

Public consultation

Draft Sustainable Waste Management Strategy

Feedback from focus group discussions held on 21 and 22 February 2006.

Two focus group discussions were held with residents to discuss Lewes District Council's "Draft sustainable waste management strategy" that sets out the Council's plans for Waste and Recycling over the next five years.

A total of 16 residents took part in the two discussions with 7 attending the Lewes and rural areas discussion group (21 February) and 9 attending the coastal areas discussion group (22 February).

The discussions were lead by an independent facilitator and based around the "discussion guide" attached as Appendix A and headed "Draft sustainable waste management strategy".

Officers and Managers from Waste and Recycling attended each discussion group and were available to answer questions from participants.

Why produce a sustainable waste management strategy?

It was explained that the Council needs to comply with waste legislation and meet statutory targets. Waste prevention and minimisation is our first priority and we want and need residents to produce less waste as well as reusing and recycling more.

Residents who attended the group discussions were given a copy of the Executive Summary of the "Lewes District Council Draft Sustainable Waste Management Strategy 2005 – 2010"

"Cover looks really good and is nice and clear"

"You need to keep reminding people about recycling and what they need to do to make it work"

It was explained that we need residents support in order to reach the ambitious recycling rates of 41.3% by 2011 and at the moment residents are recycling just over 20%, although this will increase with the new glass recycling service that is being rolled out across the District.

Planned publicity campaign: Why waste it? (LDC's planned Waste Avoidance Campaign) – was explained as part of the draft strategy and then discussed in more detail to find out residents' views:

Smart shopping

"it would be helpful if I could buy un-wrapped items, it is the packaging that is bulky and awkward to get rid of"

"need biodegradable wrapping and plastic bags should be taxed to death, so that people don't use them, they should be made expensive to put people off buying them"

"cereal packaging is a problem, lots of cardboard, and you don't take cardboard away, do you?"

Reuse/repair

"It is difficult to repair, if not economically viable then it won't happen"

"Cheaper to buy a new printer than to repair it"

"In society today people want new things for the sake of having them, not really because they need them, and all the advertising doesn't help"

"such a pressure in our culture to acquire and possess more things, whether we want or need them"

"It's all about changing attitudes and that's very difficult for you to do"

"If you want people to re-use things then you need to explain how they can and perhaps give them an incentive, not sure what but you need a carrot and stick approach"

"I never buy an envelope, I just recycle all those that come in the post that I'm not interested in replying to"

"If only we could find someone to repair things" (It was explained that as part of the "don't waste it" campaign there would be a separate directory for repair and re-use, possibly to be called "make do and mend").

"I think to get people to repair things rather than buying new you need a much more aggressive approach, otherwise you are fighting a losing battle"

Community and home composting/digesting

“If you live in a flat like I do it’s impossible to compost”

“I want my garden to look reasonable so don’t really like the idea of having a composter, would prefer if there were a “community composting” scheme”

“Need more information about how to compost and what you can put in, how about a sticker that I could put on my fridge?”

“Could you give out the composting bins free to people so that they could give it a try and see how it works?”

“Don’t really know what a digester is? Is this different from the compost bins?
“The digesters can be dug into the soil”

“If you did have a composter that was used by say people living in a block of flats then you would need someone to take responsibility for it, could be quite difficult to organise and what happens when the compost is ready, where does it go?”

“You say that the cost of a kitchen digester is £24.99, I know this is a one off cost but it still seems like quite a lot of money, would you be able to give them free to people to try out?”

“Need more information about the difference between composing and using the digesters (green cone), could you provide this for us?”

“What can you do with the compost, if you are not able to use it all yourself, is there a market for this?”

“Use the District Link to give us more information about composting and the compost doctor”

Mailing preference – reducing junk mail

Over half the group who met on 22 Feb (Coastal areas) had already signed up not to receive junk mail. The figure was higher (75%) for the group that met on 21 Feb (Lewes and rural group)

“Half the stuff the post office deliver is grotty leaflets that I recycle straight away”

“you say that we would need to write to two separate addresses to stop junk mail, will you let us have the information about who to write to”

Targeted kerbside campaign

We need to reach those residents who are not participating in kerbside

“It would be helpful to have more information about what can be put in the collection (kerbside) boxes. When I first joined the scheme a couple of years ago I put in magazines and for some reason they were not taken away. It is difficult to know what you will take”

“Our recycling collectors are really nice and helpful and if I put the wrong things in the box they leave me an oops note to tell me why”

“I found it disheartening when I took a lot of time and trouble (I’m disabled) to drag the kerbside box to the front of the flats where I live and things were left in the box”

“How about having a sticker that can be put on the boxes that say what you will take and your people putting new stickers on if you start taking new items?”

“I would like to get my clean box back instead of someone else’s”

“There is a problem with yellow pages, could the council make arrangements with stables so that they could be shredded and used for the animals?”

“If you are successful in getting people to recycle more then the boxes are not big enough and you will need to give out more or larger boxes”

“You need to think of a way of rewarding people who do recycle”

“can we have the option of kerbside collections on a weekly basis and refuse every two weeks”

Make kerbside compulsory

“It would be good if you could exchange the kerbside boxes for bags, I have difficulty carrying the box and a bag would make things a lot easier”

“I would agree with some form of enforcement providing you police it afterwards”

“Yes, it should be compulsory because why should some people make time and take the trouble to recycle and others just ignore it”

The focus group held in Peacehaven – 7 of the 9 present said they would support kerbside being compulsory, but with proviso that we would have to be consistent in how enforcement was applied.

The focus group held in Lewes – more reluctant to go along with “compulsory” – thought that we should educate, inform and persuade those who had not already signed up.

“We have nearly run out of space to landfill waste so recycling is the way forward”

“If you make kerbside compulsory, which is a good idea, you need to be aware that some people can’t afford to be fined or pay a penalty, you need to do more research about how to make a compulsory scheme work well”

“I think you need to write to everyone and explain why you are making it compulsory and what action will be taken if they don’t take part and do their bit”

“Not sure that compulsory is the best way, surely encouragement would work better?”

Introduction of cardboard recycling in 2007

“I think cardboard should be collected by the kerbside collectors”

“Couldn’t you arrange it so that we just take our cardboard to Sainsbury’s or the local supermarket?”

“You really only have cardboard when you buy new items, it’s more of a one-off thing to get rid of isn’t it?”

“Cardboard is a problem to get rid of, from what you are saying does this mean we would have to go to a recycling centre to recycle it, or would you be able to collect it?”

“At the mini recycling places you need to improve the signage, for example making it clear what can be put in each container, and say thank-you to people who take the time and trouble to do this on a regular basis. You need to encourage people to sort things out properly before placing them in the recycling bins”

“Yes, that’s a good idea, you need to keep repeating the message as well as thanking people who bother”

Include new smaller items on kerbside, for example toasters, shavers, hairdryers, batteries, scrap metal

“Excellent idea, but we would need more information about what you would take and what you wouldn’t”

“Yes, you need more publicity about this when it happens, which is a very good idea”

“Shouldn’t you be making manufacturers take more responsibility for when we need to get rid of batteries as they are really difficult to get rid of safely, aren’t they?”

“There is a problem with batteries isn’t there”

“Think that people should be encouraged to recharge batteries and perhaps you need to give more information to remind people to buy rechargeable batteries”

“If there are special regulations about getting rid of batteries then you need to let us know”

General comments:

“would like to recycle more, but it’s a culture thing isn’t it? We are a throw away society”

“I have leather soled shoes that I can repair, but it is expensive and there are only so many times I can have them repaired before it is cheaper to buy a new pair”

“How about changing arrangements so that recycling boxes emptied every week and rubbish is collected by the dustmen every two weeks?”

“I live in Lewes and at the moment we don’t have glass recycling, I presume this is something we will have soon? Would it be possible for you to let residents of Lewes know when the glass recycling service will start”

“Could we have some more information about how to recycle plastics and foil”

“What about commercial waste, especially Ask and Pizza Express, can you do anything to make sure that companies like these recycle as well”

“Your recycling people (BN25) are really nice and helpful”

“I’m glad we don’t have the big wheelie bins, they just encourage more waste”