

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING:	Planning, Transport and Environment Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.	26th July 2011
TITLE:	Food Waste Recycling Collections Update	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
WARD:	All	

1.0 UPDATE BRIEFING NOTE

1.1 Food waste collections began Monday 4 October, with a high tonnage of food waste collected from that first day - about 20 tonnes per day on average. A total of 2,389 tonnes of food waste was collected to the end of March 2011. This helped us reach an overall recycling rate for the year of 46%, our highest yet.

1.2 The food waste is being transported on a daily basis to New Earth Solutions in-vessel composting plant at Sharpness in Gloucestershire in sealed bulk containers from May Gurney's depot in Keynsham. Contamination levels have been low - ie residents have been using liners or newspaper, not plastic bags, which adversely affect the composting process. The process takes only a week before a high-nutrient compost is produced for use on agricultural land. Further information can be found at www.newearthsolutions.co.uk.

1.3 This plant has been undergoing some maintenance works throughout June/July and in the mean time our food waste has been diverted to a similar plant in Dorset through our contractor's contingency arrangements. This is at no extra cost to the Council.

1.4 Participation monitoring was carried out in March 2011 and this showed that 59% of residents are using their food waste caddies and bins. The more residents who use the new collections, putting out as much of their food waste as possible on a regular basis, the more cost-effective and efficient the scheme. The containers also help reduce bird and animal scavenging of black bags. In areas of high take up there has been a noticeable difference where scavenging has previously been a problem.

1.5 As anticipated there has been some drop-off of daily tonnage collected in the first few weeks. This is due to some people realising how much food they were throwing away, and cutting back. This has been shown to happen in other parts of the country due to people changing their buying behaviour. We have been continuing to carry out roadshows emphasising the Love Food Hate Waste message.

1.6 The results of the first few months are very encouraging but we are confident that there is even more food waste our residents can put out in their new containers. We are planning a comprehensive communications campaign in areas of lower participation to ensure we increase the number of households taking part.

1.7 Start-up packs for residents include the two containers plus a roll of 52 compostable liners and a full instructional leaflet. May Gurney continue to make deliveries of start-up packs to houses with multiple flats and other households as requested. Some households have asked for additional bins; others have opted to share the larger outside container between flats or small households. We are happy to work with residents to find the best solutions for them.

2.0 COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 Our Communications team worked hard at many roadshows, events and talks to groups in the build-up to raise awareness amongst the public and this was much appreciated by those people they've talked to. They have been able to give good help and advice to residents to make sure they're using their bins successfully.

2.2 Most people have now run out of their initial supply of liners and the campaigns team have been focussing on showing people how to line their caddies with newspapers if they don't want to buy their own liners. There is a video on our website showing a really easy way to do this successfully.

2.3 We sourced 36 local liner stockists (including major supermarkets) and online stockists. The list is on our website and we can advise residents of nearest stockists at our road shows.

2.4 We have been giving out rolls of free liners at road shows for those willing to complete our food waste recycling survey - this is proving popular - so far about 350 surveys have been completed. We have only about 400 rolls of liners left in stock now.

Key finding from these surveys show:

- The average number of bags put out each week is 2
- 42% of people compost at home
- Virtually everyone throws away vegetables. The second most popular food is bread. Raw meat is rare.
- There is a mix of shops where the liners are purchased from but on the whole they are the major supermarkets
- 71% of people have already finished their liners – but only 35% of people have bought new ones
- There is a lot of scope for trying to encourage the use of newspaper as only 33% of people have given it a go.

Anecdotal evidence from road shows:

Negatives:

- Lack of storage space
- Tried it but now run out of liners so stopped.

- Liners are expensive
- Worried about smells in summer
- Don't have food waste – give it to the dog/chickens etc

Positives:

- It's easy
- They hardly put out any rubbish now
- Street tidier from animal/bird attacks
- Think more about what they are putting out

3.0 NEXT STEPS

3.1 We continue to work with May Gurney to continue the successful bedding in of the collection service, and to ensure that it is operating as effectively as possible. We are monitoring the collections so that prompt and efficient action can be taken to resolve any issues and address any residents' queries.

3.2 The residents surveys show that we need to do more to encourage the use of newspaper for people who don't want to buy their own liners so that people stay engaged in the scheme.

3.3 We will carry out a comprehensive door knocking programme in areas of lower participation so that we encourage further uptake.

3.4 We are in the process of developing the options for the households that we have not been able to offer the service to at the moment. These are mainly blocks of flats with Mini Recycling Centres (MRCs) and the city centre streets which use green sacks for their dry recycling collections. We will present options and costs to the Council's Waste Board in the Autumn for decisions on how to take this forward.

3.5 We are working with our partner May Gurney to develop a food waste recycling service for schools and would hope to be a position to offer this as a comprehensive waste and recycling package from September 2011.

3.6 We are forecasting a total year end recycling rate of 54% in 2011/12 based upon our current performance. Food waste collections will contribute significantly towards this overall performance improvement.

Carol Maclellan

Waste Services Manager

July 2011