

What a fine mess

Domestic Waste Collection in Wales



Study and written report compiled by



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Executive Summary

This study sets out to discover how domestic waste management is currently undertaken by Welsh councils and how their approach may have changed due to the introduction of recycling targets.

Utilising the Freedom of Information act, all 22 local councils in Wales were presented with a set of 25 identical questions. The questions were split into 5 categories and constructed in such a way that they invited information ranging from the financial cost to environmental impact of the different waste management systems deployed.

Despite a limited response in some categories, the study has been successful in establishing a general and up-to-date picture of domestic waste management throughout Wales.

Of particular interest is that councils, in order to meet recycling targets, have incurred significant costs in relation to managing the many different waste streams collected from each household. In some cases an increase of 100% has been observed.

The study also found that the current approach to domestic waste management in Wales could be seen as flawed and possibly unable to deliver on increasingly ambitious recycling targets. The reason for this is that:

- 1) Councils that have implemented a recycling scheme for all households within their jurisdiction are still having to send about 65% of domestic waste to landfill.
- 2) The general success of the current system rests with individual households.
- 3) The majority of councils operate alone. This potentially means that councils are unable to benefit financially from working with other councils in meeting waste management targets.

Further research could be undertaken to establish how councils are planning to manage waste in the future and if they specifically are looking to new technologies, such as autoclaving, to help further reduce the volume of domestic waste going into landfill.

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