

DAERA's Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in Northern Ireland Consultation

Response from the Advisory Committee on Packaging (ACP)

27 June 2024

1. We believe recycling systems have to be best designed by starting with those who recycle and building around what will best facilitate recycling by them. Thus, starting with householders and businesses and around their needs/abilities/motivations and then balancing with practicality and collectors, ie, councils' ability, is critical.

2. **Recycling from households:**
 - (i) We do not recommend a bin larger than 180 litres. Larger bins take more space, will collect and subconsciously encourage more waste, and cause more undesirable effects like bad smell. (We do not recommend bins taking in 240 litres. We are aware they are being used in many places but require extra space and tailored handling, and could lead to effects like contamination and bad smell.)

 - (ii) We recommend collection of household waste at least fortnightly. A longer interval will mean more space consumed with households and undesirable effects like bad smell. We are not convinced that longer intervals reduce waste content by an amount justified against the undesirable effects. Exceptions could be made if there is a history of food and garden waste being collected frequently; in those cases 3-weekly collection of other waste could be made. Some research does indicate higher recycling rates in those cases.

 - (iii) We recommend maximum 4 different bins to be collected from homes – garden, food, dry recyclables, and residual waste. More bin classes cause confusion and apathy as well as negative effects like space needed. We recommend collectors get used to sorting from co-mingled collections. Greater sophistication such as glass being collected separately from homes could be introduced based on historical compliance and local need of processors but in the absence of a previous pattern of compliance such demands are onerous for households.

 - (iv) Caddy liners for food waste do increase collections. They show that aids and communication with ordinary people/households usually produce positive effects.

 - (v) Based on this we recommend each council be given some money and encouragement to definitely have a householder communication and training programme along with collections. Bin collectors in the field should be trained/encouraged to talk to and give leaflets to householders (Bryson's experiment showed this works). In addition, councils should capitalise on the fact that householders above the age of 35 are likely to be very interested in recycling. So, communicating with them on how to reduce waste and increase recycling as well as

training must be encouraged. Imagine if gardening clubs were replicated by neighbourhood recycling clubs!

(vi) Flats (and student accommodation) present recycling and waste collection problems because of space constraints and multiple storeys. Councils should be encouraged to have separate, specialised collection contracts to do with flats (and student accommodation) so that specific solutions and aids can be built for them. The Waste Storage Guide of 2010 should be revised to be appropriate to today and today's consumers.

3. Recycling from businesses:

(i) We recommend a similar collection system for businesses having at least 10 staff as for households (above).

(ii) Like for flats we recommend that councils be encouraged to give out separate, specialised contracts to collect from businesses with less than 10 staff. That would encourage specific solutions and aids.

(iii) Apart from the above we do not recommend more than zoning experiments in localised areas.

4. Technically, Economically and Environmentally Practicable (TEEP) exceptions:

TEEP exceptions should really be exceptions. Per exception there should be a penalty such that the council contributes a small fee to add to the collection or communications budget.

5. Using goodwill and space at larger supermarkets:

Councils should encourage larger supermarkets to have bins and collection points for usual waste as well as new initiatives such as flexible plastics' collection and communication/training of ordinary people.

6. Joint litter collection contracts with on-the-go sellers:

Councils should be encouraged to build shared-costs contracts and collection systems for packaging waste in particular from a geographically contiguous area to that outlet to collect waste from all litter spots in that area. These should tie into litter collection policies as well as impending Extended Producer Responsibility or similar provisions.

7. Council funding:

In addition to present funding mechanisms and innovations suggested above, pending Extended Producer Responsibility's tailored payments councils should be encouraged to apply to DAERA for additional funds or pricing permissions from households or businesses against specific additional collection and recycling initiatives. We do think localised payment or incentive based experiments can be successful in Northern Ireland.

