



seeing is believing

CONSERVING RESOURCES FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



Sometimes we are too busy on a day-to-day basis worrying about the next problem to take time out to reflect and count our blessings. Only when I get out and about visiting member projects do I get a whammy of a reminder that amazing things are being achieved, often in a routine way, by people committed to a cause that both warms their souls and helps their communities. This *Seeing is Believing* publication is just that - a reflection, a pause to look at and record a sample of the work being carried out by our members and their partners, who are all striving to make the world a better place. We hope to deliver this record on an annual basis as a mark of respect and celebration. The document speaks for itself.

MAL WILLIAMS, CEO, CYLCH



I was encouraged to read of such extensive collaborative work happening in Wales, demonstrating a clear commitment that local authorities and community organisations are able to form effective and sustainable partnerships. I'm sure that there is much more that we can do. It is important that Wales continues to learn from its experiences, shares best practice and allows further projects to get off the ground. Local authorities are all working extremely hard to achieve their targets, and projects such as these demonstrate that there are a myriad of ways the challenging times that lie ahead can be delivered.

COUNCILLOR ALED ROBERTS, SPOKESPERSON WLGA & CHAIRMAN,
WASTE AWARENESS WALES





seeing is believing

I am delighted to introduce *Seeing is Believing*. This publication, produced jointly by Cylch and the Welsh Local Government Association, celebrates success stories in the field of reuse and recycling across Wales. The case studies highlighted here are a testimony to the vision and commitment of dedicated individuals in local authorities, social enterprises and communities throughout Wales. They represent a snapshot of what can be achieved when these organisations work in partnership to achieve an agreed aim, in this case the Welsh Assembly Government's ambitious recycling targets. Each case study tells the story of people who care deeply about the welfare of their environment and local community, and proves that in a supportive culture, major change is possible. These studies bring us back to the importance of people; the need to value, applaud and respect the contribution of ordinary citizens and to invest in the training of staff and service users. A key message emerging from these case studies is the importance of public engagement. It is also clear that frontline staff are fundamental to the success of any given project. These examples show what is possible with determination, hard work and a flexible approach.

JANE DAVIDSON AM





contractual innovation

FRAME is best known for its successful furniture reuse project, but its contract with Pembrokeshire County Council, linking social services departments and recycling targets, is challenging the established structure

“ It’s all about the human beings and making sure you provide a service that they really value and want. And then social services will grab your hand off actually ”

JENNY SIMS, DIRECTOR, FRAME

As an established community furniture project - so successful it has increased its turnover in the region of 200 times since it was set up in 1994 - founder Jenny Sims is adamant that the focus of Pembrokeshire’s FRAME is to support human beings, rather than facilitate recycling. She says, “I’m hugely passionate about people having a say in what happens to them; in being part of the community, which is the thing that will break stigma down faster than anything else.”

At first this meant providing a service, free of charge, solely to people with



mental health disabilities, but FRAME has gone on to win an innovative tender that includes not only the local authority’s bulky waste collection, but also a clause requiring the service to provide support and training to disabled and disadvantaged people in the workplace.



“ The crucial element in the relationship we have with Pembrokeshire County Council is that we don’t just talk at them and expect them to give us money ”

JENNY SIMS, DIRECTOR, FRAME

In addition, FRAME has engineered a service level agreement (SLA) with the local authority's social services department which pays it on a per head basis to support clients with learning disabilities. Negotiations are currently underway to establish a similar contract for mental health service users.

Sims says the key to accessing a county council lies in listening and responding to

its needs: “Most importantly, listening to their concerns and responding to them in a positive way.” The local authority backs this up. Marilyn Buckley, Day/Employment Services Manager at Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC), says: “We’ve got a really productive working relationship and the important thing is that any potential problems on both sides are identified so we tackle them jointly.”

One key advantage was that FRAME’s personal development planning, which Sims describes as “person-centred planning, because it’s tailored to individual needs and preferences”, slotted in perfectly with the county council’s developing focus on individual care plans. Buckley adds: “Care plan contingent funding would be paid for every individual and the contractual arrangement is then going to be consistent with our reviewing and care plan processes. It seems quite logical to me.”

In Buckley’s view, the project’s tight procedures and record keeping add greatly to peace of mind within the local authority. “I know whenever I’ve asked to see people’s files that they’ve been given the right equipment, health and safety information; that they’ve been told how to lift – all the things that we’d be doing with our staff in our day centres. I really appreciate that.”

FRAME is a keen advocate of social accounting, which involves setting mission statements and then carrying out rigorous auditing to gauge the organisation’s success. Sims says: “We broke our mission statement down into social inclusion; education and



“ If you’re moving towards individualised care plans, then it follows logically that you should be doing the same as far as paying the person that’s providing the service ”

**MARILYN BUCKLEY, DAY/EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MANAGER,
PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

training; relief of poverty and social deprivation; environmental good practice, and developing self worth and well being.” Following a survey of staff, clients and stakeholders, Sims says, “You have a full set of social accounts which show you warts and all.”

Inclusion of clients in the day-to-day running of the project is crucial; they are involved in every aspect of the business from taking initial phone calls to sitting on the Members’ Council, which even holds the power to sack its directors if necessary. As Sims asserts proudly: “We don’t pay lip service to empowerment; we live it.” ■



lessons in adversity

When an organisation is suffering from ingrained cultural and managerial problems, it's time for major surgery. One such organisation – Torfaen Cleanstream Recycling Ltd – has taken the radical step of appointing a change manager, and come out smiling

Brian James arrived at Torfaen Cleanstream Recycling Ltd (TCRL) – a subsidiary of newly formed Cleanstream CIC – in March, with an explicit remit to put the organisation on a firm managerial footing. The county now boasts the accolade of being the



“ Ensuring the workforce is valued is the key issue, because 95 per cent will respond to positive support ”

**BRIAN JAMES, INTERIM DIRECTOR,
TORFAEN CLEANSTREAM RECYCLING LTD**

highest recycling authority in South Wales and is reported, by the Welsh Assembly Government, to have achieved the lowest amount of residual waste in Wales.





On arrival, James initiated a review of performance issues (which covered everything from health and safety to finance) and recommended an action plan to the Cleanstream Board. The next step was to implement the plan – a process now in its fourth month (September 08).

Key problems have included a shortage of vehicles and an operational culture that required senior managers to ‘firefight’ rather than allowing them to concentrate on strategy. As a consequence, managers were unable to deal effectively with significant



“There’s no short term fix for cultural change, and that is a real issue – particularly when there’s an ingrained lack of trust between management and staff”

**BRIAN JAMES, INTERIM DIRECTOR,
TORFAEN CLEANSTREAM RECYCLING LTD**



disciplinary issues such as lack of care with customers.

Another contributing factor was the high level of temporary staff employed; 50 per cent of the workforce came from one local agency. According to James, this agency also provided six hire vehicles, which led to a situation where, to some extent, “the tail was wagging the dog”. The problem was tackled head on by changing the agency. Unfortunately, a wealth of informal knowledge that had never been documented was lost as these long-term ‘temps’ ceased working for TCRL.



“Strategy hinges around indicators – we need to have clear data so we can assess how we’re performing”

BRIAN JAMES, INTERIM DIRECTOR, TORFAEN CLEANSTREAM RECYCLING LTD

Today, permanent staff make up 95 per cent of the workforce, bringing greater consistency. As James points out, “You can’t train people that are in transit.” He takes pride in TCRL’s intention to become an ‘Investor in People’. Historically, he says that: “There was a lot of mistrust. Management were a bit robust with the workforce – intolerant – rather than valuing their contribution. Now, I meet the staff once a fortnight and say, ‘Rough week last week, but thank you very much.’” He has also introduced a performance-based pay scheme, whereby a quarter of all surpluses are shared among the workforce.

Increased prices for recyclables and a rise in tonnages collected have also given the company a financial boost, which is being ploughed back into the business in the form of additional training. All TCRL staff are currently taking part in health and safety and

customer service training, in conjunction with a new, comprehensive health and safety action plan.

Data recording has been overhauled to produce accurate information on operational performance and finance, and the organisation has succeeded in operating within its business plan budget. Once plans to buy another collection vehicle have come to fruition, James feels they will be well on the way to providing what he describes as a “Rolls Royce service”.

In the meantime, morale is up. James is the first to admit that working conditions for frontline staff can be challenging, but he says: “When we were at the customer care training, the men were saying, ‘We like our work.’ That gives me a lot of confidence – a lot of hope that we have got the product there to become a high performing organisation. And the way to nurture that is to value it.” ■





sound and vision

Award-winning Rhondda Cynon Taf Council sees itself as a 'can do' authority, and has stormed up the recycling league table, thanks to its innovative awareness raising campaign

“ We want the public to see us, to come to us, talk to us, so they know who we are ”

NIGEL WHEELER, SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR STREETCARE

Four years ago, Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) County Borough Council was in the doldrums; only one rung from the bottom of Wales' local authority league table and with a derisory recycling rate of just 10 per cent. But the spectre of all-Wales targets called for a dramatic shake up and, using determination and innovation, the council has raced into the mid-table with a current rate of 35 per cent recycling and 55 per cent participation.

Service Director for Streetcare Nigel Wheeler describes the upturn as a direct result of innovative awareness raising work, aided by the success of food waste



collection trials. He says he is determined to make community engagement as visible as possible: "I go to a council meeting and one of the members says, 'Wherever I go, I see you or your team.' To me that's worked."





“ Some of the things we’ve done are quite unique. It’s simply because it’s areas we weren’t capturing people ”

NIGEL WHEELER, SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR STREETCARE

But it doesn’t stop there. Children are able to join an award winning website, www.rhys-cycle.co.uk, which employs the eponymous character Rhys as host. Rhys also acts as recycling ambassador, visiting supermarkets and schools and even appearing on Pontypridd RFC players’ strip before making a personal appearance as mascot on match days.

Other promotional activities include the inspired Enviro Vision Song Quest. Wheeler says: “We invited schools to develop their own song on themes like litter and recycling food waste. Then we put a musician with the best six; developed the music and lyrics and then had a showcase event where they all played. Stuart Cable of the Stereophonics was one of the judges.”



“Supplying food waste bags isn’t cheap. But if it stops us getting fines; if we don’t get a complaint, I’m happy ”

NIGEL WHEELER, SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR STREETCARE

This direct approach extends across all aspects of the service. One local councillor, stunned to discover that his area was one of the lowest performing in the county borough, responded with the Adopt a Street scheme, with primary school children and teachers knocking on doors to ask why people weren’t recycling.

Food waste collection has also played its part, with trials proving so successful that the scheme is due for roll out across the whole borough. Wheeler describes participation in the trial areas as exceptional. “It’s varied between about 65-80 per cent. We’ve been collecting more kilos per property than anywhere else; in some areas we’re virtually doubling and trebling the national trend.”

The scheme has been publicised in a number of ways, including a feature

on a DVD distributed to all households in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Wheeler says: “When we delivered the bins, we talked people through the process. We use the recycling bags in there, because they’re biodegradable, so it’s all clean. I think one of the reasons for success is we’ve given them the bags.”

Also crucial is adopting the right approach; not too soft, not too hard: “When explaining why you need to recycle, we’re focusing on the Landfill Directive. I’m getting to the point now where I tell people that if we don’t achieve our Landfill Directive targets by 2010, there are fines, and those fines will come back on the Council Tax. It does stop people in their tracks. But we also try and do it in a nice way so that we bring people along with us.” ■



bring a bottle

Powys County Council has maintained a presence at the top end of the league table since the advent of recycling rates, and is determined to stay there. Key to its success is its innovative formula for involving the community at public bring sites



When you're the largest county in Wales, boasting an exceptionally sparse population, size matters. Throw lower than average income levels and a large swathe of national park with associated planning restrictions into the mix and you start to get an idea of the challenges facing Powys County Council

“ The community sector can blaze the trail for the rest of us to come in and follow ”

LEE MARSHALL, SENIOR MANAGER, POLICY AND WASTE

(PCC). Then, consider that the authority was the first to hit both Wales' 40 per cent target, and also the 15 per cent dry recycling/organic recycling split; and suddenly Powys seems worthy of a closer look.



According to Lee Marshall, Senior Manager, Policy and Waste at PCC, with such a large area to cover, vehicle management is one of the biggest problems: "In an urban area, you may be able to get through up to 2,000 houses in one day with one vehicle. Some of our vehicles may potentially only get through 200 houses a day. We also only have one disposal site, so we need perhaps more bulking and transfer facilities than other authorities. Whilst technically it's possible to do, it impacts mostly on costs."



“ The council has agreed to implement a completely new recycling and waste collection system. Every household in the county will get a food waste collection and kerbside recycling collection ”

LEE MARSHALL, SENIOR MANAGER, POLICY AND WASTE

So how has Powys achieved its current recycling rate of 43 per cent? Marshall says bring sites are a key factor. The council operates an innovative scheme with local groups, which receive credits in return for maintaining banks. "We've got scout groups, village hall committees, town and community councils... It's in their interest to get people to use the site, because the

more material that goes through it, the more money they get back."

The council also works directly with community groups, including operating a 15-year contract with Cae Post to run its materials recovery facility (MRF). Cae Post has also been trialing a rural kerbside round, employing 'community catalysts'; crew members who talk

directly to householders. In addition, all boxes are chipped. Marshall says: "I think the work they're doing with their IT system is cutting edge in terms of the amount and the quality of the information they're getting out of their kerbside system. It looks like it's performing better than our own kerbside, so it shows then what perhaps we need to be doing in awareness raising."

Similarly, community organisation Cwm Harry Land Trust was funded to run a trial, collecting food waste, but has since been contracted by PCC to continue. "It's diverted 5-6,000 tonnes in a year, which goes directly towards our last target."



“People are more likely to want to use bring sites because they see the benefit coming back in funds for the local groups”

LEE MARSHALL, SENIOR MANAGER, POLICY AND WASTE

Marshall says that in light of the desire for 70 per cent recycling, the council has agreed to implement “a completely new recycling and waste collection system that will mean that every household in the county will get a food waste collection and kerbside recycling collection”.

Powys Zero Waste Coordinator Shane Logan hopes this will extend to a new way of managing waste and recycling in the county: “In the next 10 years, I’d like to see the community sector in a full, open and very clear partnership with the council in the form of a community interest company. And within that, we would then openly bid for a 25-year contract that we could all get something out of. With the obvious side that benefits from that contract would be ploughed straight into the community.” ■



A black recycling bin is shown from a low angle, tilted upwards. The bin has a yellow label on its lid. The text on the bin is white and reads: "Recycle", "With Monmouthshire", "Community Recycling", and "This container remains the property of Monmouthshire County Council". The bin is situated outdoors next to a stone wall and some greenery. In the background, there are trees and a house under a blue sky.

Recycle
With Monmouthshire
Community Recycling
This container remains the property of Monmouthshire County Council

zero waste village

Mother-of-four, Lou Summers, has lived in St Arvans for six and a half years, and describes it as “a lovely place to live”, with helpful neighbours and good community spirit. It is also Wales’ only Zero Waste Village and boasts an impressive 77 per cent diversion rate

“ I wouldn’t buy something even if I thought the product was good. If it was over-packaged, it would annoy me enough not to buy it ”

LOU SUMMERS, ST ARVANS RESIDENT

In 2005, the St Arvans Community Council's environment representative approached recycling service provider Monmouthshire Community Recycling for advice and, shortly after, the concept of the zero waste village was born. Zero waste coordinator Simon Anthony says: “There was a basic collection service covering core materials – paper, cans, glass, textiles and green waste – but residents asked for guidance on a more extensive service, which resulted in the collection of plastics, cardboard, food



waste, batteries, mobile phones, toner cartridges and tetra paks.”

The first task was to secure finance for the post of zero waste coordinator. With funding from Environment Wales, Simon Anthony started work in autumn 2006; the zero waste launch followed in 2007.



Anthony says community buy-in has been astonishing, and crucial to the scheme's success: "At the launch, 100 residents turned up and showed they were keen to learn and to recycle. Some were starting

“Allowing people to recycle more products increases the feel good factor and helps participation”

SIMON ANTHONY, ZERO WASTE COORDINATOR

to think holistically about waste and recycling, which was fantastic.”

In addition to organising meetings to promote the scheme, Anthony has become a regular visitor to the village, monitoring participation and providing hands-on advice. Lou Summers says his input has proved invaluable. Anthony adds: “It’s the personal touch, and I think that’s the real selling point - the social aspect that the larger businesses just can’t deliver.”

Interestingly, levels of food waste have fallen dramatically since the introduction of the service. According to Anthony, “Food waste made up 14 per cent of the



“The thing that helped the most was having someone to tell people what to use and where it goes, and how it benefits the community. To have that advice, and then to introduce the boxes, makes a real difference”

LOU SUMMERS, ST ARVANS RESIDENT

total waste stream, but once the food collection started and people could see how much they were wasting it fell to around 10 per cent.

“People have also started shopping more sustainably; reusing carrier bags and shopping locally.” Despite having a weekly residual waste collection service, many residents have cut their use to a fortnightly basis.

Affluent areas like St Arvans are traditionally seen as ‘low hanging fruit’ for recyclers, but MCR is proving that more disadvantaged districts can also benefit from the zero waste model. The organisation has introduced an increased service to an estate in Abergavenny – an area of the town which has historically been one of the most deprived, with the lowest participation in Monmouthshire – and witnessed resident buy-in leap to 79 per cent.

Although this is a long way from 77 per cent diversion, it’s a positive sign, especially when faced with possible future targets of 70 per cent. Anthony is cautious but hopeful: “70 per cent diversion using kerbside is a possibility for the future, although the correct political and economic instruments need to be applied. Industry and technology will have a role to play in diverting certain parts of the waste stream from landfill, but providing the education and service provision requirements are met, kerbside collection can achieve 70 per cent diversion from landfill.”

So back in St Arvans, once all the recycling’s been done, what’s left in the Summers’ bin? “Soft plastics. But if there’s something mixed, you tend to break it down into the cardboard bit and take the plastic off, because the system’s set up, and it’s just become part of your life.” ■



external affairs

When it came to drawing up a communications strategy to promote existing and future work, Isle of Anglesey County Council decided that outsourcing would give it an added boost of creativity



The Isle of Anglesey County Council has a history of outsourcing. Unlike many Welsh authorities, it even contracts out its waste and recycling collection and cleansing services, so when it came to ramping up the council's communications procedure it didn't take long to decide that an outside company might come to the table with more creativity and fresher ideas than the authority could muster on its own.

According to Jon Eastwood, Principal Waste Management Officer, the decision was a success right from the start: "Even at the tender stage, the applicants

were bringing something new to the table – creativity and some innovative ideas... and the experience to push the boundaries that we didn't really have within the authority."

It's still early days – Anglesey's contract with Acer Marketing Communications has only been in place since June – but so far, all seems to

“ I think there's a big role for promotion and we should be able to achieve a lot just by banging the drum ”

JON EASTWOOD, PRINCIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICER

be working well. This year's Anglesey Show saw the council cleaned out of free compost bins – 850 in total – and a campaign is currently underway to

Help the environment and your pocket

Week One
The freezer is your friend

Chill out in the kitchen

Callington

Callington

Callington

Callington

Callington

Callington

1 Arena

The Arena

Indoor Car Boot & Market

Open all year round

Open all year round

Open all year round

Open all year round

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“We’re trying to develop a culture within our section, that we do take risks within the limits”

JON EASTWOOD, PRINCIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICER

raise awareness of food waste. Eastwood says: “Acer has secured eight weeks of free advertising coverage in the local newspaper, coming up with handy tips to save on food.”

Where the authority feels Acer has really made its mark is in coming up with slightly off-the-wall messages

like one of the posters on the council's updated recycling bus which states that its latest recycling rate of 35 per cent is 'equivalent to 3,000 elephants'. Eastwood says: “We believe it's important to send out simple messages, that people can relate to.”

Overall, the aim is to be more visible to the public and to offer what Eastwood describes as “a different slant” where possible. The recycling bus will be a regular sight at island events, engaging the public with activities that highlight the need for recycling items such as shoes and trainers, which can be used in





the manufacture of playground surfaces, or repaired and reused abroad.

The website is also due for an overhaul, and will soon feature podcasts and up to date information on services.

With household food waste collection trials due to start in the new year, work is almost completed on the authority's in vessel composting unit, which has been developed in conjunction with neighbouring Gwynedd and Conwy County Councils.



Anglesey takes pride in its partnerships, whether they involve the private sector, other local authorities, or the community sector. Eastwood cites its arrangement with waste management

company Verdant, highlighting the partnership that ran under the banner of Anglesey's exemplar status when community group Mentor Môn operated recycling rounds in some areas. He says: "We still have a working contract with

“ We’ve managed to maintain a partnership with the community sector which is working really well. We’re very comfortable with it ”

JON EASTWOOD, PRINCIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICER

Verdant, but they have sub contracted the bulky waste element to Mentor Môn. That's something that's post-exemplar where we've managed to maintain a partnership with the community sector that's working really well.

"Working in partnership allows you to be innovative, tapping into external experience and expertise. It is important that local authorities have checks and balances, but we also need to be innovative, and partnership delivers this." ■





gwelwch a chredwch

