

Sustainability Forum: 13th July – Responsible Resource Use

The evening was divided into two parts, 3 presentations with time for questions, followed by a roundtable and feedback session.

The presentations were:

- Waste and recycling – a borough perspective;
- The Random Café – experiences, successes and challenges
- RefillAbell – experiences, successes and challenges

The next Sustainability Forum will be on the evening of 24th October, with the theme of reducing the environmental impact of your home.

Waste and recycling – a borough perspective:

The Council waste collection service consists of a weekly collection for recycling and food, and a fortnightly collection for waste and garden waste (around 112,000 collections per week across all 4 services).

Watford has the lowest amount of residual waste per household in the county, and for 2021/22 had a recycling rate of 51%, which is good for an urban borough, and 5th highest in Hertfordshire. The England average recycling rate is 44.1%.

There are a wide range of things which influence recycling, some of which WBC can influence, such as collection methodology and outreach, and some which WBC can't such as weather/ climate and demographic (urban).

Watford's recycling rate has been improving, especially since weekly food and fortnightly waste was introduced. The challenge is how we continue to improve, by reducing, reusing and recycling. The focus for 2023 is to introduce food recycling flats and roll out food awareness campaign on reducing food waste. Currently we have 24% avoidable food waste, that is food that is edible!

How can you help?

- Sign up to the #Worth Saving newsletter to follow the four steps to waste less food **www.wasteaware.org.uk/worthSaving**
- Organise a clothes swap event – kits are free to borrow from Veolia
- Share details of our reusable nappy and sustainable periods schemes
- Check out our 'remember your reusables' campaign – don't leave the house without them!
- Recycle Right – avoid wish recycling!
- Share the details of the above with friends, family, community groups!

Further information can be found at:

- www.watford.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling
- www.wasteaware.org.uk
- www.recyclenow.co.uk

The slides are attached in the appendix.

Q&A:

- Much of the waste comes from supermarket packaging – how do we influence suppliers / supermarkets to reduce their packaging?
- How will food waste bins be introduced to flats? Working with the flats management company, internal food waste bins (like for houses) will be provided – if you live in a flat, encourage your management company to respond and cooperate. We cannot enforce it.
- Where does food waste go to? Anaerobic digesters
- Can the link to see where our waste goes be more accessible? Information can be found:
 - <https://www.watford.gov.uk/reduce-waste/happens-recycling>
 - <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/doc/waste/wasteaware/hwp-annual-report-21-22-accessible-version-002.pdf> - the images below, taken from that report, shows where waste has been disposed of in 2021/22. Please read the report for further information.

2021/22 was largely a continuation of established arrangements which saw residual waste directed to energy from waste (66%) and landfill facilities (33%) in adjacent counties and regions rather than in Hertfordshire itself as illustrated in Fig 27 below.

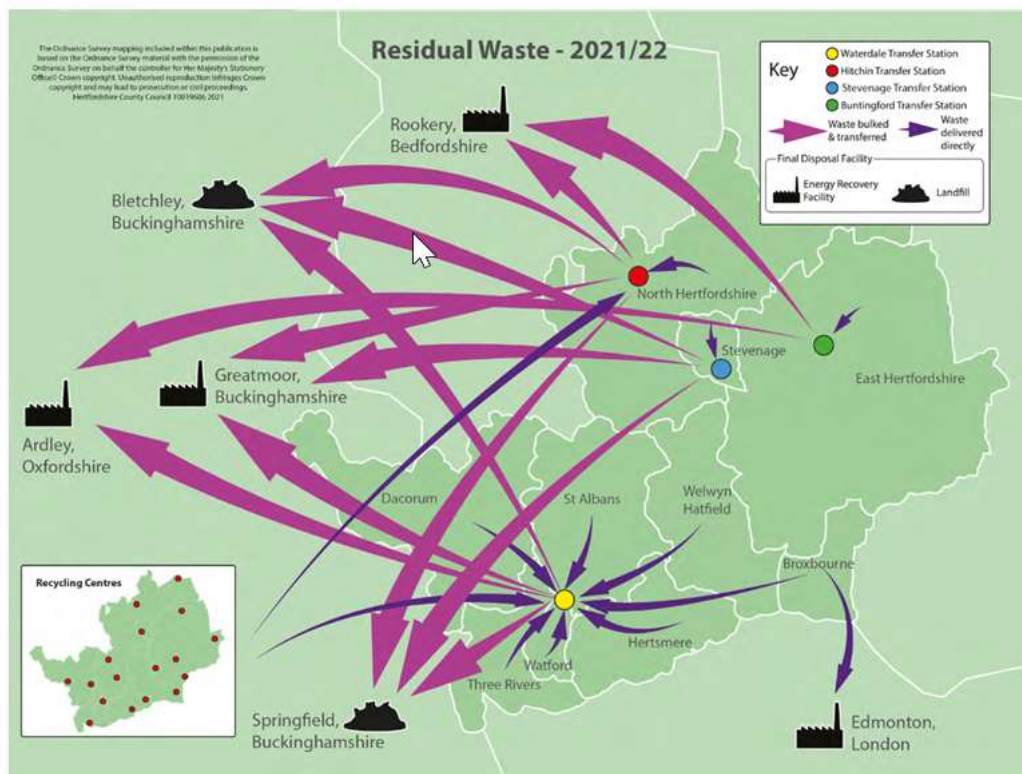


Figure 27 - the vast majority of the residual waste generated in Hertfordshire currently has to be sent outside of the county for treatment

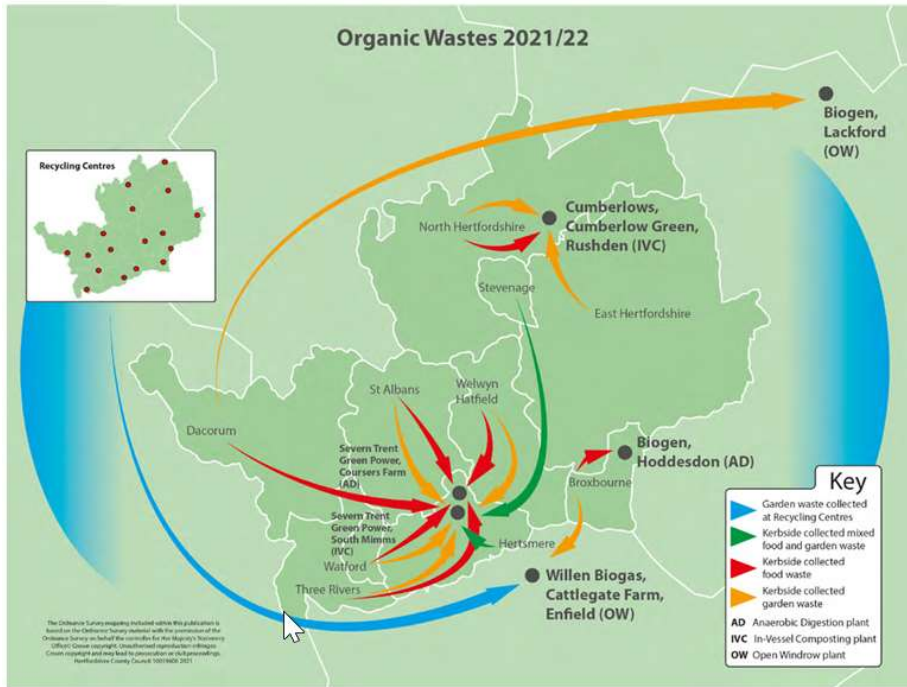


Figure 28 - Most of Hertfordshire's organic waste arisings are treated within the county boundary with the rest travelling short distances to facilities elsewhere in the East of England and London regions

Pg 42:

Pg 48:



Figure 29 – Three quarters of non-organic material captured for recycling and reuse by the HWP is processed in the UK, more than half of it at facilities in nearby Eastern and Southern Regions of England

- Can different districts / boroughs in Hertfordshire have the same bins for recycling types, and recycle the same things? It is a question which will be raised. It does create potential for redundant bins and therefore waste.
- Are there likely to be public recycling bins? Because the contamination in public recycling bins is enormous, this is currently unlikely to happen.
- We used to do much more in terms of reusing things, deposit returns etc., can we review what happened in the past and see what works?

The Random Café – experiences, successes and challenges (<https://randomcafewatford.com/>)

The Random Café started 6 years ago with the aim to reduce food waste in Watford. They began getting food from 2 supermarkets, and now also receive out of date food from the Foodbank, as they can't distribute out of date food.

The food is either used in the café, or sold in a pay as you feel basis in the shop. Also use it to make preserves and dry it. 1.4 million bananas are wasted each day, they now dry excess bananas to have as snacks etc. They have even done a wedding.

They now also have an allotment, with 3 poly tunnels and 12 raised beds.

If they can't do anything with the food, they compost it. They have just received funding to get a hot bin, so they can compost more types of things. They are also thinking about setting up collection points for other types of recycling. They look at where they can reuse, and use cardboard at the bottom of raised beds, wood for planters etc. They work with the community, for instance with the dementia café. They also now have a workshop where they can make more things with waste.

They have created recipe books, and have ideas around the shop to give people ideas.

So far they have saved 94.7 tonnes of food, since they started in 2017.

People haven't seen food grown, so are talking to schools and have a wide range of different varieties of things, currently lots of different types of tomatoes!

Q&A:

- How many people come to the café / shop? On a slow week 60-70 people, on a busier one around 120. They are open 3 days a week.
- Have others replicated this? Letchworth – best before café and shop; they are happy to show others what they do and for them to replicate it.
- How did you get space in the building? Lots of campaigning and pestering Watford Community Housing. Councillors helped push for it too. Plus lots of presenting to people about it!
- Comments:
 - it is a way of getting people active without thinking about it. Helping in the allotment.
 - It's good to encourage people to plant food or pollinators in their gardens.
 - Did a litter pick in the park, really enjoyed it. Exercise without thinking about it.

RefillAbell – experiences, successes and challenges (<https://refillabell.co.uk/>)

It has been open for 2 years, and took some time to sort out the shop! The idea began in lock down. Jane started going to a refill shop in Croxley and noticed the benefits and reduction in waste, and thought others would too. Jane was doing deliveries for Sameer’s pharmacy, and he suggested the idea of a zero waste shop. They crowdfunded.

They work with schools, showing them a different way to shop. They also have stalls and give talks to community groups.

They are trying to get people to think about what single use plastic means, and how to reduce it, do things a bit differently. For instance, they recycled 800 containers in April last year.

It’s Plastic Free July, and the challenge is to change 1 thing in your life – perhaps visit RefillAbell! One small change can have a knock on effect. It’s about shifting mind sets, how do you change and influence this?

Zero waste shops have had a hard time of it lately, a lot have closed, due to the rising costs.

Q&A

- How did it start? Jane and Sameer set up their own business, and have some employees and volunteers. They have now also set up a CIC which allows them to get grants for their community activities. They are starting to run a ‘People, Planet, Pastries’ event to allow people to come a talk about the issues (along the lines of People, Planet, Pint)
- They are planning to do a clothes swap, and will be taking part in the Jumble trail on 29th July in Oxhey.
- They get given allotment surplus and they sell that for donations in the shop – the proceeds of this go to the Peace Hospice.
- The approach is about circulating the green pound, and supporting local businesses.

Roundtables and feedback:

Question	Green Group	Blue Group	Yellow Group	Red Group
Where do you waste most? What does your black bin look like?	Cellophane, packaging	Single use coffee cup, food waste (as in a flat). Often not very full – but recycling bin always full. Things you assume are not recyclable <i>*more info to stop wish cycling</i>	Plastic wrappers, Polystyrene, Cat pouches, Packaging that don’t know where it goes.	Plastic packaging from supermarkets
What have the presentations inspired you to do? What actions can you take to reduce your	Check out RefillAbell. Cut out packaging use Visit Random Café again	Organise a clothes swap Use a refill shop more More care over what is recycled	RefillAbell, Oxhey. Look at dental toothpaste and dishwasher tablets	Inspired to bring groups and organisations we know and participate in to the Random Café

waste and consumption?				and RefillAbell store.
What is stopping you?	Access		Ease of taking bags / containers	
What might help you to do more?	Better comms about what's out there – posters, emails, mailouts, social media (inc. paid for – cheap on twitter)	Battery collection points	Communication, leaflets, newsletter	Improved convenience – greater opportunity to recycle/buy plastic-free at supermarkets
What (else) might you do to encourage others to take action?	More group action – to feel part of something	'Living simply' programme. (Already) volunteer at a charity shop Recycling bins at community centres (business recycling) Use local companies / shops etc. – think of the wider environmental impact.	Make it easy. Gov't to ban bad (non-recyclable) products.	Bring groups to Random Café and RefillAbell