an increase in the recycling rate for those 5,500 households from 12% to 51% (averages for twelve month period). At some stages throughout the trial, almost two thirds of waste was being recycled or composted.

One of the most interesting finds from the trial was that not all of the increase in recycling was from the organic waste collection. By changing the frequency of collection of the residual waste from weekly to fortnightly, residents were ‘forced’ due to the limited capacity of their grey wheelie bin to recycle more of their dry recyclate (plastic bottles, cans, paper etc). Those that did not recycle generally generated more refuse than would fit in the one-wheelie bin. The tonnage picked up through the red and blue box scheme as a result of changing the collection frequencies increased by approximately 40%.

All partners in the exercise considered the project a success. In order to ensure similar or better success rates when expanding the service, Waste Watch recommended:

- That there was a high level of communication between the local authority and the householders using clear and simple messages.
- That there were opportunities for householders to give feedback on the scheme.
- That extra help and advice was available to assist householders so as to ensure they understood the needs of the collection service. This could include home visits and practical waste reduction advice.
- That the local authority operated a reliable and consistent collection services in order to increase participation rates.
- And that residents were provided with operational information on the recycling scheme such as collection dates and targeted materials on a regular basis.

The results of the communication programme were published by waste Watch in the report *Diverting Messages* in 1999.

**Daventry District Council’s Integrated Waste Collection Service**

All partners considered the organic waste trial a success and the go-ahead was given for the authority to introduce the alternate weekly collections of organic waste and refuse district wide during the year 1999-2000. Whilst undertaking this expansion of the scheme, the recommendations made by Waste Watch, which it was felt were central to the success of the scheme, were adhered to where resources allowed.

Since September 1999, all 30,000 households within the district have been receiving the four bin collection service. Red and blue boxes are emptied weekly whilst the grey and brown wheelie bins are emptied on alternate weeks.

**The Four-Bin System**

In July 2000, cardboard was added to the list of materials, which could be recycled within the district. Through talks with the composting operator it was agreed that the authority would trial the collection of post-consumer cardboard in the brown bin. The addition of cardboard to the organic kitchen and garden waste proved to be a great success and the service was promoted district wide in January 2001.

**Scheme Result**

The authority is now operating an integrated waste collection service, which is achieving one of the highest recycling rates in England at the current time (43% 2001/02). This has taken significant financial and staff resources and has required on-going education and support for the residents of the district who have accepted this new approach to waste collection.
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