

## Summary sheet

# Realising the Reuse Value of Household WEEE

**WRAP has undertaken a detailed study of the potential reuse value of unwanted WEEE disposed of at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and via local authority bulky waste collections. Reusing WEEE, either directly or after repair, is a promising route to reducing waste and extending the life of often perfectly serviceable products.**

**The research found that there is the potential to generate a large amount of resale value from the repair, refurbishment and open market resale of WEEE.**

## How much could this WEEE be worth?

The study estimates that almost a quarter of WEEE brought by householders to HWRCs across the UK has a reuse value, and together this could be worth over £200 million in gross revenue each year.

- The research suggests that 23% of all WEEE separately collected at HWRCs is immediately resalable or resalable following viable repair and refurbishment. From this, it is estimated that a maximum of around £220 million in resale value could be obtained.
- Once the cost of purchasing and repairing the items has been accounted for, the net value of this equipment is around £106 million, ignoring the cost of transport and handling.
- The equivalent gross resale value for equipment from bulky waste collections is £77 million.
- These figures are based on an annual total of 348,000 tonnes of WEEE arising at HWRCs, and 149,000 tonnes from bulky waste collections.

## Which WEEE categories have the highest potential value?

The reuse value of WEEE varies considerably by category and per tonne. Small WEEE typically has lower levels of reuse potential, but the proportion that is reusable has a higher value compared to other categories.

- Nearly three quarters of the estimated value of segregated WEEE at HWRCs comes from small WEEE – this is the category with the greatest economic potential on a £/tonne basis.
- Certain WEEE streams have a far lower resale value compared to other categories. CRT TVs, for example, have nil or negative value.
- Large domestic appliances also offer good potential value, from reuse, use of parts, or scrap,

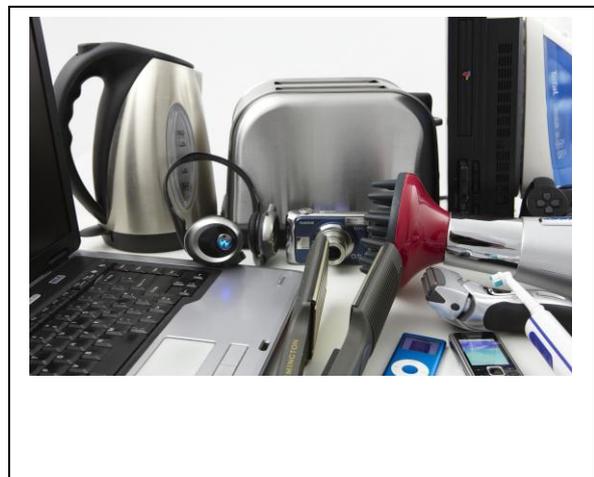
making up 61% of the resale value from bulky collected WEEE.

- Fridges and freezers offer good reuse potential if they are working; otherwise their value lies in dismantling or as scrap.

## How does WEEE differ between HWRC and bulky waste collection?

As you would expect, larger heavier items predominate in bulky waste collections, with smaller items taking a larger proportion of WEEE deposited at HWRCs.

- Consumer equipment is the category of WEEE most commonly brought to HWRCs – one third is equipment such as DVD and video recorders, radios and TVs. This is followed by small household appliances.
- For bulky waste collections, large household appliances and consumer equipment each comprise a third of collected WEEE.



**Small WEEE items** The reuse potential for these items has the greatest economic potential on a £/tonne basis.

## What do we know about the reasons why householders dispose of these items?

While the main reason for disposing of WEEE is because the householder considers the item to be broken, many items are also disposed of because they are no longer wanted or have been replaced.

- Consumer equipment (TVs, radios, DVD players etc.) is less likely to be disposed of because it is broken compared to other types of WEEE. Over half at HWRCs is thrown away because it is being replaced with a newer item or is no longer wanted.
- Testing found that 12% of WEEE at HWRCs is in full working order, with a further 11% viable for resale following repair.
- Interestingly, 30% of respondents consider their WEEE item to be in full working order – far greater than proves to be the case.

## Do householders consider repairing their broken equipment?

Many people seem to have given up on the idea of repairing their broken electrical equipment, perhaps reflecting a belief that repairs are expensive and difficult to arrange.

- For broken items, nearly half of respondents at HWRCs consider that it would be cheaper to replace rather than repair their item.
- The main reason for not repairing broken WEEE subject to bulky waste collection is that it is considered beyond repair.

## Is WEEE damaged before being collected or taken to the HWRC?

Generally, WEEE was not found to be damaged while being stored to take to the HWRC or awaiting bulky waste collection.

- Just 6% of WEEE brought to the HWRC is not in the same condition at the HWRC as compared to when it is decided to dispose of it.
- Only 8% of WEEE is damaged before bulky waste collection.

## Are householders aware of alternatives to HWRCs and bulky waste collections?

When asked about alternative methods for discarding WEEE, unprompted awareness of alternatives is low. This suggests that the concept of sending WEEE for reuse is not well established.

- Of householders taking WEEE to HWRCs, 83% say they are not aware of any other disposal route.
- Of those arranging a bulky waste collection, 57% say they could take their item to an HWRC.

## What about WEEE in the residual waste stream?

- It is estimated that 89,000 tonnes of WEEE are also disposed of in residual waste at HWRCs, with a suggested potential resale value of £28 million.
- An estimated 160,000 tonnes of WEEE are disposed of via residual household waste collections. Taking account of its likely condition, this stream could have a resale value of up to £56 million.
- Note that these totals should not be aggregated, as there may be the potential for overlap.

## How was this research undertaken?

This study was based on:

- 594 face-to-face interviews with householders at five HWRCs across the UK;
- 114 telephone interviews with householders who had recently booked a bulky waste collection; and
- the independent testing of 112 WEEE items by an expert testing company.

Full report, "Realising the Reuse Value of Household WEEE", available at [www.wrap.org.uk](http://www.wrap.org.uk).

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

