

# Introducing Pots, Tubs and Trays (PTTs) and Tetrapak cartons to an existing kerbside collections Scheme



## Summary

This case study demonstrates how, during 2014, Torfaen Council successfully added PTTs and Tetrapak cartons to an existing kerbside box recycling scheme.

The case study covers the planning and implementation stages of the service enhancement, and the supporting communications to the 40,000 households covered by the service.

## Key Facts

- Existing kerbside scheme collected paper, glass, tins, cans, textiles and plastic bottles.
- Service improvements needed to meet statutory recycling targets.
- PTTs and Tetrapak cartons added to collection scheme in February 2014.
- 70 tonnes more plastic packaging collected from January to September 2014 compared to the same period for 2013.

## Drivers for change

The Welsh waste strategy, “Towards Zero Waste”, requires Welsh authorities to make staged progress towards recycling and composting 70% of waste by 2025. Compositional analysis and industry research identified that service improvements were required to enable Torfaen Council to meet the long-term target. This led to the decision to implement the following changes:

- Introduction of a separate fortnightly blue bag cardboard collection between October and December 2011.
- Operation of a separate weekly food waste collection from October 2012.
- Expanding the existing weekly dry recycling black box collection to include PTTs and Tetrapak cartons in February 2014.<sup>1</sup>

## Pre-implementation service review

Whilst the existing kerbside scheme enabled the authority to meet previous targets (e.g. 40% by 2010), to reach the statutory 70% recycling target required a review to establish what changes were needed. It was evident that increasing the number of materials collected for recycling was key to delivering the target.

In 2010 a review of the recycling vehicle fleet was undertaken prior to the introduction of the additional materials, due to the existing fleet coming to the end of its serviceable life. As a result a bespoke fleet specification was produced, drawing on input from operational staff, consideration of expected tonnages to be collected and the need for additional volume on the collection vehicles for the plastics.

Ultimately it was identified that the most effective way to collect food and cardboard waste in Torfaen was to use split body

vehicles, of which four vehicles were purchased. It was also agreed that following the introduction of weekly food waste collections, green (garden waste) bin collections would be suspended during the winter period. Rounds were designed so that food would be collected weekly from all properties and cardboard collected fortnightly, with half of the properties collected on week one and the remaining properties collected on week two.

The purchase of 10 kerbside sort vehicles allowed a borough-wide rollout of the PTTs and Tetrapak carton collections on the existing weekly dry recycling service. Plastics bottles and PTTs are collected together in one compartment, and then all of the other materials are collected in separate compartments (paper, glass, tins and cans, Tetrapak cartons and textiles). The vehicles are operated with a driver plus two loaders.

Prior to rollout, Torfaen Council liaised with its waste services contractor to ensure markets were available for all target materials. A two-year fixed-rate sales contract was subsequently procured for all dry recyclables, commencing in October 2013. This enabled the authority to secure a revenue for the collected material. Plastics are bulked at the contractor’s depot in Cwmbran and sold for onward processing at a number of different plants in the UK - these can vary according to the market. Plastics are separated by the reprocessor, and the material is then thoroughly washed and granulated to form new flakes or polymeric pellets, which are used in a range of product applications.

Throughout the rollout, Torfaen Council decided that no restriction would be placed on the number of 55 litre boxes that residents could have, and nets were provided to minimise windblown material. Requests for boxes doubled during the first four months of the roll out; larger families typically use three boxes for recycling.

<sup>1</sup> Paper, glass, tins, cans, plastic bottles and textiles were originally targeted on the black box scheme.

## Planning for the introduction of PTTs

Torfaen Council developed a project plan prior to introducing PTTs. The plan recognised the need to update policies and procedures (covering, for example, health and safety and educating staff) and to manage communications both internally and externally.

A number of road shows were scheduled and these worked extremely well. They were targeted throughout the borough in the major supermarkets, customer care centres and leisure centres. The majority of resident feedback was that the introduction of PTTs collections was welcomed, and by taking orders for new black boxes and nets residents seemed more likely to participate.

## Communicating the changes

The Council received funding from Waste Awareness Wales to help develop the communication campaign and supporting plan. The plan identified where adverts would be shown, the key message and how long the adverts should be displayed. The target audience for each of the adverts was also identified to maximise awareness of the addition of PTTs to the existing recycling service. Every piece of communication was produced in both Welsh and English.

A publicity pack was developed in conjunction with Waste Awareness Wales to introduce the scheme. In the pack each household received a letter and leaflet introducing the scheme, and a waste collection calendar.

Additional methods of communication included the following:

- Articles were placed in the local press (Torfaen Talks and Trash Times).
- Education Officer visits to schools.
- Briefing notes for Members and Call Centre staff.

- Posts on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Council website update.
- Signage on new recycling vehicles.
- A3 posters displayed in libraries, local shops, customer care centres etc.
- Roadshows.
- Passenger panels for bus adverts.

Plastic information leaflet delivered to all residents prior to the change. This included a prompt for residents to contact the council if they required additional recycling boxes.

## Outcomes

The addition of PTTs to the recycling scheme has increased the range of materials residents can recycle, and importantly has diverted a high volume stream from the residual waste. This has led to an increase in the tonnage of plastic collected for recycling; 70 tonnes more plastic packaging were collected in January to September 2014 compared to the same period for 2013.

The upfront service review and resulting changes to the fleet profile ensured that there was sufficient capacity in the rounds to collect PTTs. The Council felt that the introduction of PTTs was a positive change for the residents, as a desire for plastic PTTs to be added to their existing service was expressed by residents (through the roadshows and communications via letter or email).

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