

# Countywide partnership campaign in Gloucestershire to increase participation in recycling services

## Introduction

The Gloucestershire Waste Partnership (GWP) was formed in 2003 to strengthen the relationship between the two tiers of waste management in the county. Gloucestershire County Council is the lead partner and its Waste Communications Manager is the project manager for the 'Recycle for Gloucestershire' campaign. The councils making up the Gloucester Waste Partnership are:

- Gloucestershire County Council
- Cheltenham Borough Council
- Cotswold District Council
- Forest of Dean District Council
- Gloucester City Council
- Stroud District Council
- Tewksbury Borough Council.

## Key Facts

- Recycling rates across Gloucestershire increased by more than the target of 3%.
- Participation in low performing areas in the county increased by 12% overall.
- The campaign lasted from September 2006 to March 2008.
- Campaign funding was £267,500.
- Cost per household was £1.08.

## About Gloucestershire

- Gloucestershire is a two-tier authority area in south-west England consisting of one Waste Disposal Authority and six Waste Collection Authorities.
- The county is largely rural in nature with the main urban focus in Gloucester and Cheltenham, though the county has a number of market towns (e.g. Stroud, Tewksbury and Cirencester).
- Gloucestershire has a population of approximately 565,000 living in 247,570 households.
- A higher than average proportion of the population is above 50 years old and a lower than average proportion is below 35 years old.

## Background to campaign

All the district councils offer weekly collection of residual household waste and a separate kerbside collection for paper, glass and cans throughout their area. Some collect additional materials (e.g. plastic bottles in Gloucester and Stroud). Kerbside recycling boxes are emptied every two weeks except in Gloucester where boxes are emptied weekly. All the councils apart from Stroud DC provide a garden waste collection service. The district councils also operate a network of local bring sites. There are five Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) operated by Gloucestershire CC and one by Cheltenham BC.

No significant service changes were introduced during the course of the communications campaign to boost participation in recycling in Gloucestershire.



### Communication objectives

The two main objectives of the 'Recycle for Gloucestershire' campaign were to:

- increase the percentage of waste recycled and composted across Gloucestershire by 3% by March 2008; and
- increase participation rates in dry recycling schemes in low performing areas by 20% by March 2008.

### Approach

Two major elements of 'Recycle for Gloucestershire' were a countywide campaign targeted at existing low-to-medium recyclers and door-to-door canvassing targeted at low participation areas. Other activities included collection calendars, information leaflets, district-specific and countywide recycling guides distributed to every household by direct mail, roadshows, updates on the campaign website ([www.recycleforgloucestershire.com](http://www.recycleforgloucestershire.com)) and recycling champion programmes in Cheltenham and Gloucester.

### Countywide campaign targeted at existing low-to-medium recyclers

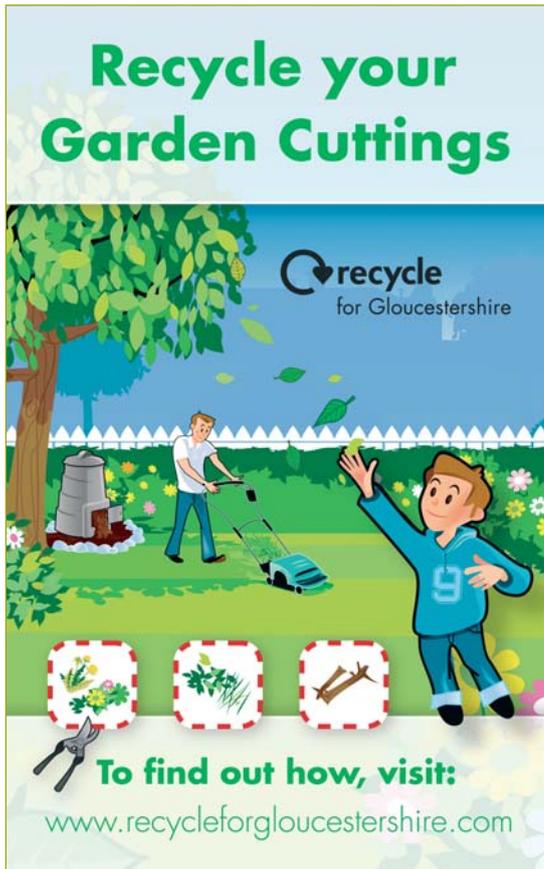
The countywide campaign was made up of a number of 'mini campaigns' reflecting national themes. The advertising artwork for each mini-campaign varied, but was based on 'Recycle Now' iconography. The schedule was as follows:

### ■ 'Recycle Your Glass Jars – Now There's A Bright Idea', Christmas Campaign 2006.

Glass was chosen for the slogan as it is a plentiful material during the holiday period. In addition, the link between glass recycling and energy saving was to feature in national TV advertising in January 2007. Introducing it in Gloucestershire in December extended the campaign in the county.

■ 'It's COOL To Recycle', March 2007. This campaign extended the energy saving theme to link recycling to climate change by using the strapline 'Recycling Helps Combat Global Warming'.

■ 'Today's Top Tip', March 2007. The Recycle Now family of messages was used to urge people to visit Gloucestershire's HWRCs. At the sites themselves, the strapline changed to 'Recycling Starts At Home – Sort Your Items Before You Arrive – Save Time And Recycle More!'



■ **'Garden Cuttings', May 2007.** This promotion featured garden waste just as the gardening season got into full swing in the county.

■ **'We CAN Do It!/Got Bottle? Recycle It!', July 2007.** This promotion again featured the strapline 'Recycling Helps Combat Global Warming' to reinforce the message by association with the previous advert. As a result of the flooding emergency in Gloucestershire, a revised design was created for the second week of the campaign (see below).

■ **'Recycling Helps Combat Global Warming', Christmas Campaign 2007.** The campaign steering group again selected glass recycling and the strapline 'Recycling Helps Combat Global Warming'.

Each mini-campaign used combinations of press adverts, billboards, radio adverts and posters as appropriate. Press adverts were placed in five titles to obtain countywide coverage and airtime was purchased for the Christmas campaigns from local radio stations. Posters were displayed in council offices, libraries and other suitable locations. HWRC billboards were used, but proved expensive and had a limited audience.

### Campaign flexibility

The approach allowed considerable flexibility as illustrated by the two examples below.

The summer campaign ('We Can Do It!') continued the theme of recycling combating climate change, but coincided with the Gloucestershire flooding emergency. Large areas of the Severn Vale lost their mains water supply and, as a consequence, an estimated 40 million plastic bottles of water were brought into the county. The second week of the press campaign was changed to advertise plastic bottle recycling and a new design was commissioned entitled 'Got Bottle? Recycle It!'. People were invited to visit the campaign website for up-to-date information on where they could recycle their empty plastic bottles as many additional temporary sites were set up during the emergency.

The original plan for press activity during October 2007 was to promote garden waste, but the campaign steering group felt it would be more appropriate to address the issues being raised at roadshows. A four-page 'wrap-around' supplement, The Gloucestershire Recycler, was developed for the county's two main newspaper titles (Gloucestershire Echo and Gloucester Citizen) which included district updates, stories on plastic bottle recycling, guides on cardboard and plastics, information on what happens to recycled materials, HWRC details and interesting recycling facts. Additional copies were printed for distribution at events and for use at future roadshows.



**Door-to-door canvassing targeted at low participation areas**

Low performing rounds were selected by district recycling officers. Although the canvassing programme carried out by a contractor in five of the districts proved difficult due to the adverse weather conditions and flooding, 23,312 households were visited with a contact rate of 42%. In addition, the community group, Cheltenham Centre for Change, visited 20,468 houses in Cheltenham with a contact rate of 54%. Canvassers were provided with a series of district-specific leaflets, which could also be left when residents were not at home. Generic leaflets were also carried by the canvassing team to be left with residents as appropriate.

Conversations lasted on average about five minutes and the canvassers covered topics such as kerbside recycling, bring sites, HWRCs, home composting, junk mail, real nappies, etc. as appropriate. The canvassers also recorded barriers to recycling where these existed. Requests for recycling boxes were received from 3,189 householders who had either not got a box or wanted a replacement/additional box.

Authority	2005-06	2007-08*	Increase
Cheltenham Borough Council	25.9%	31.3%	+5.4%
Cotswold District Council	36.9%	43.3%	+6.4%
Forest of Dean District Council	15.9%	25.2%	+9.3%
Gloucester City Council	34.2%	37.5%	+3.3%
Stroud District Council	22.0%	26.3%	+4.3%
Tewkesbury Borough Council	16.6%	29.5%	+12.9%
Gloucestershire County Council	29.8%	36.3%	+6.5%

\*estimated

Table 1: Recycling rates

Authority	Pre-campaign	Post-campaign	Increase
Cheltenham Borough Council	39%	53%	+14%
Cotswold District Council	39%	49%	+10%
Forest of Dean District Council	31%	40%	+9%
Gloucester City Council	36%	47%	+11%
Stroud District Council	46%	57%	+11%
Tewkesbury Borough Council	54%	60%	+6%
<b>County overall</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>+12%</b>

Table 2: Participation rates in low performing areas

### Results/Conclusion

The objective to increase the percentage of waste recycled and composted across Gloucestershire by 3% by March 2008 was met in all districts (Table 1). Although the challenging target of a 20% increase in participation in low performing areas was not met, a 12% increase was achieved (Table 2). All six districts saw increases without any changes to the collection systems.

### Key Learning Points

- Maximum effect was gained through consistent use of Recycle Now iconography and campaign branding (same straplines, themes and colours).
- The countywide campaign was reinforced by national and local activity.
- Flexibility was necessary to adapt to unforeseen change and maximise the campaign's impact.
- Managing the campaign at a county level made the most of centralised resources, though more time should have been allocated for project management and delivery.
- A steering group including all the partners was essential to ensure consensus of support.

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**Waste & Resources  
Action Programme**

The Old Academy  
21 Horse Fair  
Banbury, Oxon  
OX16 0AH

Tel: 01295 819 900  
Fax: 01295 819 911  
E-mail: [info@wrap.org.uk](mailto:info@wrap.org.uk)

Helpline freephone  
0808 100 2040

[www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk)