

Local Authority communications case study: Cumbria

# Recycle for Cumbria partnership campaign

## Introduction

Between October 2006 and March 2008 the Cumbria Waste Partnership ran a campaign, 'Recycle for Cumbria', to increase awareness of recycling and the use of recycling facilities in Cumbria. Cumbria Waste Partnership consists of the following councils:

- Cumbria County Council
- Allerdale Borough Council
- Barrow Borough Council
- Carlisle City Council
- Copeland Borough Council
- Eden District Council
- South Lakeland District Council.

## Key Facts

- Recycling rate increases of up to 29%.
- Increased participation rates of up to 14%.
- The campaign lasted from October 2006 to March 2008.
- The campaign cost £391,965.
- Cost per household was £1.69.



## About Cumbria

- Cumbria is the third largest county and one of the largest shire counties in England. There are six Waste Collection Authorities within the county and one Waste Disposal Authority.
- The county has a population of 496,200 living in 231,400 households.
- Cumbria is the second least densely populated county in England with 73 people per km<sup>2</sup>.
- 50.7% of the population of Cumbria live in rural areas.

## Background to campaign

In the remotest areas of Cumbria, the physical terrain and a lack of suitable transport networks mean that kerbside collection of recyclables is not feasible and there is a reliance on drop-off sites. These physical challenges are amplified by social and economic demands for service support to counter long-term economic decline in Barrow and West Cumbria. Prior to the campaign in 2005-06, recycling rates varied from 18% in Barrow to 36% in Eden District.

### Communication objectives

The key objectives of the campaign were to:

- achieve an 85% participation rate for occasional recyclers ('secure and flourishing families') in kerbside collections by March 2008;
- increase the quality of the materials recovered from those households that recycle regularly ('wealthy achievers') to achieve a 10% reduction in contamination by March 2008;
- achieve a 65% participation rate in kerbside collection among non-/low recyclers ('blue collar roots', 'struggling families') by March 2008;
- increase the quantity of materials recovered from household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) and drop-off sites by March 2008; and
- develop a library of communications resources for use by partners so that Cumbrian residents and visitors experience a consistent message.

### Approach

The project was managed at two levels. All partners attended the monthly project meetings to review progress, discuss issues and agree actions. The project management team met fortnightly to plan and monitor the project in more detail. A member of the project team reported to the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership Board, keeping senior waste management officers and councillors informed of the activities and progress of the project.

The partners decided to continue and improve their use of the Recycle for Cumbria cross-county branding for all materials produced as part of the campaign.

### Target audiences

Cumbria Waste Partnership used Acorn profiling to identify low performing areas. They then targeted various social groups found in these areas as follows.

'Secure and flourishing families' recycle occasionally but need to be motivated to encourage consistent recycling behaviour. They were targeted with:

- poster campaign and radio advertisements;
- website ([www.resourcecumbria.org](http://www.resourcecumbria.org));
- telephone helpline; and
- two roadshows at farmers' markets in each district.

'Wealthy achievers' recycle regularly and are keen to know how and where the materials are reprocessed. With more information about service availability they could recycle more, with less contamination. They were targeted with:

- a golfing tournament (with celebrity sponsorship);
- roadshows;
- features and programmes on local radio stations and in local newspapers; and
- local radio advertisements of the golfing tournament, promoting recycling.

'Blue collar roots' and 'struggling families' tend to be non- or low recyclers. They were targeted with:

- posters and displays in appropriate locations;
- bus backs and headliners on four buses in each of the low performing areas;
- leaflets and calendars to deliver motivational and instructional information;
- bin stickers to inform residents about which materials to put in which container; and
- doorstep canvassing to motivate those who do not respond to the campaign.



## Communication materials

- **Recycling rangers.** Three recycling rangers were hired to develop and deliver the campaign. Each was provided with a vehicle branded to support the campaign's activities. The rangers carried out 'door stepping' around the county, achieving a response rate of over 50%, and undertook a programme of roadshows. The three recycling rangers cost £92,000 (including recruitment, salary and dedicated branded vehicles).

- **HWRC and Recycling Point branding.** New signage based on the Recycle Now branded signage was installed at three HWRCs and 47 Recycling Points. Stickers for the receptacles at the Recycling Points were also provided. HWRC and bring site signage cost £13,000.

- **Christmas campaign.** The first campaign of the project was aimed at families who currently recycle but could be encouraged to recycle more. Christmas-themed posters were displayed in libraries, schools, community centres and supermarkets. Adverts in six local newspapers covering the whole of the region appeared over a four-week period and an average of 31 radio adverts per week on the three local radio stations ran from mid-December 2006 to mid-January 2007.

- **Service packs, adverts and a competition.** These were used to focus on hard-to-reach groups with low participation rates and included advertising on buses, householder packs and branding on recycling vehicles. These materials were targeted at a sample of 1,000–1,500 households.

- **Newspaper supplement.** An insert, The Recycle Times, was distributed to all six major Cumbrian newspapers with 164,000 copies circulated.

- **Golf tournament.** Originally intended to stand alone, poor response led to the Recycle for Cumbria sponsored tournament being run by Cumbria's golf clubs. The tournament was backed up by leaflets and posters, with roadshows providing information on recycled products including those aimed at the golf market as well as more general recycling information.

- **Junk art competition.** This was open to entries from groups to individuals, young children to adults. The recycling rangers selected the finalists for each category for judging by a celebrity at the golf tournament awards ceremony. The winners were presented with their awards at a separate ceremony held at High Head Sculpture Valley.

## Library of resources

A suite of communication materials was created which could be used by all partners, providing professional-looking and consistently branded material based on Recycle for Cumbria iconography. This library of resources cost £21,000 and included:

- householder pack – including information leaflets for kerbside collection services, HWRCs, Recycling Points, frequently asked questions, collection calendars and stickers for labelling recycling receptacles;
- image library;
- newsletter, presentation and advertising style templates; and
- seven behavioural change adverts to be used by the partnership over the next two years.

## Results/Conclusion

Recycling rate increases of up to 29% were obtained (Table 1). Participation rates were also up in the targeted groups.

- 'Blue collar'/'struggling families' target group saw an increase in Carlisle of 9%, closely followed by Barrow and Copeland with 7%.
- 'Secure and flourishing families' target group saw an 11% increase in participation in Copeland, followed by Allerdale 10%, Carlisle 6%, Eden 7%, Barrow 5% and South Lakes 3%.
- In the 'wealthy achievers' group, where the focus was more on quality of recycling given the already high participation rates, Carlisle, in combination with its new service rollout, saw a 14% increase.

The number of committed recyclers increased by 5% in the 'blue collar' target group, 3% in 'secure and flourishing families' and 1% for wealthy achievers (from 81 to 82%). The contamination rate reduced across the board within the 'wealthy achievers' target group falling by 13% in Carlisle, 8% in Eden, 7% in South Lakeland and Copeland, and 4% in Allerdale.

Authority	Pre-campaign	Post-campaign	Overall improvement
Cumbria CC	29.9%	36.0%	+6.1%
Allerdale DC	30.0%	37.6%	+7.6%
Barrow BC	18.0%	-	-
Carlisle DC	16.0%	45.0%	+29.0%
Copeland BC	28.0%	-	-
Eden DC	36.0%	46.4%	10.4%
South Lakeland	26.7%	-	-

Table 1: Recycling rates

The partnership saw an 8% increase in usage at HWRCs and bring sites.

The recycling rangers were a major success of the campaign. They supported campaign activities and improved links between the districts and the County Council making partnership management much easier. They proved so successful that funding has been secured to retain their services.

The junk art competition also proved to have additional benefits for the community, with some of the finalists receiving offers from buyers wanting to purchase work entered in the competition.

### Key Learning Points

- The most challenging part of the project was the campaign focusing on the 'wealthy achievers'. Although the golf tournament was generally a success, it is unlikely this event will be repeated as the benefits did not justify the cost or resources.
- Another challenge was balancing the success of the communications campaign which motivated people to recycle with providing enough facilities to collect the deposited materials. This problem was mitigated by the introduction of alternate waste collection (AWC) in Carlisle and the rolling out of AWC by South Lakeland District Council, thus providing more opportunities for members of the public to recycle.

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