

Collections Blueprint: Trade waste recycling



Offering businesses a comprehensive recycling service in Conwy

Households across Wales have come to expect comprehensive waste and recycling services, and in the county of Conwy, this is also spreading to local businesses, with the county council priding itself on its comprehensive trade waste service.

Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) introduced a recycling system for businesses in 2008, offering collections of residual waste, paper, cardboard, cans, glass, and plastic from businesses, in a manner that means those that live and work in the county can 'recognise synergies' between the household and business services.

A food waste service was added to the county's commercial offerings in 2013.

Currently, the council has 1,300 commercial customers, mainly concentrated on the coast at popular seaside resorts like Llandudno and Rhos-on-Sea.

The service handles 4,500 tonnes of trade waste per year, including 759 tonnes of dry recycling and 617 tonnes of food waste, from a wide variety of businesses in the county.

Making recycling enticing

Since 2013, CCBC has only taken on trade waste customers if they also agree to sign up to the recycling service. The council regards refuse bins containing recyclable material as contaminated, and if a business customer puts recycling in with general waste, a council recycling officer will visit the business to educate the customers. As a last resort, repeat offenders could be removed from the council's customer base.

Recycling is made enticing for all customers, though, through a pricing structure ensuring it is cheaper to recover material than send it to landfill, not least to cover

the associated charges the council incurs through disposal fees. Though there are many different pricing structures and different container types, the standard charge for a weekly collection of a 240-litre wheelie bin of refuse, for instance, is £5.50, whereas for an equivalent wheelie bin of recyclable material, it is only £1.90.

Keeping materials separate

Keenly aware of the The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 requirement that recyclables are collected separately, as well as the Welsh Government's Collections Blueprint advocating the same, the council offers separate collections of plastics (both bottles and pots, tubs and trays), glass, cans, paper, cardboard and food waste.

Keeping materials separate helps the council maintain its good relationships with its reprocessors, which, for steel, aluminium, paper, card, plastic and glass, are all within 100 miles in North Wales or North West England, including a long-term contract with the local paper mill in Shotton, North Wales.

The council's flexible service offers variation in the types and sizes of containers, which range from the Trolibocs used in the domestic service or stickers for bundles of cardboard, to 240- or 660-litre bins. Collection frequency is also flexible, with weekly, fortnightly or monthly recycling collections possible for most containers, though food waste and Trolibocs are only collected on a weekly basis.

Focus on food waste

In addition to the restaurants, bed and breakfasts and hotels serving beach-going holidaymakers along the coast, Conwy also has many agricultural businesses throughout the county, meaning it has one of the highest concentrations of food-related businesses in Wales. Consequently, and with an eye on potential legislation mandating separate food waste collection, the council encourages its commercial customers to recycle food as well as dry recyclables.

The council offers free compostable bags to trade customers to make recycling food as hygienic and hassle-free as possible. CCBC accepts all cooked or raw food, including leftovers, meat, fish, bones, cheese, fruit and vegetables, egg shells, bread, cake, biscuits, tea bags, coffee grounds and kitchen paper through weekly collections.

Food waste recycled by Conwy businesses is processed either at the council's plant on Anglesey into high-quality compost or at an anaerobic digestion plant to generate energy and fertiliser.

A competitive trade waste service

CCBC's trade waste service is recognised as offering value for money compared to numerous private competitors, especially as the council is upfront about costs, with no hidden fees for bin rentals or duty of care documentation. Customers appreciate the dedicated trade waste team, comprised of a trade waste officer and supervisor, plus members of the Environment Advice Team, who man the phones and answer questions.

The team is committed to providing customers with not just the most economical package, but also the most environmentally-friendly one as well, through onsite audits and information packs to inform businesses of their responsibilities. The council also benefits from having a fleet of trade recycling vehicles (using different vehicles for the different materials) operating throughout the county – including to rural areas where private trade waste contractors do not necessarily offer services, ensuring the comprehensive service to customers is never interrupted.

