



Pressure to reduce waste grows

Careful management of waste is essential for a good quality of life. Whilst environmental awareness and recycling grows, so too does the amount produced. With diminishing capacity at landfills, it is now vital we cut our production of waste and find alternative means for disposal.

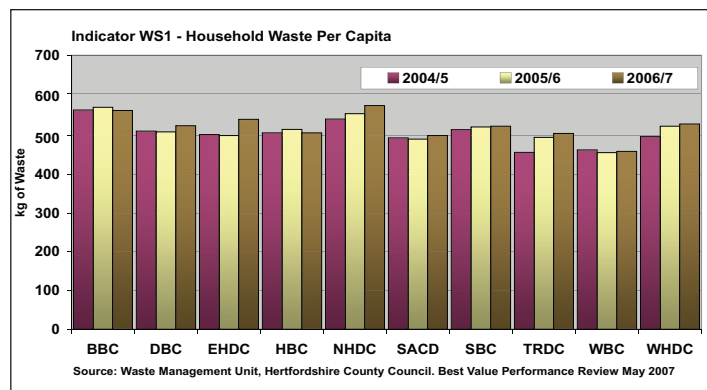
In 2006/07, the total amount of waste produced in Hertfordshire was estimated to be around 2 million tonnes. Household waste¹ accounted for about a quarter of this and was 2.2% greater than in 2005/06. Each resident in the county produced an average of 527 kg with each household producing 1,222 kg on average. This compares with 2005/6 figures of 516 kg for residents and 1199 kg for households. Over 300,000 tonnes of county household waste was disposed of in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex and North London. In 2006-7

- 308,342 tonnes of waste was put into domestic dustbins - a 1.1% reduction on 2005-6
- 47,424 tonnes was disposed of through HWRCs² - 2.3% less than the previous year
- 197,658 tonnes were recycled or composted - raising the countywide recycling rate up to 35.8% from 33.2% in 2005-6 whilst the national recycling rate was 30.9% in 2006-7.

Around 58% of county household waste produced during the year was disposed of in landfill sites. Capacity in these sites is running out with fewer being created. The latest calculations show there is very little space available for Hertfordshire beyond 2010.

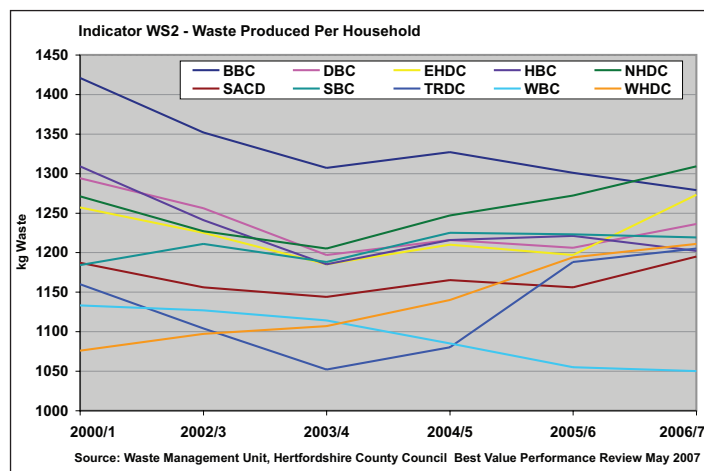
Indicator WS1 - Household Waste Per Capita

Household Waste per capita (head) in 2006-7 was seen to rise by 0.4% overall.



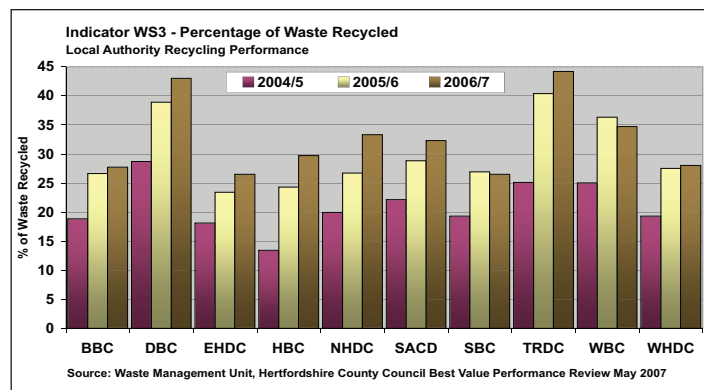
Indicator WS2 - Waste Produced Per Household

There have been some dramatic waste reductions per household over the last six years, with 113 kg less waste produced in the county overall, as shown below. There were also some big but variable increases in 2006-7 with St Albans, Dacorum and North Herts rising by 30 to 39 kg. The greatest rise of all, however, was in East Herts increasing 76 kg.



Indicator WS3 - Percentage of Waste Recycled

Recycling plays an important role in successful waste management as it reduces the amount that needs to be transported and disposed of. In 2006-7, 35.8% of household waste was recycled whilst the total amount recycled was over 197,000 tonnes. This was again well above the county's statutory performance target of 30% for the year. The county council also recycled 50% of waste it received at its 19 HWRCs. This was also an improvement in the HWRC recycling rate, even though the 1% appears to be a 'slowing down' of progress. This is almost certainly due to the success of green and organic kerbside waste collections across the county which reduces the amount of compostable waste delivered to HWRCs.





The success of waste minimisation initiatives, such as home composting, however, is impossible to measure. Nevertheless, it is possible to see that a fall in the amount of compostable waste within the main collection has fallen. The number of home composting units sold, available from local authorities via the county council's Home Composting Sponsorship Scheme, continues to grow. Available to residents at significantly reduced prices, over 58,700 of these units have been sold since 2000.

Other Challenges & Developments

As reported last year, the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme³ was introduced by the government in 2006 with the aim of reducing the amount of biodegradable municipal waste disposed of in landfills. To date the county council has been successful in complying with the first and second years of the scheme. It continues to be reasonably confident that the measures currently taken to manage its waste will ensure compliance for at least the next three years. In 2006-7 it used 82% of its allocated tonnage of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill. In order to end dependence on landfills, however, alternative forms of waste treatment must be developed. During the year, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership continued to investigate new technologies in this area and is expected to reach a decision soon on the most suitable solution for the county.

Further pressure to reduce landfill also came during the year with the announcement that landfill tax, paid on each tonne of waste sent to landfill, would increase by £8 per year, as opposed to the originally proposed £3, until at least 2011. Another challenge faced by the partnership is compliance with new legislation for the management of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment. New regulations came in to force in July changing the way household items, e.g. TVs, fridges and washing machines, are disposed of. All electrical household items taken to HWRCs or bulky electronic items collected by district councils, must now be recycled by component, as opposed to being sent to landfill.

1 Household waste: 'dustbin' waste collected by the District and Borough Councils, litter, street sweepings, waste received at HWRCs plus waste recycled from the domestic waste stream. Non household waste comprises; commercial, industrial, and construction and demolition wastes.

2 HWRCs: Household Waste Recycling Centres

3 See last year's report for more on legislation and organisations

WasteAware³

Whilst the 30% recycling and composting target was set by the government for the county council, it is actually a measure of the combined efforts for all the county's waste authorities that form the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership.

Now in its tenth year, the campaigning activities of WasteAware continues to raise awareness of the significant waste management issues Hertfordshire faces. Through its website, leaflets, events and competitions, it aims to increase understanding of the measures required to achieve sustainable waste management. Information provided includes awareness raising on the harmful effects of waste production on the environment, tips and contact details to help reduce the amount of waste sent for disposal.

Essentially, through promotional activities of the county council and the 10 district and borough councils, the partnership focuses on the three waste hierarchy principles;

- to reduce
- to reuse
- to recycle (or recover)

One way WasteAware aims to encourage young people to take responsibility for waste is through its secondary school education programme. In 2007 the partnership ran a competition where year 8 and 9 pupils could watch a 'CragRats' theatre production before submitting a project to encourage students, friends and families to recycle. With the opportunity for schools to win £1000, £500 or £250, the competition proved very popular and was again launched for 2008. As in 2007, the partnership website contains a host of resources designed to help schools enter.



Hitchin Girls School receiving their prize for increasing awareness on waste and recycling in 2007 in a WasteAware competition