



Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP) - How The Waste Partnership Works

Summary

RECAP is a partnership between the local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - unitary, county and district - also known as the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership. It has resulted in practical benefits, cost efficiencies, and impressive recycling rates which have earned the Government's Beacon Status award.

“Joint working between the authorities in the Partnership enables a sharing of best practice, allows resources to be used more efficiently, and provides greater consistency in services for our customers. I don't believe there are any downsides to working in partnership - we have seen only benefits.”

Emma Joy,
Waste Partnership Co-ordinator

Project Background

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership was formed in 1999 and consists of seven members - Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, Cambridge City Council, and the District Councils for East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire.

Each local authority is responsible for its own waste collection or disposal (both in the case of Peterborough City Council), while the Partnership acts as an umbrella organisation which allows each to retain their own flexibility while benefiting from the efficiencies of joint working.

Top-level management of the Partnership is directed by the Waste and Environment Forum, consisting of those councillors from each authority with responsibility for waste management.

Reporting to this forum is the Joint Waste Officer Group. This comprises senior officers from each local authority whose remit includes waste management.

[The group, in turn, has four sub-groups reporting to it, covering:](#)

- **Data** - forecasting, trend analysis, modelling and statutory data submissions.
- **Marketing** - including press and public relations. For the next three years this will focus on waste prevention, trade waste recycling and dry recycling.
- **Operations** - day to day issues, the impact of any new legislation and new services.
- **Prevention**, intervention and enforcement - tackling National Indicators 195 and 196 to improve environmental and street cleanliness and deal with issues such as fly tipping, flyposting, litter, graffiti and detritus.

The four-sub groups are committed to delivering improvements, with all the authorities involved pooling their resources and sharing best practice. There is also liaison between the four sub-groups. For example if a new service is launched, it might involve data, marketing and operations.

Implementing practice on the ground is the jointly funded Waste Partnership Team. This receives combined funding from the seven authorities of approximately £120,000 a year. It consists of the Waste Partnership Co-ordinator an Environmental Action Co-ordinator and a Recycling Co-ordinator. The Partnership also has a joint public awareness fund which top slices £1 from recycling credits for every tonne of dry recyclable waste - providing £100,000 in the last year for advertising and promotional materials.

Objectives

In the face of growing waste, increasing costs, customer expectations and tough government and EU targets to reduce landfill, the Partnership's waste management strategy was adopted after extensive public consultation in 2002. Its aim was to increase the amount of waste recycled and composted and provide new waste treatment facilities for waste which is not, or cannot, be recycled.

[The strategy aims to reinforce the traditional waste hierarchy, making landfill a last resort. Efforts are focused on:](#)

- waste prevention,
- re-use and recycling including diverting more organics from landfill
- ensuring high levels of customer awareness and satisfaction, and;
- working to deliver efficiencies and, therefore, best value to tax payers.

In 2006/7 in Cambridgeshire, an impressive 48.5% of household waste was recycled or composted making it the most successful county in England for recycling. Cambridgeshire also came top in the amount of waste produced per person - with the lowest rate in the country of just 264kg residual waste per person per annum. Peterborough also has one of the highest recycling and composting rates in the country, achieving an all time high of 43% during 2006/2007 and topping the leaderboard for unitary authorities.

Together, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have topped the leader-board in first and second position for green recycling by Waste Disposal Authorities.

In the same year, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils came in the top 10 for recycling and composting rates. Both have very successful kerbside collection schemes in place, which are popular with residents as an easy way to recycle.

Fenland District Council also proved its worth, when it was recently awarded a "[Highly Commended](#)" in the National Recycling Awards for its Recycling Target Success. The meteoric rise in recycling rates due to their "[Getting it Sorted](#)" campaign impressed the judges. This effort is reflected in their inclusion in the top 10 for improvement in waste generated, and improvement in composting and recycling rates.

South Cambridgeshire District Council also came top in the country for its green waste recycling, composting nearly 33%.

[Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough \(RECAP\) was granted Beacon Council Status for Waste and Recycling 2006/7 as a result of its achievements in:](#)

- Partnership working
- Community working
- Communication
- High recycling rates through comprehensive collections
- Innovative waste management systems

Successful projects include procuring a joint glass bank contract in 2003; joint bulk purchase of goods such as wheeled bins and kitchen caddies, and the joint procurement of abandoned vehicles contracts in the partnership area. It is RECAP's experience that joint procurement and joint contracts bring better value for money for each partner and service improvements.

The Partnership also has close ties with a local 3rd Sector organisation, Cambridgeshire Community Recycling and Reuse Network (CCORRN), whose Choose2Reuse campaign, is now being extended nationally. It promotes community reuse and charity recycling schemes with the dual aims of encouraging donations of quality re-usable goods and putting greater value on second-hand purchases.

Another key project is the Master Composter scheme to recruit, train and support volunteers to promote home composting to communities.

Building on the Partnership's success so far, the future aim is to raise recycling levels to:

- 45 to 50% by 2010
- 50 to 55% by 2015
- 55 to 60% by 2020, with Peterborough aspiring to achieve 65%+

by focusing on three key priorities of increasing waste prevention, increasing dry recycling and trade waste recycling.

Cambridgeshire County Council is also working to deliver new waste treatment facilities through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract with a private sector waste management company, supported by Government funding of £35 million.

Benefits

The local authorities, who make up the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, have seen numerous benefits from joint working to meet the increasing challenges and demands of waste management. [The benefits include:](#)

- Greater efficiency in the use of limited resources.
- Sharing of knowledge and best practice to drive improvements for all.
- Greater ability to influence the waste agenda as a result of a stronger voice from seven authorities acting together rather than individually.
- Less confusion about services and recycling for the public, through consistent communication on waste services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Better value for money, resulting from pooling resources and having greater bargaining power.
- Joint procurement projects - which encourage more competition, better prices from suppliers, and increased procurement efficiency by using single contract specifications, documents and evaluations.

Critical Success Factors and Lessons Learned

For partnership working to be successful it is essential that all parties feel ownership of the process and its aims. It is vital to ensure that senior officers and elected members are committed to the Partnership and appreciate the benefits to their organisation and their customers.

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, good communications and the building of an understanding of each authority's perspective has been essential to the success of the Partnership. With a unitary and a disposal authority, plus five collection authorities, it would be all too easy for each to focus on its own particular responsibilities.

All partners are, working towards the greater goals that are achievable through partnership working - tackling tough environmental targets while ensuring best value and a consistently high level of service for council tax payers.

Risks

The Partnership believes the key risks it faces are from external sources such as changes in national and European legislation. By working together its individual authorities can only be stronger as a result of facing those risks together.

Transferability

Where local authorities are providing the same services but in different areas or at different levels, working together makes sense to overcome administrative boundaries and achieve greater efficiencies and improved customer satisfaction.

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