

# Collections Blueprint: Residual waste restriction



## Limiting the number of black bags in Monmouthshire

As part of the Welsh Government's zero waste strategy, local authorities have been set demanding recycling targets increasing over the next 10 years – incrementally stepping up to 70 per cent recycling of household waste in 2025.

A key measure to assist this is limiting how much waste households can throw away. By restricting the capacity of the residual waste bin, people are encouraged to make more use of their recycling service.

Monmouthshire County Council started limiting households to two 80-litre bags of residual waste for every fortnightly collection in June 2013, in order to raise its recycling rate and reduce the overall cost of the waste management service at a time of financial pressure.

After rolling the new scheme out to all 42,000 households in the county in one go, Monmouthshire's recycling rates increased from 55.5 per cent in 2012/13 to 61.9 per cent in 2014/15.

### Providing tools for the job

To help residents reduce their residual waste in line with the new limits, the council provided each household with a year's supply of branded grey bags. Collection staff would only collect residual waste put out in the council-branded sacks, which meant that residents appreciated that if they put out too many for one collection, they would run out by the end of the year.

Each household was also given a reusable hessian bag as a starter pack, containing extra rolls of red and purple recycling bags, food waste bags and literature explaining all of the changes to the service and reminding them of what could be recycled and where and when it could be collected.

Communications explaining the need to recycle more were also distributed through newspapers, bus and train advertisements, on local news services and through roadshows.

As a result, after two years, the amount of residual waste per household being collected at

the kerbside had fallen by 56 per cent, from 5.2 to 2.3 kilogrammes (kg) per week.

### **Optimising the recycling service**

Monmouthshire made no changes to the recycling system, with no limit to the amount of recycling collected each week. Supporting this, recycling bags and compostable food waste liners are free to pick up at local community hubs and shops.

In large households, where the restricted capacity poses an issue, the council allows applications for an allowance of an extra bag. Prior to approving this, waste awareness officers visit the household to ensure that it is recycling as much as it can.

A separate nappy and adult hygiene waste collection service has been introduced, meaning such items are not included in the residual restrictions.

Because the amount of residual waste put out for collection dropped so sharply, residual collection rounds were carried out far more quickly, while recycling rounds took much longer. Monmouthshire therefore undertook a rationalisation project to adjust the areas covered by each round to ensure that the different crews' work was balanced.

### **Falling residual waste tonnages**

As a result of the residual waste restrictions, the tonnage of residual waste collected at the kerbside has halved.

This has been matched by growth in the quantity recycled: the amount collected rose from 6.6kg per household per week to 8.4kg, pushing the recycling rate up to 63 per cent. This has been achieved at a time that the council also introduced a charge for separate garden waste collection, which has reduced green waste recycling tonnages.

There has been a 30 per cent increase in the amount of waste taken to the county's four Household Waste Recycling Centres ((HWRCs) located in each of the four main towns), as there are no limits to the amount that residents can deposit there.

However, the total amount of residual

waste collected by the council in 2013/14, through kerbside collections, HWRCs and other streams, measured at 17,030 tonnes – 3,016 tonnes and 15 per cent less than in 2012/13.

### **Clear financial benefits**

The fall in residual waste generation that has resulted from Monmouthshire's residual waste restriction has delivered financial benefits.

Within a year of the new service, the annual cost of sending residual waste for treatment at the facility used by the Prosiect Gwyrd (Project Green) authorities of Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire, Vale of Glamorgan and Caerphilly had dropped by over £335,000 to £2,263,000, a figure that fell by a further £30,000 in 2014/15.

The much lower fees for sending materials to recycling mean that despite tonnages of food and dry recycling increasing by 27 per cent, the cost of that only rose by £40,000 (9.7 per cent) in the first year.

In total, in the two years following the change, the council's waste treatment costs for all streams dropped by almost £500,000 from £3.44 million to £2.98 million. The overall cost of providing the grey bags and the communication campaign was £170,000.

