

waste



One of the continuing major challenges for Hertfordshire is sustainable waste management, as it is throughout the UK. It is clear that we need to address the way in which we produce and handle waste as a society, with an emphasis on individually reducing the amount of rubbish that we put in our dustbins, for example by avoiding over-packaged goods, re-using shopping bags and composting our organic waste.

In 2002/2003, the total amount of waste produced in Hertfordshire was approximately 2 million tonnes - around 525,600 tonnes of which were household waste. This equates to a 0.7% decrease in household waste from the 2001/2002 figure of 529,300 tonnes, continuing the encouraging downward growth trend of the previous year. Statistically, however, waste generation rose to an average of 508 kg per person, but fell to an average of 1202 kg per household.

Household waste is made up of dustbin waste collected by the District and Borough Councils, litter, street sweepings, waste that is received at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), and waste that is recycled from the domestic waste stream. Non-household waste is made up of commercial, industrial, and construction and demolition wastes.

In 2002/2003, more than 375,000 tonnes of Hertfordshire's household waste was disposed of outside the county, at facilities in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex and North London.

In 2002/2003,

- 341,898 tonnes of waste was put into domestic dustbins - a decrease of 3.5% on 2001/2002
- 86,345 tonnes was disposed of through the HWRCs - 9.6% less than in the previous year.
- 97,354 tonnes were recycled or composted - this was an increase on the countywide recycling rate to 18.5% from 15.1% in 2001/2002.

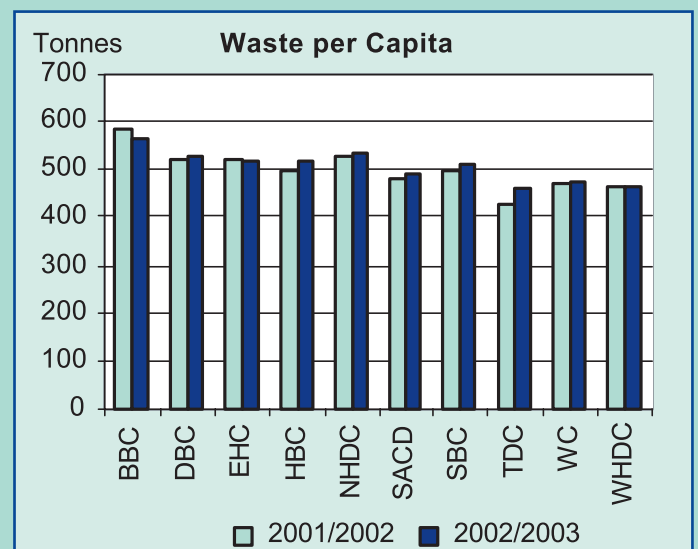
The County Council provides 19 HWRCs in Hertfordshire, where residents can dispose of their own household waste free of charge, and the Waterdale Transfer Station which helps meet the disposal needs of the western side of the county.

A survey carried out in 2000 indicated that more than 50,000 visits are made every week to the county's HWRCs, equating to something like five visits from each household every year, delivering on average 45 kg of waste each time. Almost everybody in Hertfordshire lives within five miles of a HWRC.

Around 74% of the household waste produced in Hertfordshire in 2002/2003, was disposed of in landfill sites, but these sites are running out of space and fewer are being created. In fact, the latest calculations show that, in Hertfordshire, we will run out of landfill space by 2008.

There is evidence that the Landfill Tax introduced in October 1996, - currently £14 per tonne for general waste and £2 per tonne for inert waste (inert waste is generally waste material generated by the construction industry, including excavated soils and sub-soils), continues to stimulate growth in household waste generation. There are a number of possible reasons for this but one of the more likely is the increasing cost of private skip hire. The evidence of the past two years, however, would seem to suggest that this impact is beginning to be less significant. This trend could be significantly reversed though, after the Government's announcement that it intends to escalate the level of tax by at least £3 per tonne a year until it reaches £35 a tonne.

Indicator WS1 - Household Waste per Capita



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We measure the amount of household waste produced per capita by adding together:

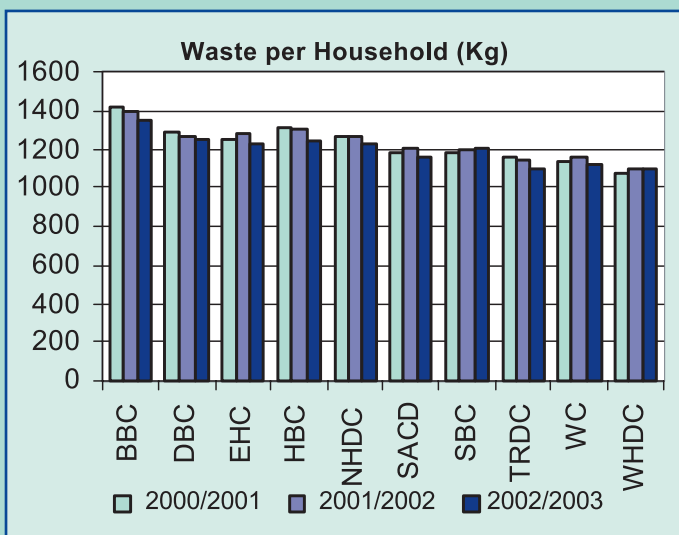
- what is collected by the 10 district and borough councils
- what is received at the 19 Household Waste Recycling Centres
- what is taken out of the stream for recycling by the County Council and the district/borough councils, and dividing the resulting total by the population of Hertfordshire.

The comparative amounts for each of the ten Hertfordshire district and borough councils are shown below:

The 2002/2003 figures show an overall increase of 1.4% when compared to the previous year.

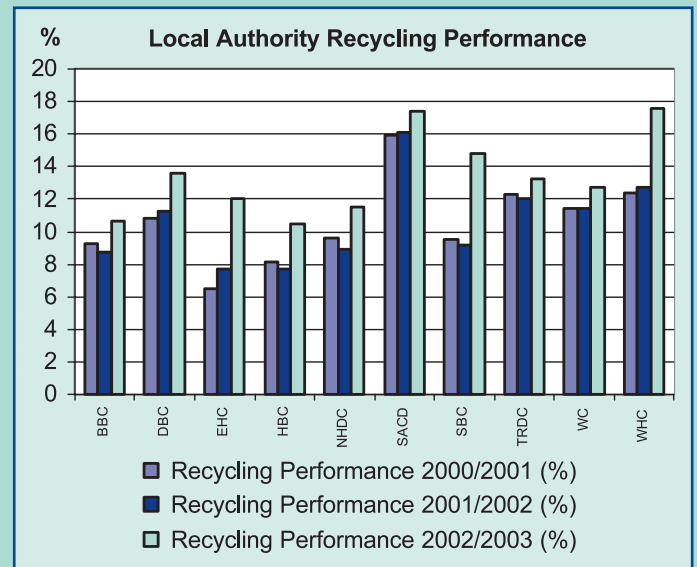
Indicator WS2 - Waste Produced per Household

Another possibly more reliable approach to quantifying household waste production is to divide the total amount of waste generated by each district by the number of households in Hertfordshire, and in doing so, calculate how much waste is produced per household rather than by individual.



The figures for 2002/2003 continue the trend of the past two years of declining growth in household waste production, showing a decrease of 2.6% since the data for 2001/2002.

Indicator WS3 - Percentage of Waste Recycled

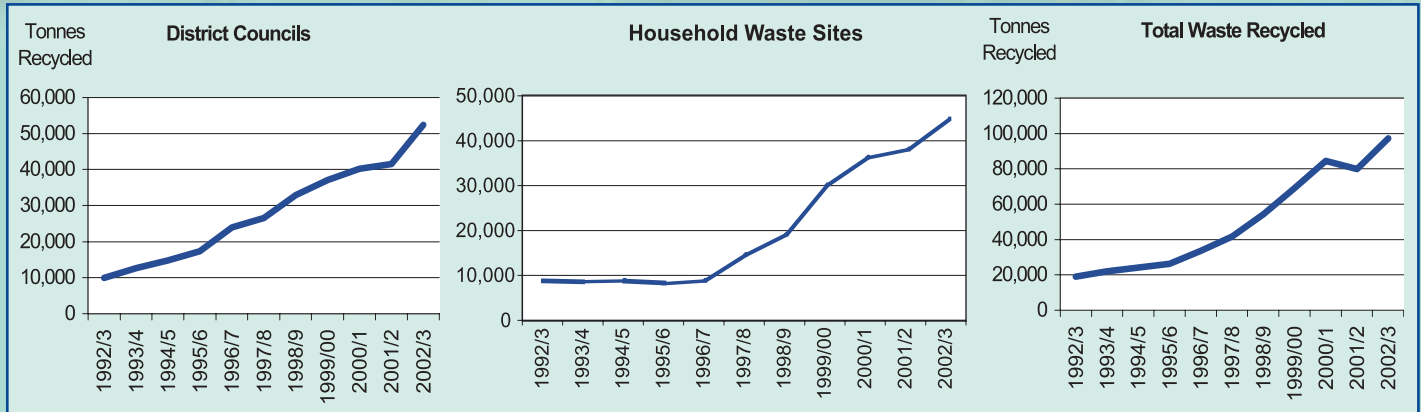


Recycling is an important element of any successful waste management strategy in that it has the benefit of reducing the amount of waste requiring disposal. In 2002/2003, 18.5% of household waste produced was recycled. The total amount recycled was almost 100,000 tonnes demonstrating the eleven Hertfordshire councils commitment to increasing the county's average recycling level to more than 20% by the year 2003/04 and 30% by 2005/06. The graph above shows the individual recycling performance for each of the ten Hertfordshire district and borough councils.

In 2002/2003 the County Council recycled 34% of the waste received at its 19 HWRCs. The graphs shown above give a year-on-year breakdown of household waste recycling in Hertfordshire, and include figures for the household waste collected for recycling by the 10 Hertfordshire district and borough councils and various voluntary groups for which the County Council has paid recycling credits. Included in the amounts is the material that is collected in bottle banks, can banks and paper banks etc. Not included is the trade waste recycling by businesses and charity shops.

The County Council's recycling rate at the Household Waste Recycling Sites rose by almost 6%, largely as a result of the continued development of the separate collection facilities for recyclable materials.

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The effect of waste minimisation initiatives, such as home composting, is not evident in the statistics as there is no reliable way of accurately measuring their effect. They are, however, extremely beneficial in reducing the amount of waste requiring disposal. The County Council's Home Composting Sponsorship Scheme has encouraged many of the district and borough councils to promote the sale of home composting units, at reduced prices, to their residents, with the result that now more than 70,000 of Hertfordshire's 427,000 households have purchased units.

WasteAware

The Hertfordshire WasteAware campaign, now in its sixth year, made further progress in raising awareness of the significant waste management issues that must be faced in Hertfordshire. The County Council and the ten district and borough councils are working in partnership to enhance the public's understanding of the measures that must be taken to achieve sustainable waste management in the County, through the promotion of the principles of the waste hierarchy, reduce, reuse, recycle and recover.

The campaign activities included a wide range of promotional events aimed at

- Reducing how much waste is produced
- Making the best use of the waste that is produced
- Choosing waste management practices which minimise the risks of immediate and future environmental pollution and harm to health.

Future Strategy

The continued growth in the amounts of household

waste being produced, and the gradual decline in the availability of landfill facilities in and around Hertfordshire, have highlighted the need for a fully integrated strategy for dealing with Hertfordshire's household waste in the future. In October 1998, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the County Council and each of the District and Borough Councils, committing each and every one of them to combining their efforts and resources towards devising and implementing such a strategy. Since then significant progress has been made.

The Waste Strategy Development Group, comprising of a Member from each authority, was set up to oversee the process and in December 2001 a final draft strategy was produced. A full-scale public consultation process was carried out in the spring of 2002 with all the partnering councils going through a process of formally adopting the resulting strategy in September and October the same year. The process of implementing the Strategy began almost immediately.

Major Issues

The introduction of the Ozone Depleting Substances Regulations in January 2002 created major problems for the Hertfordshire waste authorities with the recycling and disposal of discarded fridges. The regulations brought with them a requirement that all of a fridge's CFC and HCFC gases must be removed before the fridge is scrapped. The ceasing of retailer take-back schemes meant that the County Council had to make arrangements to recycle more than 43,000 fridges in 2002/03, all of which, because of the shortage of suitable treatment facilities in the UK, were shipped to Germany for recycling.