

# North Hertfordshire District Council – Green Office Project

Our Project aim was;

- To reduce waste to landfill from the Council Offices and to ensure that the local authority officers are practising waste reduction and landfill diversion at the same time as driving and promoting similar messages to the residents of North Herts.
- To encourage employees to recycle and compost as much of their office derived waste as possible.
- To create as many opportunities to recycle and compost as possible within the work place.
- To reduce residual waste to landfill and therefore carbon and methane emissions.
- To reduce residual waste costs and generate income from the recyclates.
- To develop and promote similar messages regarding recycling and diversion to staff, residents and commercial customers of NHDC.

The above aims are being achieved by providing recycling collections at the District Council Offices for paper, glass, cans, mixed plastics, cartons, food & card using existing collection contractor arrangements. All currently provided free of charge to NHDC.

The project launched w/c 28-3-11. To 30-6-12 we have:

- Reduced landfill waste from 23.237 tonnes over 15 months to 5.627 tonnes (75% reduction). We exchanged the daily collected 1100litre refuse bin to a 240 litre bin in just 3 weeks. This reduced NHDC's waste collection cost by 59% equating to ~£ 2470 to date
- Increased paper recycling by approx 94% to 41.12 tonnes over 15 months. This is due to confidential papers (after being shredded) now being collected in paper bins and increased general awareness of recycling, resulting in higher participation.
- Composted 23.372 tonnes of food/card.
- Recycled 1224kg of plastics/cartons, 1672kg glass and 236kg cans.
- Cumulatively a diversion from landfill of 67.625 tonnes to date, which has outweighed our first predication of 57.45 tonnes (including shredded paper -previously this was going off site for disposal so is not in stated landfill or paper recycling figures).
- Income from sale of paper received to end of June 2012 was £5026.27.
- Previously, all waste except a proportion of paper was sent to landfill. Weights have been derived from monitoring the bins' fill levels using an average weight of a 240 litre bin for each material.
- Removed the majority of general waste bins from all the offices within the Councils main office.
- Provided multiple recycling and composting bins on all floors including reception for customers use.
- Previous assumptions were that capital costs of providing the new internal recycling / composting bins would be under written by the paper revenue over the first 30 months. These costs were recovered within the first 12 months of our successful project.

We researched appropriate containers, trialling some within Waste Services and contacted other councils who had launched similar schemes to learn their experiences.

A significant part of the project was preparation to assess each department's requirements in terms of waste generation, both recyclable and residual and where requirements differed eg back office and customer facing service areas.

Prior to promoting the new collection services further we gained authorisation of senior management to make changes to officers' working environment. This had to be carried out sensitively at a time of change regarding financial cuts and redundancies.

For two months before launch, we publicised the service to staff via team briefings and intranet to prepare them for the service changes.

We designed promotional items - an A3 poster detailing containers and materials and stickers for bins, both internal and external and service briefing notes presenting these to Senior Managers and to the internal Staff Consultation Forum to gain feedback upon our suggestions.

To launch the service we held a promotional event with posters, guidance and containers on show for staff to see and combined this with a book swap to encourage higher attendance. We also offered a prize of a toiletry pamper hamper (left over from a Present Swap event) which was based on reading the information and answering a question.

A presentation was given to Senior Management Team once the officers had been consulted to provide a level of reassurance to the senior officers that concerns and comments had been addressed.

Discussion and negotiation took place with the office cleaning teams, including caretakers as these individuals would play the main role in emptying the bins as and when required and submitting them ready for collection upon the appropriate days. Procedure notes for caretakers and cleaners were drafted and we now hold regular meetings with the Office Facilities Manager. We receive feedback in addition to our own monitoring, from the cleaning staff who inform us if they find significant amounts of recyclables within the general waste bins or contamination within the recycling bins.

All individual desk waste bins were removed and replaced with communal waste bins situated at key locations on each floor.

Paper bins accommodating both white office paper and news/pams were located throughout all floors, ensuring no desk was too far away from one. Containers for plastic/cartons, glass, cans and food/paper towels were provided in kitchen areas. Staff also had the option of their own desktop tidy to collect their recyclables through out the day, limiting the need for constant trips to the recycling bins.

We recruited a network of Green Champions, at least two per floor to act as contact points for basic queries e.g what goes where. This team was briefed on all service aspects and asked to provide feedback on questions they were regularly being asked so we could highlight this information in any progress bulletins or on the intranet. Most of the general queries formed 'hot topics' which are added weekly to the intranet. Waste Services and Green Champions monitor the recycling and general waste containers to ensure materials are being placed in the correct bins. Feedback is provided to the Waste Team if appropriate to escalate any issues to the head of the relevant department for action. Any issues that the Waste Team experience during bin inspections are reported back to the Green Champions for them to raise at their next team meeting. We have set up regular meetings with the Green Champions for them to share their experiences of any issues they've found or questions they've been asked.

The Waste team also attend any team meetings to discuss the service and address any concerns or queries staff may have.

We provide regular feedback on progress via Team Briefs and Senior Management Group briefings as well as a performance graph in Reception.

Other local organisations have now shown an interest in the project and enquiries have been made as to whether they could implement a similar scheme. Due to the introduction of a trade waste recycling service from NHDC we are now offering advise and experience to help provide this shortly.

We introduced this scheme to;

- Reduce waste sent to landfill and help protect the environment.
- Reduce the cost of waste generated at NHDC and create revenue through material sales.
- Make it easier for staff to recycle i.e. increasing the opportunities for them to participate and continue the behaviour at work as they do at home.
- To further improve residents' perception of the Council.
- To prove and actively follow our own key environmental messages we as a council are requesting residents to follow. To be seen to be leading by example.
- To assist with NHDC's climate change strategy, and to lower emissions from NHDC's buildings.

The project was funded through landfill diversion payments from Herts County Council to NHDC. All costs were recovered within 12 months. This is due to reduction in residual waste collection costs and the generated income from the sale of the recyclables (mainly paper).

Lowering NHDC's running costs and increasing efficiencies on waste will benefit residents financially as well as the environmental benefit of sending less waste to landfill.

- NHDC cost saving of £2470 to date on residual waste collection and income generation of £105 p/t for paper, £135 per tonne from December 2011.
- Positively contributes to NHDC's sustainability - 75% reduction in waste to landfill and increased recycling by 219%.
- Exposes staff to the same messages regarding waste and recycling as residents. This service seems to be making staff more environmentally conscientious and allowing them to continue learned recycling behaviours from home into the workplace.

Waste collection costs will be reduced further and income from paper recyclates is now being generated. Greater environmental awareness will be maintained by NHDC employees.

Such full authority participation in any service is rare so we tried to be as inclusive as possible and worked with every team and department, ensuring we addressed their concerns and providing full information allowing them to participate fully.

Green champions were key in involving and receiving feedback from all floors to help the smooth running of the service.

We learnt how important people's individual desk bins are to them and how if you directly address their concerns, no matter how trivial, they are more willing to participate and play their part. Service monitoring will continue to ensure we consistently achieve a high capture rate of recyclables and maintain participation.

It was vital that the project was supported by the Chief Executive Officer and the elected members, aiding the implementation of the project from the outset.