



Recycling Household Waste

Halesworth U3A Science Group

With man-made climate change
and declining natural resource,
should we recycle more?

Prepared by Tony Langford who sends his apologies for missing the meeting!



Current Thinking

in an ideal world

Don't forget that we should:

- MINIMISE use of plastics, metal, glass & paper
- RE-USE if possible
- RECYCLE after re-use
- RECOVER ENERGY if cannot recycle
- DUMP if all else fails



Current Position in UK

- UK households provide over 30 million tonnes of waste each year.
- Of this only 17%* is recycled
- Some other European countries recycle over 50%

* This includes 700,000 tones sent to China for recycling.



Position in Suffolk

From Kerbside collections there are

- 114,000 tonnes recycled or re-used

Of which

- 45,000 tonnes are card & paper
- 5,000 tonnes are plastic
- 2,000 tonnes are metal cans
- 62,000 tonnes become composted garden waste

From Recycling centres and other 'bring' sites there are an additional

- Well over 5,000 tonnes of glass and a myriad of other items that are recycled – see later.

These figures are the latest available but are probably a little higher today



Why is recycling so limited in UK

- **Education?**

Perceived a waste of time by many

Can't be bothered/not my problem

No financial incentives or fines

- **Lack of Investment**

Recycling equipment is very expensive and often labour intensive making it unprofitable to sell recycled material when competing against cheap labour (China) and/or subsidised competitors

- **Left to local Authorities**

Limited central control so each area 'does its own thing' which causes confusion



But is Recycling beneficial?

- Glass – the energy saved when glass is recycled back into another glass product is massive
- Plastics – both energy and declining resources (oil) saved by recycling back into another plastic item
- Cans – like glass, major energy savings here.
- Paper – most is recycled into newsprint with gains in energy consumption, pollution and water use. However some would argue that growing more softwood trees, thereby increasing the volume of carbon dioxide removed from the atmosphere, instead of recycling papers is better.



Just for interest, what happens to our recycled waste?

- Paper/Card – new paper & card products, mainly newsprint
- Plastics – new plastic products including refuse sacks, plastic bottles, fibres and 'wood'.
- Cans – new metal products.
- Bottles – new bottles & jars and crushed for aggregate.
- Books – re-distributed to charity organisations or pulped for new paper products.
- Tetra-pak – pulped and aluminium, polythene and paper separated off for recycling.
- Textils & Footware – re-use in developing world or shredded to make cotton felt/wadding/mops/dusters
- TVs & White Goods – broken down into constituent parts for further recycling
- Car & Domestic Batteries – separated into component parts for further recycling
- Ink & Toner cartridges – processed and re-used
- Light bulbs & Tubes – glass used for new bulbs or aggregate. Mercury separated and sold and metals sold for recycling
- Etc, Etc, Etc