

Agenda Item No. 4(c)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

25 July 2018

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE FOOD BAG TRIAL IN HIGH PEAK

(1) **Purpose of the Report** To seek Cabinet Member approval for expansion of a trial issuing free compostable food bags to households in Buxton to divert food waste and reduce disposal costs.

(2) **Information and Analysis** On 11 January 2018, the Cabinet Member approved a contribution of £7,989 to part fund, with High Peak Borough Council, a small scale six month trial to issue compostable food bags to households in the Borough to encourage more residents to divert food waste for composting through their garden waste bins. (Minute No. 10/18 refers).

Evidence from national research identified that to significantly increase participation householders should receive support through the provision of compostable food bags, stickers and leaflets alongside a high profile communications campaign.

Householders have been issued with two compostable food bags per week to encourage them to separate their food waste. The bags issued are the same as those issued by Derbyshire Dales District Council.

The trial area covers 7,000 households in large parts of Glossop and the surrounding areas, and has been running since its inception in September 2017. It should be noted that householders in High Peak have been able to place food waste in their garden waste bins since 2009 but participation levels have been very low. National research has identified that the public do not participate for a variety of reasons including:

- too smelly/messy;
- do not have the time; and
- do not see the point.

Food waste consists of:

- avoidable food waste that could have eaten but have chosen not to; and
- unavoidable food waste, such as fruit and vegetable peelings - banana skins, apple cores, cauliflower leaves, tea bags, egg shells, etc.

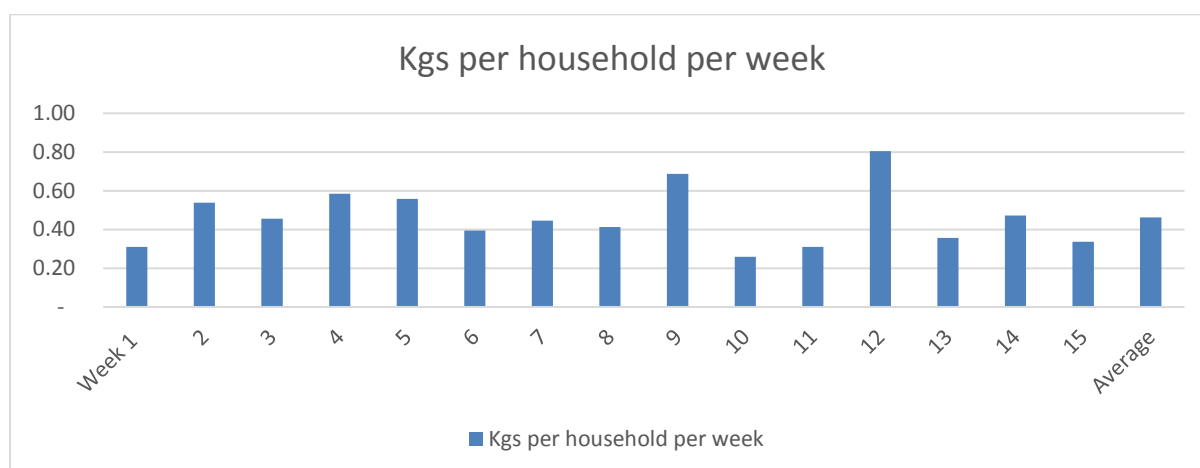
National research confirms that the typical household generates approximately 2kgs of food waste per week or 100kgs per year, more than the body weight of the average man. Until a household actually separates this waste most do not realise how much food waste is thrown away.

Food waste is by far the single biggest waste stream in household waste bins. Derbyshire householders are placing over 57,000 tonnes of food waste in their general waste bins each year that the County Council has to dispose of. This has a significant impact on the environment and the financial cost to the Derbyshire Council Tax payer is over £7.5m per year.

During the trial, participation by householders was expected to generate on average between 0.1kg and 0.5kg of food waste per household per week across the trial area.

The following table highlights that the average weight of food waste diverted during the trial was 0.48kg per household per week, an increase of 0.31kg which equates to a diversion of 3.3 tonnes of food waste per week or 167 tonnes in one year by the Glossop householders.

The graph below illustrates the performance over 15 weeks of the trial.



In May 2018, a face to face survey was undertaken with 356 households to assess the scheme, including the quantity of bags that were provided. The key outcomes from the survey were as follows:

- 80% said they use the service regularly, 10% said they never use it.

- 43% of householders using the service are already buying their own liners from local shops and supermarkets.
- 83% of users said they would continue to use the service if they were supplied with fewer bags.
- 96% of users were satisfied with their food waste collection service.

The food waste collected is composted at the County Council's in-vessel composting plant at Waterswallows, Buxton. This facility is managed by Suez on the Council's behalf. Suez has been monitoring the quality of the food waste being presented as it is critical that all food and garden waste feedstock is quality controlled to enable a compostable product to be produced. Suez has recently confirmed it is satisfied with the inputs from the trial and will continue to spread the resulting compost on agricultural land in the Buxton area replenishing farmland with nutrients and organic matter that reduces reliance on artificially produced fertilisers.

The trial has proved that the provision of free compostable food bags engages the public and diverts food waste, however, the key challenge faced by the Council is balancing the economics of the initiative.

The trial cost was £3,338, lower than initially estimated, which demonstrates that the trial has been more successful than originally anticipated. However, whilst the initiative delivers direct disposal savings to the County Council, there are significant costs for the provision of the food bags, leaflets and stickers, their distribution and marketing costs. In summary, the provision of two bags per week puts the project into a negative cost scenario for the County Council, however, the provision of one bag should present some modest disposal costs savings when the bags and promotional materials are issued annually.

Taking into consideration the positive feedback from residents and the costs outlined, it is proposed that, subject to approval, the initiative be continued for a further 12 months but all households being issued with one bag per week.

Furthermore, it is proposed that the initiative be expanded into the Buxton area (7,000 households), as part of an expansion in the High Peak area.

It should be noted there are six retailers in Glossop selling the compostable bags and it is proposed that a limited number of bags could also be made freely available at Council outlets in the area, such as municipal buildings, libraries, etc. Some Buxton retailers are understood to sell the bags now but officers will engage with them in August 2018 to encourage sales.

The following table outlines the costs of continuing this trial in the Glossop area and the costs of a further roll out into the Buxton area.

Items of Expenditure	12 month extension of the Glossop trial (£)	12 month trial in the Buxton area (£)	Total (£)
52 bags for 7,000 properties and additional stock for the public offices	7,338	7,338	14,676
Stickers for bins		1,385	1,385
Distribution of stickers		980	980
Leaflets	219	365	584
Distribution of bags and leaflets	2,150	2,150	4,300
Marketing costs	2,000	2,000	4,000
Total Implementation Costs	11,707	14,218	25,925
Estimated Disposal Savings to the County Council.	16,695	16,695	33,390
Estimated Net Saving to the County Council	4,988	2,477	7,465

This 'invest to save' trial has demonstrated that, with strong public participation, it is possible to create environmental benefit, increased recycling rates and produce some modest disposal savings for the County Council. High Peak Borough Council is very committed to this development of its kerbside compost scheme and has invested significant Officer time in the implementation and monitoring of the trial. However, it is unable to offer any direct financial support to the initiative and its continuation as no direct financial savings are accruable by it.

The proposed expansion of the trial into the Buxton area will enable the Council to further understand household behaviour and commitment to this composting scheme, as well as providing on-going cost benefits. Subject to approval, the results of the expanded trial will be the subject of a further report to the Cabinet Member in summer 2019.

The collection of food waste from the Glossop and Buxton areas is estimated will add almost 0.5% to High Peak Borough's recycling and composting rate (48.1% in 2016-17) and will also add 0.05% increase to the Derbyshire recycling rate.

Furthermore, Suez is satisfied that contamination in the food waste stream is minimal and is happy to commence discussions with Chesterfield Borough, North East Derbyshire and Bolsover District councils in regard to undertaking similar trials in those areas. This will be at no net cost to the County Council and will enable assessment of food composting in these areas and to the composting process at Arkwright in-vessel composting plant.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The proposed 12 month expansion and continuation in the High Peak area will incur implementation costs of £25,925 which can be met by the disposal savings that the County Council gains, consequently providing net disposal savings to the Council of up to £7,465.

(4) **Legal Considerations** The County Council has a duty to dispose of residual waste presented by households.

(5) **Environmental and Health Considerations** The County Council is committed to increasing sustainable waste management solutions across the whole County.

(6) **Key Decision** No.

(7) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(8) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Environment Department. Officer contact details – Neil Haslam, extension 39787.

(9) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That the Cabinet Member approves:

- 9.1 The expansion of a compostable food bag trial into the Buxton area and the continuation of the Glossop trial until September 2019 and the trial to include the issuing of one food bag per household per week (issued on a roll of 52 in September 2018).
- 9.2 Any small scale trial in the north-east of the County providing that it is cost neutral to the County Council due to the associated disposal savings.
- 9.3 Officers to report back to the Cabinet Member in summer 2019 with a further report on progress of this trial and with any developments of trials in the north-east of the County.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment