

Kerbside Recycling – Experiences from authorities receiving funding from the National Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund

Appendix XV: North East Lincolnshire Council

North East Lincolnshire Council

Introduction

North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) received Round 2 funding to expand a kerbside collection of dry recyclables to 28,000 properties. In 2002/03 it recorded a BVPI 82a of 8.2% and a BVPI 82b of 7.3%, which were achieved through a fortnightly kerbside collection of dry recyclables on alternate weeks with a garden waste collection, and bring banks. In 2004/05 it achieved a combined rate of 21%.

This report describes the detail of the collection and its performance together with a discussion of the lessons learnt in implementing the collection.

Description of the collections

Recycling and refuse collections before the Round 2 funding

NELC is a Unitary authority comprising approximately 70,000 properties. The area has suffered from many years of industrial decline and the area is ranked 73rd on the 1998 index of deprivation. In 1996, when the Unitary authority was formed by combining Grimsby with Cleethorpes, a different range of refuse and recycling services were in operation in the two authorities, and those in Cleethorpes were contracted out while those in Grimsby were operated by the DSO. Residents in Grimsby had wheeled bins prior to the two authorities combining. In 1996 the new Unitary authority introduced wheeled bins for refuse for residents in Cleethorpes. In subsequent years efforts have been concentrated on developing a single service offered to all residents.

Since 1996 it has carried out a range of recycling trials that have included:

- alternate week collection of refuse and dry recyclables (newspapers, magazines and cans) provided to 5,440 properties: started July 1996, end December 1997 due to high levels of contamination and inadequate MRF facilities;
- replaced in January 1998 by a monthly collection of newspapers and magazines to same 5,440 households, with refuse reverting to weekly;
- in August 1998 introduced fortnightly collections on a Saturday of garden waste for 1,397 properties, reutilising the wheeled bins from the first trial, and a collection of newspapers, magazines (in a polypropylene sack), mixed plastics and cans (in a box);
- expansion of garden waste collection in March 1999 and May 1999;
- expansion of box collection to 1,000 properties; and
- corrugated cardboard added to the garden waste collection in September 2000 and January 2001.

At the same time the properties in Cleethorpes had been receiving an opt-in collection of newspapers and magazines collected in sacks.

Introduction of the collections was done on a very limited scale due to the lack of financial resources. Often streets would be added one at a time as a result of crews being able to complete their existing rounds more quickly than at first.

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Participation in all the schemes was low and there was little Member support due to other priorities for resources.

NELC bid successfully in Round 1 of the NWMRF to introduce a fortnightly wheeled bin collection of garden waste and cardboard to 14,000 properties and to provide the same properties with a fortnightly collection of glass, paper (newspapers, magazines, envelopes), and cans. The materials are collected on alternate weeks. Residents are provided with 240L wheeled bins for the garden waste and three 38L boxes for the dry recyclables. The garden waste is collected in RCVs and the dry recyclables are collected in Kerbsiders. The glass is collected mixed.

Following the successful implementation of the Round 1 funded collection NELC applied for further funding in Round 2 to expand the dry recyclables collections. Further Defra funding from Round 3 enabled expansion of the garden waste collection.

Collections funded from Round 2 NWMRF

The Round 2 funding enabled NELC to provide a further 28,000 properties with the dry recyclables collection using the three 38L boxes. Of these, 14,000 were already receiving the existing dry recyclables collection, using a combination of a reusable sack and a single box. This collection excluded glass. The other 14,000 properties were in deprived and hard-to-reach areas.

The funding enabled the purchase of 28,000 sets of boxes and two collection vehicles and covered promotion and operational costs for the first year. In a change from Round 1 Triple Top-loader Terberg vehicles were purchased. Slave bins are used to transfer the materials from the crates into the vehicles.

At the same time as introducing the collection NELC introduced a no-side-waste policy for refuse collection which is collected weekly.

Roll-out of the collection

The collection was rolled out in the first half of 2003/04. A letter was sent to residents informing them that their collections would change just one week before the boxes were delivered. The short notice was on purpose to try and minimise complaints. Due to the existence of several different schemes careful planning was necessary to ensure each resident received the correct letter.

The box distribution was carried out by the supplier, Taylors. Meticulous planning by Officers was also undertaken with up-to-date address lists being prepared and the delivery of each set of boxes noted on delivery. NELC ordered the boxes well in advance that enabled the supplier to schedule in its own staff for delivery, rather than agency staff.

Residents can only opt out of receiving the containers if they are unable to handle them, e.g. if they are disabled or infirm. Opt-out forms were not provided and residents were not encouraged to do so. However, assisted collection is provided and details on properties where assisted collection is required were provided to the box delivery team so that boxes were taken to the back door of properties.

When the boxes were delivered residents received a calendar indicating the collection days.

In May 2003, following the roll-out of the collections, the refuse rounds were re-organised and it was possible to reduce the number of rounds as less material was being set-out in the refuse bins.

The project was rolled out by a team of 3, the waste strategy officer and funded with Round 2 money, a part time project manager and administrator. The council decided to cherry pick areas where collection would be easiest initially and then systematically rolled out the collections to other areas, with the deprived areas being included on the scheme last.

Communications and promotion of the collection

Because the collection is not offered to all residents the promotion and marketing had to be carefully targeted to ensure that residents not receiving the new co-mingled collection would continue to participate properly in their existing collections. Also, in the past with the introduction of some of the smaller scale collections there had been negative press highlighting the inequality of service across the authority.

However, a number of events were held with selected targeted audiences, including:

- an Environmental drama festival ' Earthworks – don't let it go to waste';
- use of the Rethink Rubbish 'Giant motorised dustbin';
- a 'Buy Recycled' joint promotion with Sainsburys Supastore;
- junk modelling workshops for 7 to 11 year olds;
- presentations in primary schools using a themed storyboard;
- development of a waste information and educational CD for primary and secondary schools;
- a waste awareness drama performed to local primary schools;
- a waste awareness campaign using bus advertising; and
- a weekly prize draw for people participating in the kerbside collections.

These events had varying degrees of success although the individual impact of each one is difficult to gauge.

Crews did not receive specific training before the collections started but were briefed and kept informed of the changes.

On an annual basis, residents with the collections receive collection calendars.

Performance of the collection

It is difficult to assess the performance of the Round 2 funded collection in isolation because data have been collated for the collections as they have expanded through Round 1, 2 and 3 funding.

The Round 1 funded collection was rolled out in October 2002 for the financial year 2002/03, 4,097 tonnes of green waste were collected from 28,130 households, which is equivalent to 145kg/ household/ year. In 2002/03 BVPI 82a was 8.1% and 82b was 7.25%.

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By 2003/04, the number of households served was 37,684 for dry recyclables with most households included on the Round 2 funded scheme by May 2003 and 3,925 tonnes of dry recyclables were collected from the kerbside that is equivalent to 104kg/household/year. In the same year, 29,444 households were served by the garden waste collection that collected 6,795 tonnes. This is equivalent to 230kg/household/year. BVPIs for this year were as follows: 82a – 9.45% and 82b% 10.21%.

By the end of 2004/05, the number of households served was 42,011 for dry recyclables and 4,107 tonnes of material were collected. Most households included on the Round 3 funded schemes were included by January 2005.

By the end of 2004/05, 39,025 households were served by the garden waste collection and 8,495 tonnes of material were collected.

Since 2002/03 overall, the expanded collections have contributed approximately 1.1% to BVPI 82a which was 9.2% for 2004/5. However, included in this figure are materials collected through Round 1 funded schemes and existing schemes operated by the authority, so the actual contribution from the Round 2 and 3 funded element will be lower. It should be noted that this contribution to performance is from less than 50% of the households as the schemes were not borough wide in 2004/05.

Since 2002/03, BVPI 82b has increased by 3.9% to 11.98% in 2004/05, although again existing schemes and Round 1 funded collections are included. As for the dry recyclables collection, less than 50% of households are served by the separate garden waste collections.

Between 2002/03 and 2004/05 the total quantity of waste arising has risen by 5.1%, or 4,264 tonnes. It is possible that the increase is at least partly due to additional bin capacity being available to householders through the introduction of garden waste collection.

Standard collection costs

It is difficult to compare collection costs between authorities for many reasons including contracting out versus in-house service, lease versus purchase of capital equipment, accounting practices, etc. Therefore, for the purpose of the case study analysis, Kerbside Analysis Tool (KAT) has been used to estimate a standardised cost for each collection. It should be stressed that the use of KAT is to overcome difficulties in comparing a service that is operated and paid for in a number of different ways across authorities and not as a reflection of perceived inaccuracies in the audited or declared costs for individual authorities.

KAT uses information on the infrastructure actually employed to carry out the collection, for example the number and type of vehicles, and applies a unit cost, uniform depreciation and financing. **The standard costs calculated by KAT are not the same as the price paid to a contractor for operating the service or the same as the costs that appear in the audited accounts of the authority.** However, they enable a fair comparison between authorities of the costs of running kerbside collections.

Standard costs have been estimated for all the kerbside collections operating in the authority including refuse collection, regardless of if they were funded by Round 2 or not. It is sometimes impossible to separate out the elements funded by Round 2, for example if it only covered part of a collection or if it replaced an existing collection. Therefore, the cost analysis can only be undertaken at an authority wide level. Refuse collection costs are included as well as those for recyclables collection because it provides a useful base reference against which to compare the costs of the recyclables collections, refuse collection costs not being uniform over the country.

The cost analysis is for the financial year 2004/05 and can therefore be directly related to the performance above.

The standard collection costs for the refuse and kerbside collections in NELC are presented in Table 1. All the costs are **gross**, i.e. do not include any benefits from the sales of materials or from the receipt of recycling credits if payable.

Table 1: KAT standard gross collection costs for household waste collected at the kerbside

Collected stream	Round 2 funding	Total households served	Collection frequency	Tonnes collected 04/05 (T)	Collection cost per tonne (£)	Collection cost per household (£)
Refuse	–	70,062	Weekly	56,835	23	18
Sorted dry recyclables	for 24,000 households	42,011	Fortnightly	4,107	112	11
Garden	–	39,025	Fortnightly	8,495	66	14
Total	–	70,062	–	69,437	33	33

When considering the costs presented in Table 1 it is essential to remember that they cover the collection of household waste/recyclables only, i.e. trade waste is not included, and additional costs for spare vehicles, depots and other support costs relating to collection are not included. Post collection costs, such as gate fees for refuse, MRF processing and composting, and ancillary costs such as for promotion, education, call centres and communications are also not included. Depending on the extent of these facilities and activities, and also the level of recycling credits or sales revenues, the standard KAT cost may be lower or higher than the audited accounts and a direct comparison is impossible with BVPI 86.

Lessons learnt

Officers were pleased with way the project had been rolled out and mentioned the following positive points:

- optimum utilisation of vehicles and crews since designing the rounds with dry recyclables collection in mind;
- achieving Top Ten status in terms of the BVPI on composting rates;
- having no contamination of dry recyclables and therefore no rejection which Officers feel is due to the triple box system which means the materials can be easily inspected and feedback is provided to households that include the wrong materials to help to prevent it happening again;
- achieving a recycling rate of 25% from 6% despite financial difficulties for the authority;
- managing efficient box delivery, having learnt from wheeled bin delivery a few years previously.

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The officers felt that the following aspects of the project went less well:

- funding was provided by WRAP on communications which required Officers to spend much of their time reporting and adhering to guidance and they find this very time demanding, particularly as the funding was not that high;
- tonnages which can be collected in the Triple body top loader vehicles have been disappointing in terms of value for money because an additional crew member using a slave bin is required for operations and thus is more costly to run; when compared to a traditional kerbsider with a driver and two;
- electric carts were used in parts of the council with hard to reach back to back housing, however, additional crew and vehicles were required to deliver and pick up the carts which filled up very quickly.

Developments following the Round 2 funding

Expansion of the co-mingled collection

As mentioned above, Round 3 funding was secured to expand the garden waste collection so that 42,000 households in total receive both the dry recyclable and the garden waste service. The roll-out of the collections started in January 2005.

Other

Officers are aware that many households in the authority are not served with a kerbside collection. They would like to improve the service the authority provides but will not be able to achieve this without further funding. They feel funding must be ring fenced for recycling schemes or it may be used by the authority for other services.

It is unlikely that alternate week collection of refuse would be introduced for the foreseeable future, however feasibility studies are on going.