

Waste – reduce, re-use and recycle



What we stand for

- Moving towards a “zero waste society”. We cannot continue to bury such large amounts of rubbish in landfill sites: former sites are unusable for most purposes, and new sites that are far enough from residential areas and water courses which they may pollute, are increasingly hard to find. Moreover, rubbish buried in landfill sites makes a significant contribution to global warming through methane emissions (CH₄ is more than 20 times more potent than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas).
Source : www.epa.gov/methane/scientific.html
- Dealing with rubbish as locally as possible, avoiding the added impact of transporting waste long distances.
- Addressing the crisis in waste generation through a joined up policy of recycling, repair and re-use and actively promoting the use of recycled products in the local economy.
- Opposition to any suggestions to build or use an incinerator to deal with any part of York's waste, whether this is located in York, North Yorkshire or elsewhere.
- A bold and effective waste strategy which draws on the experience of other local councils in the UK and abroad and works with local partners towards zero waste without incineration.
- The avoidance of long term contracts for the processing of waste with private companies which are likely to undermine increased recycling and re-use policies.

What's happening now?

The recent history of recycling policies in York is not a happy one. Prior to 2003 the Labour Council did very little at all: in 2000 York's recycling rate was a mere 10%, whilst by 2003 it was still below the government's 12% target. The City's then Recycling Officer left in despair to join another authority and undertake a successful zero waste strategy!

Since 2003, under pressure from the need to avoid financial penalties, from Green councillors and the public desire for improved recycling, the Lib Dems have made some efforts to increase recycling and reduce waste – with mixed success.

Kerbside collections for paper, glass, cans and more latterly plastic have been introduced for a large proportion of dwellings in the city. Around 85% or more of households have a kerbside collection of some kind, including some collections by community based St. Nicholas Fields.

Around 60,000 households (72%) have collections of garden waste for composting and plastics. Cardboard collections are being introduced more widely in 2007.

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This system has also involved the change to two-weekly collections of rubbish in conjunction with the green bins. Green councillors supported this idea in principle, but argued for this change to be made more gradually with pilot projects first. However, this was turned down.

All these changes have led to improvements in York's domestic rubbish recycling rates – the 2004/05 figure for *recycling and composting* was 17.77%; the estimate for 2005/06 was 24.08%. But there is still a long way to go.

No to incineration!

Landfill taxes and financial penalties for missing recycling targets are set to increase, and York has been working on its Waste Strategy for the next 20 years with partners in North Yorkshire.

The Green Party has been at the forefront of the campaign to ensure that this strategy does not include incineration of waste.

As well as producing extremely poisonous chemicals called dioxins, incinerators always undermine attempts to increase recycling to high levels as they require a continued supply of carbon rich waste to be used as fuel.

Successful zero waste strategies (being introduced by other councils in the UK and countries such as New Zealand) maximise recycling, re-use, repair and waste reduction, sometimes including mechanical and biological treatment of residual waste, but never incineration. Their targets for recycling of domestic waste are always in excess of **60%**.

At present York's strategy aims at recycling & composting 40% by 2010, 45% by 2013 and only reaching 50% by 2020.

The strategy was changed during 2006 following pressure from the Green Party and local campaigning groups, to leave open the proposed treatment methods for residual waste with a promise of further public consultation including a no incinerator option.

However, the low recycling target of 50% if retained will make it difficult to deliver a successful waste reduction policy. Green councillors argued that the large amounts of money being spent on preparing a contracting process (PFI) with private waste treatment firms, would be better spent on measures to improve recycling, re-use and waste reduction.

What we will do

- Introduce a zero waste strategy for the City of York drawing on best practice from around the country.
- This would involve working in partnership with North Yorkshire Councils and others in the region where possible. It would be based on a very high recycling target for municipal waste of at least 60% by 2020 and up to 75% in later years.
- This target would be supplemented if necessary by small scale mechanical and biological treatment plants to extract further recyclable materials from residual waste, and a policy of progressive waste reduction along with re-use and repair policies.
- Our strategy rules out incineration as a solution and avoids long term (PFI) contracts with private companies for dealing with residual waste. It directs taxpayers' money away from these contracts and towards helping local people to reduce, re-use and recycle as much as possible.

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Faster roll out of kerbside collections to include terraces and flats

- Kerbside collections of paper, cans, glass, plastics and cardboard and garden waste would be extended to all households where at all possible, partly through increased support for community based recycling groups such as St. Nicholas Fields.
- A range of measures would be used in co-operation with local communities to increase the levels of kerbside recycling eg: community competitions and awards, door-to-door advice and local surgeries, along with continued support for 'York Rotters'.
- Cooked and prepared food waste make up the second largest portion of our domestic waste. As well as information campaigns to encourage people to reduce this waste, we would look into the options for the collection of cooked food waste, as some other authorities already do.
- The number of bring sites around local neighbourhoods would also be increased and the coverage for foil, textiles, clothes, shoes, books, and other types of recyclables extended.
- The costs for the removal of bulky household items would be reduced and the system made easier to use to prevent fly tipping.

Greater focus on re-use

- There would be a major focus on encouraging the re-use of various items to keep them out of the waste stream. We would ensure that there were sufficient resources, staff and training at Hazel Court and other waste depots to enable a full re-use service to be available to the public for items such as furniture, household goods and other re-useable items. We would fully support York's bicycle repair and re-use service 'Bike Rescue' and the proposal for a city centre base to ensure maximum numbers of cycles are repaired for new owners. We would also work closely with the police to cut cycle thefts and promote cheap recycled bikes to undercut the market for stolen ones!
- Proper health and safety systems would be put in place so that the re-use of electrical and white goods would also become a possibility.
- Work closely with the voluntary sector to ensure the highest possible levels of re-use and recycling, for example through York Community Furniture Store.
- We would also actively promote the use of modern re-useable nappy services. (Around eight million disposable nappies are thrown away each day in the UK and make a huge contribution to landfill and their toxic legacy for future generations).

Commercial waste

- We would also introduce a strategy specifically aimed at increasing the reduction and recycling of commercial waste and other non-domestic waste in the city.
- Government policies currently create a disincentive for Councils to collect commercial waste as any that is not recycled adds to the 'Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme' (LATS) penalties the Council has to pay, whilst if the waste is collected by a commercial company there are no LATS penalties to be paid on it. We would campaign to change this situation.
- In the meantime, we would work through partnership bodies, local business networks, voluntary sector groups and if possible with private waste collectors to promote waste reduction and increase commercial recycling rates.

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- Whilst the Council is now promoting recycling for commercial waste *brought* to depots, we would also ensure that commercial waste *collected* from premises is also sorted for recycling, which at present does not appear to happen.

Using recycled products

- Recycling is all very well, but to make it all make sense we also need to use recycled products. We would ensure that the Council itself uses recycled products throughout all its functions including schools and other facilities (not just in environmental services!).
- We would also work through partnership bodies, business networks and local communities to promote the use of recycled products as widely as possible.

Green councillors have:

- Consistently put on pressure for a roll out of the kerbside collections in a way that builds customer support for recycling.
- Campaigned for higher recycling targets in the Council's waste strategy.
- Questioned the drift towards incineration and organised a well-attended public meeting to discuss this issue and helped to launch a campaign.
- Worked with 'York Residents Against Incineration' to successfully challenge the place of incineration in the Council's waste strategy.
- Secured a public commitment from the Council Leader that there will be no incinerator in the City of York Council area.
- Supported community recycling and re-use initiatives such as St Nicholas Fields and the new bicycle repair service.
- Attempted to secure improvements to the Council's procurement policies requiring the use of recycled materials.
- Initiated 'scrutiny topics' on recycling and re-use, which researched the best ways forward.