Recycling for all at Welcome Break

Summary

In 2012, Welcome Break began to look at ways to reduce the amount of waste they sent to landfill and partnered with their waste contractor, Biffa, to achieve this. A review of operations identified that there was a need for recycling both ‘back of house’, in the food preparation areas of the various outlets, and ‘front of house’, in the customer serving and seating areas.

Through three site trials, design work with a recycling bin manufacturer and staff training, the company has now successfully introduced recycling facilities for both customers and staff at their service stations.

This has increased overall recycling rates from 16% to 48%.

In recognition of this good work, Welcome Break was shortlisted for Recycler of the Year (Retail/Service Sector) at the National Recycling Awards in 2013.

Background

Welcome Break is an independent motorway services operator, with locations throughout the UK. A number of hospitality and retail brands operate at Welcome Break’s sites including: Starbucks, KFC, Burger King and EATIN. In addition, some sites have a Days Inn or Ramada Hotel.
Based on observations of customers using the recycling station, two things were identified to improve usage rates:

- Improve the bin designs and locations to make them easier to use;
- Improve bin signage and use instructions.

The trial was widened to include 2 additional service stations and several changes were made. Greater attention was paid to where the bins were sited, with care taken to examine the ‘flow’ of customers and where they may want to dispose of their waste.

There was also a need to make it easier to empty food waste and recyclable containers from customer trays into the bin. Working with Glasdon, the bin manufacturer, a new design was developed that provided a tray holder on the front of the bin that could be tilted upwards to allow waste to be transferred into the bin more easily.

Finally, improved signage was provided for the new bins, based on WRAP’s standard labelling system, and using a 5-step process to help guide the separation of materials to minimise contamination.

Outside Recycling Provision

Waste also arises from car park and pedestrian areas at each site. To help improve recycling rates in these areas, Welcome Break provided ‘paired’ bins (as shown on the left), which provide space for the disposal of DMR and general waste.

Signage was also developed for these bins, using the same graphics as the ‘front-of-house’ recycling stations so as to provide consistency with the recycling provision in their customer seating area.
Recycling benefits across the business

The new recycling facilities were rolled out across all Welcome Break sites between July and November 2013. The introduction of the scheme has resulted in the diversion of 28,000 tonnes of waste from landfill by October 2014, from the start of the scheme in July 2013, and has increased the overall recycling rate from 16% to 48% over the same period.

As well as being shortlisted for the National Recycling Awards in 2013, Welcome Break has received recognition from its customers on social media, who have praised the new approach to recycling and the company’s commitment to ‘doing the right thing’.

Dealing with ‘contamination’

All of the recyclable waste from Welcome Break is collected and goes to Biffa’s Material Recycling Facilities (MRFs) for sorting into separate recyclable materials. Food goes to an anaerobic digester to produce gas for energy production and a digestate which is used as a fertiliser.

Contamination of food waste with packaging material can be problematic and these facilities typically impose a strict limit on contamination levels.

Welcome Break has therefore had to put a considerable amount of effort into: a) staff training and engagement to ensure that all employees take care in separating waste, and b) the careful monitoring and management of customer waste through spot audits. Any issues with contamination are flagged to the site in question and actions identified to avoid this happening in the future. The easy-to-use facilities, with clear signage and instructions, are helping to minimise contamination.

The Hospitality and Food Service Agreement

In June 2012, WRAP launched the Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, a voluntary agreement to support the sector in reducing waste and increasing recycling rates.

For more information on WRAP’s work with the Hospitality and Food Service Sector, visit www.wrap.org.uk/hospitality or email hafs@wrap.org.uk

Future Aspirations

Following on from its significant achievements with waste recycling, Welcome Break aims to further improve segregation and increase recycling rates so that the volume of waste sent to landfill is minimised.

WRAP’s vision is a world where resources are used sustainably. Our mission is to accelerate the move to a sustainable resource-efficient economy through re-inventing how we design, produce and sell products; re-thinking how we use and consume products; and re-defining what is possible through re-use and recycling.

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