

## Local authority communications case study: York

# Communicating the 'Recycle for York' campaign to all households with an alternate week collection of refuse

## Introduction

In 2005-06, City of York Council introduced an alternate week collection of refuse and garden waste to approximately 60,000 properties. All these properties receive a full fortnightly kerbside recycling collection for paper, card, plastic bottles, glass bottles and jars, drinks cans, food tins and empty aerosol cans. The target audience for the 'Recycle for York' campaign was those households provided with an alternate week collection (AWC) of refuse.

York has a good infrastructure of bring banks with over 50 sites throughout the city. The council also has three Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs). These sites collect a number of additional items from those collected at the kerbside, which include food and beverage cartons, waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), household and car batteries, soil and rubble, asbestos, textiles, books and shoes.



## Key Facts

- Dry recycling rate increased from 16.5% in 2005-06 to 24.7% in 2007-08.
- Kerbside capture rate improved across all material streams. Individual material capture varied between 9 and 38% as a result of the campaign.
- Campaign lasted from September 2006 to February 2008.
- Campaign budget was £77,700.
- Cost per household (based on 60,000 properties) was £1.30.

## About York

- City of York Council is a unitary authority in the North Yorkshire region.
- The city forms the main urban centre of the authority with a number of smaller outlying villages.
- The population was 186,000 at the start of the campaign in 2006-07. It had increased to around 188,100 by the end of the campaign in 2007-08.
- During the campaign the number of households increased from 82,700 to 83,600.

### Background to campaign

Historically York had used a variety of promotional materials to communicate with residents about why and how to recycle. To support the introduction of the alternate week collection of waste, York ran a seven-month communications programme which included a suite of broad brush methods aimed at all affected households. Further promotions work was later carried out to support the launch of the plastic bottle collection scheme which included leaflets, press campaigning, roadshows, website updates and newsletters.

Although tonnages and set out rates were good for households provided with an alternative week collection, it was felt that capture rates could be improved. Analysis for 2005-06 showed that kerbside recycling collections were only capturing 23-37% of the targeted materials.

### Communication objectives

City of York Council wanted to continue to build on the strong foundations laid by previous communications. It also wanted to remove confusion about specific materials and to tackle certain low participation areas. The campaign's objectives were to:

- increase the recycling rate by 10% by February 2008; and
- increase the capture rate of materials collected from the kerbside by 10% by February 2008.

### Approach

A broad brush approach was taken with a variety of communications methods used to inform and engage with all residents across the city. The messages were mainly targeted at specific material streams with the aim of increasing capture rates for those materials where capture was particularly low.

Campaign materials were chosen to link with the national 'Recycle Now' campaign, and also seasonal and local events. Campaign materials included:

- **Posters.** These were distributed throughout the campaign for display on public, library, community and council notice-boards. The posters advertised the AWC scheme, Christmas collection dates, and dates of recycling roadshows.
- **Waste and recycling leaflet** (March 2006). This leaflet was delivered to all properties on the AWC scheme and provided general information about what to recycle at the kerbside plus additional ways and materials to recycle. It also gave details about the HWRCs and bulky collection scheme.
- **Service information leaflet** (October 2006). This leaflet addressed outstanding issues from the service launch information packs, and reinforced how and what to recycle. The simple and clear headlines used the full suite of WRAP's Recycle Now branding templates.
- **Bus advertising** (June 2007). To reach as many households as possible, a variety of bus advertisements were placed on the buses covering the main target housing and town centre areas.
- **Roadshows** (Summer and Autumn 2007). Five roadshows were held at different locations around the city.
- **Waste and recycling leaflet** (October 2007). This leaflet incorporated the collection dates for 2008 and provided information about the Christmas collection day changes, green waste collection scheme and a teaser of the imminent launch of the cardboard collection scheme.





- **Vehicle livery** (November 2007). Four vehicles and one officer's van were fully branded using the 'Let's Recycle More' WRAP suite of materials. This was the first time that council vehicles had been branded in York. On average each vehicle collected from 800 households each day, driving on some of the major routes through the city and creating multiple opportunities for people to have seen the campaign messages.
- **Newsletters.** *Your City Newsletter* was distributed to all properties twice during the campaign period and covered the what, how and why to recycle messages.

### Results/Conclusion

The dry recycling rate increased every year of the campaign, from 16.50% in 2005-06, to 23.30% in 2006-07 and 24.70% in 2007-08, which exceeded the target recycling rate of 20%.

The overall recycling rate also showed a huge increase from 24% in the baseline year to over 41% in the final year of the campaign.

Capture rates for all kerbside material streams have risen (Table 2), with a significant increase in plastic bottles – a waste stream highlighted in the bus advertising and second information leaflet. The target to increase the capture rate by 10% was significantly exceeded, with plastic bottles playing a major part in this success.

Best Value Performance Indicator	2005-06 (baseline)	2006-07	2007-08
BVPI 82a Percentage sent for recycling	16.50	23.30	24.7
BVPI 82b Percentage sent for composting or for treatment by anaerobic digestion	7.58	16.63	16.91
<b>BVPI 82a&amp;b combined</b>	<b>24.08</b>	<b>39.93</b>	<b>41.61</b>

Table 1: Best Value Performance indicators during the campaign

Waste stream	Pre-campaign	Post-campaign	Overall improvement
Mixed paper and card	23%	32%	+9%
Mixed glass	37%	49%	+12%
Mixed cans	24%	32%	+8%
Plastic bottles	0%	17%	+18%
Garden Waste	28%	66%	+38%

Table 2: Capture rates before and after the campaign

### Key Learning Points

- Integrated campaign with consistent branding and messages.
- Economic savings through good use of the WRAP communication suite of materials.
- Ability to monitor the direct campaign affects as no significant service changes took place during the campaign period.
- The ability to target direct messages based on capture rate analysis information.

*'The material iconography and other artwork on the 'Recycle Now' partners website proved to be a great tool for the campaign. It saved both time and money in designing logos, graphics and layouts for posters, leaflets and other deliverables.'*

**Elizabeth Wray, City of York Council**

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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)