



Smaller bins in Denbighshire

With an eye on meeting Welsh Government recycling targets, Denbighshire County Council has been gradually restricting household residual waste since 2006 – introducing less frequent collection services and reducing the volume of residual bins while increasing capacity for recycling.

Prior to 2006, Denbighshire had a weekly black sack collection, but still produced lower than average residual household waste arisings, so when introducing wheeled bins the council chose a relatively modest sized bin of 180 litres.

Initially, 10,000 households, out of a total of around 42,000, were given 180-litre bins. Residual collections were also reduced to once every two weeks and dry recycling facilities were upgraded.

Introducing these services to only a quarter of the population increased the recycling rate by 10 per cent within a year.

Expanding the recycling service

In April 2009, more changes took place including the expansion of the council's recycling system to accept more material streams, including cardboard, mixed plastics and food waste. The move saw the tonnage of material from each household increase from around 175 kilogrammes (kg) of dry recycling to 225kg, with the additional diversion of around 100kg of household food waste. This resulted in the recycling rate increasing from around 27 per cent to just over 50 per cent.

Significantly, despite a drop in waste passing through civic



amenity sites, collection teams revealed that households still had more room in residual bins because material was being recycled, and that the content of residual bins was drier due to higher levels of food waste diversion. This spurred the council to further reduce residual capacity to 140 litres (or 70 litres per week, as waste collection is fortnightly), saving on upfront capital costs by issuing the bins as and when households have required replacements, rather than in a single rollout.

Introducing these changes has resulted in a recycling rate of over 62 per cent and the reduction of residual waste in Denbighshire to around 42,000 tonnes per year, which equates to less than 150kg per household per year.

Saving the council money

With the full political support of the council, the waste and recycling team found it easy to decide to switch to 140-litre bins, and the residents also proved easy to win over. The waste and recycling

changes mean Denbighshire is saving considerable sums, not least through the reduction in residual waste disposal.

With landfill tax currently over £80 per tonne, the total cost of disposing of waste is now more than £100, so this reduction in residual waste has meant clear savings. Indeed, the council's spending on waste and recycling services has been decreasing year on year recently, and despite large increases in landfill tax, treatment costs and inflation, the current budget for waste and recycling is less than it was in 2006/07, when the council began restricting waste.

With provisional data for the first quarter of 2016 showing that residual waste is still decreasing in Denbighshire – with the residents generating just 37kg of waste in the quarter compared to 45kg in the same quarter the year before and compared to a Wales-wide average of 51kg per person – the financial and environmental benefits of restricting residual waste only look to be increasing.