

Collections Blueprint: 80%+ recycling from HWRCs



Recovering resources and value from HWRCs in Rhondda Cynon Taf

Though kerbside collections in Wales have developed hugely in recent years to increase their efficiency and impact on recycling, they will never be able to cover every recyclable waste stream generated by households. For a large range of materials, household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) are vital for recovering value and resources.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT), seven sites are placed strategically throughout the county to meet the needs of its 235,000 residents. The sites often recycle over 90 per cent of material collected, and in the 12 months up to December 2015, recorded an overall rate of 87.17 per cent. Even material that can't be recycled is still diverted from landfill wherever possible. Monthly rates for diversion from landfill at the sites regularly exceed 90 per cent, and for those same 12 months averaged 89.68 per cent.

Llantrisant 100% Recycling Centre

In 2015, the council opened a new HWRC, Llantrisant 100% Recycling Centre, which has a target of recycling every single bit of waste deposited by users. This ambition has driven up activity on the site, where there is no skip for general waste.

The site is built around a bespoke modular design that takes vehicles around a carousel of blocks. A split-level ramp raises cars above containers that take heavier materials, allowing residents to more easily and safely deposit these materials such as wood, green waste, metals and plastic. On the ground floor of the site are smaller containers for items such as cardboard, textiles and glass.

Funded by the Welsh Government's Collaborative Change Programme, the site has reached a recycling rate of around 95 per cent each month since opening in October 2015,

with its diversion rate reaching as high as 98.9 per cent. The site is expected to become one of the council's most-used sites.

Ban on black bin bags

A key policy helping Rhondda Cynon Taf Borough Council achieve its high recycling and diversion figures is a ban on the use of black bin bags at its HWRCs.

The measure was introduced in June 2014, at the same time as the council restricted the amount of residual waste that could be collected in its fortnightly kerbside scheme (one bag for those with 120-litre wheelie bins, none for those with 240-litre bins), and was designed to ensure that residents fully sorted their waste and put care into what they were throwing away. Any resident bringing a black bag onto the site will now be challenged by staff and told to sort the waste inside it or not deposit it at all.

The result of this policy was a jump in the average recycling rate at the county's HWRCs from 78.4 per cent to 93.4 per cent.

Making the process as easy as possible

HWRCs in Rhondda Cynon Taf are laid out to make the process as easy as possible for residents. General waste banks are put at the back of the site in all of the county's facilities, apart from Llantrisant, which doesn't have one, so that by the time they reach it, residents have as little left to throw away as possible. Clear signage is also key, with each bay numbered, with a picture and words explaining what can go in to each container in both English and Welsh.

A clear, consistent layout allows the staff's meet and greet policy to work more efficiently. Operatives at the sites greet residents, talk to them about what they have brought and are able to precisely explain where to take it to get the most use out of it.

Staff are given a greater sense of involvement through the interaction and are thoroughly briefed on decisions made concerning the HWRCs and any new processes that are introduced. This in turn

makes them better placed to give advice to site users and get involved with the decision-making process.

Pushing higher up the hierarchy

At Llantrisant, a pilot reuse shop is being developed to push items brought to the site further up the waste hierarchy. Staff ask those entering the site if any of their material would be suitable for reuse. Donated items are sorted and stored on shelves set up in the rooms below the raised level. Residents visiting the site can visit the shop and purchase any of the assortment of goods, with funds going to local charity and to help rollout similar shops at the other HWRCs in the county.

The council also runs a bicycle recycling scheme and paint recycling project out of its HWRCs. Bikes brought to the sites are refurbished at a local school and resold, while unused paint, often treated as hazardous waste by HWRC operators, is taken to a reprocessor, where it is mixed, repotted into a new product and reused within RCT.

