

Waste Minimisation and Public Engagement

Waste minimisation focuses on ensuring that waste is not produced in the first place (i.e. you buy things with less packaging), reused (you pass on unwanted cloths for someone else to use) or recycled (using that big blue wheelie bin you have which takes materials to be used as something else –plastic as fleece etc).

BAN Waste has always supported a **Zero Waste** approach, which requires seeing waste as a resource where all outputs are used again as inputs and no waste is created; waste minimisation is extremely important part of this. Waste minimisation is also a legal requirement to ensure our government and its initiatives to ensure they follow the Waste Hierarchy to reduce, reuse, recycle before recovery of energy and then last ditch measures of disposal.

So we were interested to know how Newcastle City council was planning to look at waste minimisation and work with residents to take this forward. Below we have taken some points from the council on this.

The Council says it has relatively little control over the amount of domestic waste produced in the City. As such the Council feels that to minimise waste production the council needs to do so by influencing people's behaviour and by seeking to provide alternatives to throwing things away. They go on to say "this is why public engagement is vitally important if the Council is to successfully reduce waste arisings.

Changing consumer behaviour would produce a direct benefit by reducing waste but would also influence suppliers to change their behaviour to appeal to waste conscious consumers.

Surrey County Council produced a business case for waste minimisation that identified a number of factors which contributed to the success of waste minimisation initiatives:

- Commitment from Members and senior managers
- Involving staff at all level
- Dedicated personnel and resources
- Accurate measurement to assess success
- High profile community engagement campaigns
- Community involvement

In Newcastle we have targets for waste minimisation in our Sustainable Community Strategy. This has the support of members and senior officers. We also have an Environmental Education and Engagement Team in place. The Team was set up to help promote ad develop awareness around waste and recycling and this team is a valuable resource for taking forward work on waste minimisation.

Types of initiatives proposed by the council for discussion

- **Initiatives targeting specific types of consumption** e.g.
 - Waste exchanges, swap events etc.
 - Initiatives to reuse things instead of throwing them away e.g. Freegle (or FreeCycle), Recycle y Bike, Community Repaint, TD Clothing. Many of these initiatives are community enterprises and also provide employment and other benefits to the community
 - Sustainable shopping guides
 - Home composting initiatives
- **Capacity building Initiatives**
 - Supporting businesses, charities and other organisations to undertake and sustain waste minimisation projects
- **Public awarenss campaigns**
 - Should these focus on publicizing initiatives and specific things people can do rather than just general awareness raising? We currently have the Our Newcastle Campaign which has done some work on waste minimisation.

The information has been taken from a report on "Waste Minimisation and Public Engagement" produced by officers at Newcastle City Council for the council's environment scrutiny panel, in May 2010. The full version is available to download on our resources pages.

We welcome your thoughts on how Newcastle might do more to ensure waste minimisation is put first and foremost in the Council's approach to Aiming for Zero Waste.

Our Waste Minimisation section will detail some of the work we have done and provide some suggestions of ways to take this forward.