

Cutting down the amount of rubbish we produce is vital, but it's not the only answer. We are going to continue producing rubbish for the foreseeable future so we need a long-term plan which will work for the county both in terms of cost and of the environment.

The main ways of dealing with our rubbish are a combination of these:

Recycling • Composting • Energy from Waste (where waste is burnt to produce energy) • Landfill

We already know that we will need to choose a combination of these methods for any long-term solution. No one method can do this on its own. But how they're combined and how these methods will work is down to you.

Recycling

It used to be the case that we could easily sell most of the materials we collected from recycling – but not any more. Now there's little or no value in paper, glass or steel cans. Good, clean clothes and aluminium cans are the only materials with any real resale value now.

There's also the question about how 'green' recycling is – it can take more energy to recycle some items than it would just to buy new every time.

But there are still benefits:

- Less rubbish going into landfill sites
- Reducing the amount of raw materials used

The government says we must double the amount we recycle in Norfolk by 2004 and have set other targets through to 2020. Now it is down to the Norfolk Waste Management Partnership to decide how we will best achieve those targets.



Recycling can be done

- Centrally – where the council takes all the rubbish away and then sorts out the materials for recycling at a central point. This costs more but doesn't require us to sort out our rubbish.

Plus points

- Easy for the public
- Everybody is served
- One collection for everything

Minus points

- It can increase the amount people throw away
- The rubbish gets 'dirty' and so less can be recycled
- Unproven technology

Or...

- By asking us to separate out our rubbish. This is cheaper but depends on people putting the effort in themselves.



If people decide they will co-operate with recycling, there are several ways it can be done:-

Collection schemes where the council collects the materials from the individual's house. Householders are asked to put their paper, cans and textiles into one big box or bag.

Plus Points

- Everybody is served
- Easy for the public – no need to carry it to the recycling bank
- Wide range of recyclables collected

Minus Points

- It's up to the individual whether they do it or not – and many don't
- More expensive than using the 'bank' system

Or...

'Bring' schemes where people take their newspapers, cans and glass bottles to a central 'bank' at a supermarket or public car park or to a Household Waste Recycling Centre.

Recycling Banks

Bottle, paper and can banks are all familiar sights around the county with literally hundreds spread throughout the area.

More recently they have been joined by banks for clothes, shoes and, in some areas, plastic bottles. The materials collected at these banks have little



or no monetary value. However, there is a cash incentive for parish councils and other voluntary organisations who collect materials for recycling.

Green wine bottles from the Continent are a particular problem, because in this country we like to buy our food and drink in clear glass. That means there's no market for green glass – we actually export most of our green glass from the bottle banks to Argentina!



Plus points

- Lots of banks throughout the county
- Can collect a wide range of items
- Cheaper than collection schemes
- Safer for glass

Minus points

- People have to transport items to the banks
- Can be seen as a nuisance to neighbours
- Frustrating when full

Household Waste Recycling Centres

Although most people refer to them as 'tips' or 'the dump', our 21 Household Waste Recycling Centres in Norfolk perform a vital role.

Across Norfolk, some 98,000 tonnes are collected at these centres each year and about 32% of that is recycled. With sites open 364 days a year, normally from dawn until dusk, they come into their own when householders have bulky items to dispose of or a lot of garden waste.

People using the centres are asked to sort their items and put them into large containers. There are separate containers for oil, garden waste, cardboard, cans, textiles and paper. These centres also deal safely with the removal of CFCs from fridges and freezers. What can't be recycled goes to landfill.

Plus points

- No charge to householders
- Convenient



Minus points

- You need your own transport

The Comeback of composting

At least 30% of what goes into your bin can be turned into compost. That has several advantages:-

- Less landfill means less pollution and valuable landfill space saved
- Compost is an organic source of food for gardens
- Compost can partly replace commercially produced peat.



So what can be composted?

- Kitchen waste such as vegetable and fruit peelings, tea bags and leaves, coffee grounds, egg shells, paper and cardboard.
- Garden waste such as grass cuttings, leaves and straw.

Composting can either be done centrally with councils collecting all organic material suitable for compost from each house or it can be done by individuals at home. It is obviously cheaper and saves energy if individuals make their own compost

Councils backing Home Composting
Several councils in the area have launched home composting schemes. By bulk-buying composters they can offer people in their district the chance to buy their own composter at cost price.

Plus points

- Reduces the amount of rubbish that has to be collected from your home
- Helps ensure less biodegradable waste is put into landfill sites
- Low cost
- Makes use of your waste

Minus Points

- Space required in the garden
- Regular attention needed

Commercial Composting

There are several different ways of commercial composting but all produce the same results – quality compost which can then be sold.

The material to be composted can come from different sources:-

- Household Waste Recycling Centres
- By householders sorting their own kitchen and garden organic waste separately, ready for collection

Plus points

- Serves householders unwilling or unable to make their own compost at home
- Helps ensure less biodegradable waste is put into landfill sites

Minus points

- More expensive than home composting
- Needs to be transported
- Potential smell and air-borne pollution

Energy from Waste

There are various ways in which we can produce energy from our rubbish. All of the methods involve very strict environmental controls.

There are two main ways of getting energy from waste:-

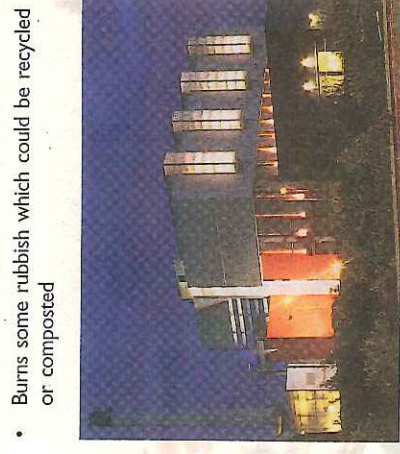
1. Burning our rubbish (incineration)

Plus points

- Produces energy from rubbish
- Provides an income
- Can take a wide range of rubbish without sorting

Minus points

- Public concern about air pollution
- Requires strict environmental controls



Energy from Waste Plant.

2. Collecting gas produced by rubbish

In this method rubbish is passed through a sealed container and the gas collected. The technology is still being developed and may soon be more widely available in this country. It is still too early to give 'plus' or 'minus' points, however:

Landfill

Landfill is always required because it is the only final disposal option. It is never popular, but no rubbish treatment site is popular if it is near your home.

Strict controls mean pollution is kept to a minimum. The new European Union regulations call for less biodegradable waste to go for landfill.

Plus Points

- Landfill gas can be used to generate electricity
- A good use for redundant quarries
- The only option for some waste

Minus points

- Unpopular with neighbours
- Requires strict environmental controls
- Space is gradually being used up