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From: Catherine Walker

Posted At: 02 December 2007 21:10

Posted To: NE02836 - Regional Waste Plan Consultation

Conversation: consumer opinion

Subject: consumer opinion

I am glad at last to air my views on welsh waste disposal. I have been trying to recycle my waste or dispose of it in a responsible manner, since I arrived in the country in 2001. Prior to that, I lived in a small village of 800 people and walked 200m each week, to my village recycling facility, open all day Friday and Saturday morning. Once there I separated my bags of waste into the twenty different receptacles available for each type of rubbish: clear plastic, coloured plastic, Tetra Pac type containers, yoghurt and cream tubs, polystyrene trays etc.

There was a fortnightly household collection for the items that were not recycled. The criterion for inclusion - if it were allowed - was that the item must not exceed the size of a bag of sugar. Any vegetable matter or garden cuttings went in a separate bin, and in return in spring we received a free bag of compost for our pot plants. Many items were banned from inclusion in the general rubbish and had to be taken to the recycling facility for appropriate disposal. These included none rechargeable batteries, spray cans, old personal audio equipment etc. I had been disposing of waste like this since 1994.

Once I arrived in Ruthin to live in August 2001 I phoned the local council to enquire about rubbish disposal. I felt I had stepped back twenty five years as nothing seemed to have moved on since I lived here in 1980. I was particularly shocked when I asked how I should dispose of batteries. "Put them in the bin sack, I was told." Naively, I thought that maybe, as in one town I lived in, the rubbish went on to a conveyor belt where it was sorted for such incorrectly disposed things, before the 'good' rubbish went into the incinerator to provide district heating. When I asked what happened to them then, I got told that they went into landfill: I imagined the toxins leaching into the water supply and thought the Cambrian pop factory of my youth wouldn't have fared so well if they had done that hundreds of years ago. I have been unable to dispose of my batteries, my conscience won't let me. I last threw some away four years ago, when I took them on holiday to Austria and put them in the little box for that purpose in the post office. Since then, I have kept them in a kitchen drawer. Now perhaps you intend to give me a means to dispose of them without endangering the livestock or people who live in North Wales.

I now live outside of town, in the village of Pwllglas and in spite of some improvement in recycling in the town, it is still like living in the past here. How are locals, who don't have transport supposed to dispose of things responsibly? As I mentioned at the start of this post, I used to walk to recycle or dispose of the rubbish, but I only had to cross the street to the nearby shop to dispose of tins, glass, paper and old clothes. In Pwllglas, we have a community hall, why can't we have recycling bins there? If you make it easy for people to recycle, they will. If you make it complicated, they won't.

I look forward to hearing your plans to bring Welsh Waste Disposal into the twentieth century, before we get too far into the twenty first.

Catherine Walker