



ALTON CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK

Recycling Survey Report

March 2021

Find us on: altonclimatenetwork@gmail.com altonclimatenetwork.org.uk

Instagram: @Alton.CAN

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Report on the ACAN Recycling Survey

This survey was carried out in Jan/Feb 2021. There were 176 responses.

Plastic waste and recycling are one of the issues most frequently brought to ACAN's attention and therefore we were delighted when Cllr Steve Hunt gave us the opportunity to undertake a survey. He made the original version for his council use and then offered to help us amend it for our use. So many thanks to him for this. This report is written by members of ACAN.

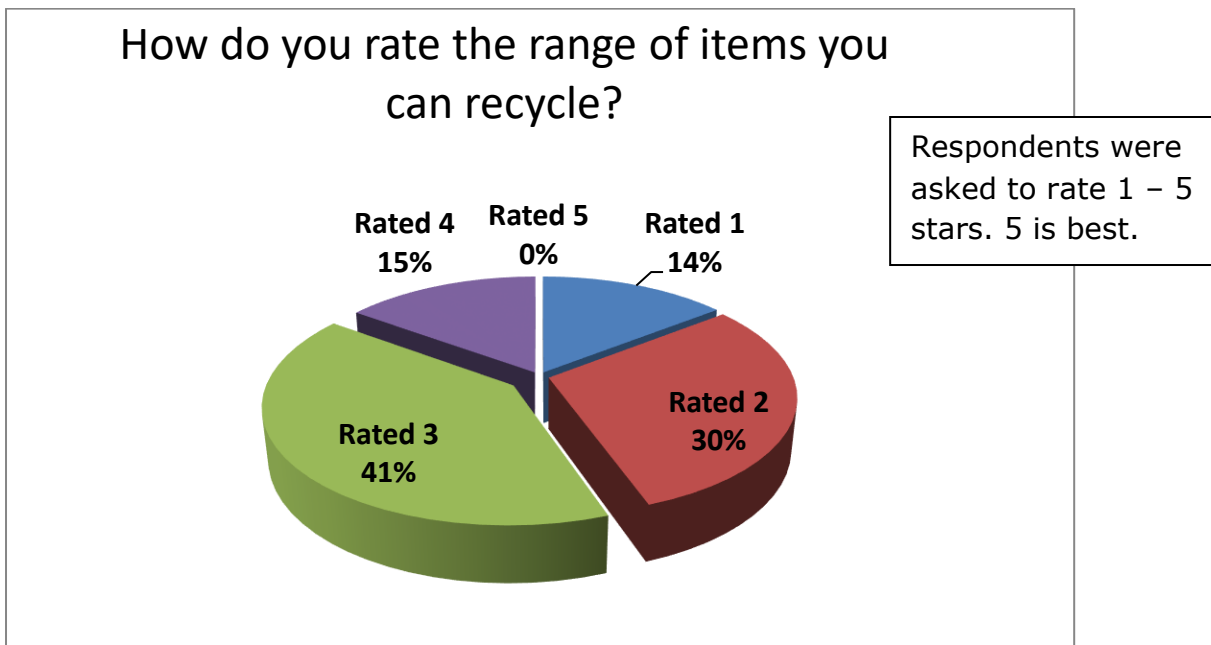
Following the analysis it appeared that the two main issues were:

- First the level of **confusion** felt by residents as to what can and cannot be placed in the recycling bin which is perceived to be as a result of poor communication from the council.
- The second issue is the level of **dissatisfaction** of the range of materials that can be recycled. The perception is that other UK counties can put a much greater range in bins "for recycling" although how much of what goes into bins in Surrey for example actually ends up as new product is perhaps overestimated.

A fair understanding of the extent of the problem of waste, particularly plastic waste, is apparent. The respondents feel strongly that a great deal more recycling is at least part of the answer. Many answers indicate that **reducing** the amount of plastic used particularly in food packaging is also perceived to be important.

Q1 How do you rate the range of items you can recycle? There was a scale of 1 – 5 stars to rate this service. No-one awarded 5/5 but 15% of the sample awarded 4 stars. The largest segment 41% gave 3 stars and the 2 lower ratings were awarded 30% and 14% respectively.

Comment It is well known that Hampshire's official recycling rates are very low compared to other counties and these figures may be considered to be a bit higher than expected.



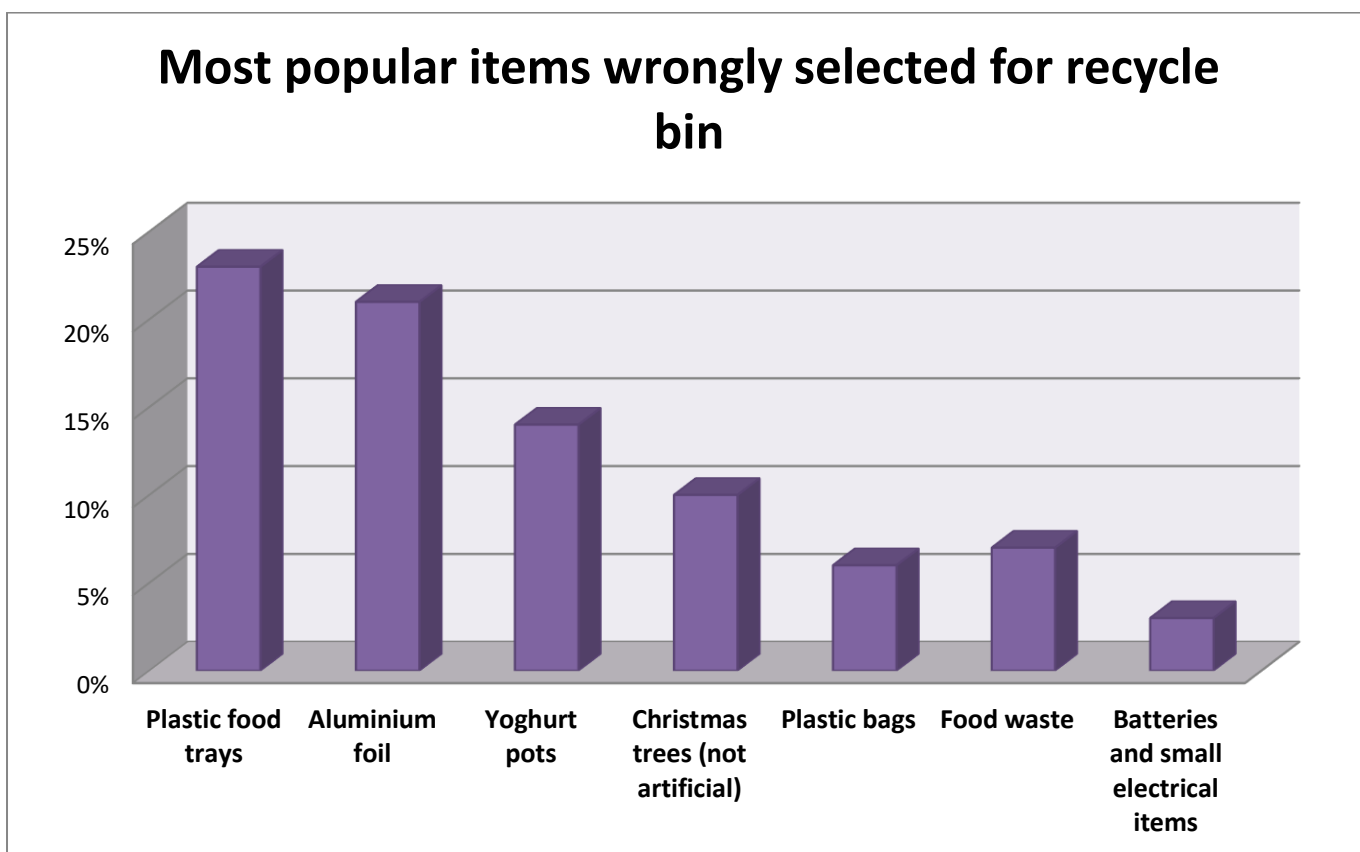
Q2 What do you think we are able to put in kerbside recycling bins?

Select all that can go in: Glass bottles and jars, Steel cans, Aluminium cans, Aluminium foil, Batteries and small electrical items, Plastic bottles, Plastic bottle lids (eg milk bottle lids), Plastic food trays, Yoghurt pots, Plastic bags, Paper and cardboard, Garden waste, Food waste, Christmas trees (not artificial)

The answers to this question indicate a poor understanding of the requirements in the community. The "pots, tubs and trays" waste stream is collected by many authorities but not in Hampshire. This survey shows that 23% of respondents believe that food trays can be put in the recycle bin and 14% believe yogurt pots can be. Aluminium foil is also often mistakenly put out for recycling, presumably because people consider metal to be easy to recycle.

10% thought that Christmas trees can be recycled, possibly as part of the garden waste scheme. Less than 10% of people thought that food waste, plastic bags or batteries and small electrical items could be included. Few people had all the items correctly placed.

A chart showing "wrong" replies is shown.



Comment

One respondent commented that some years ago the instructions were different, plastic types 1, 2 and 3 could be put in the recycling bin. It seems that the instructions changed a while ago but maybe not everyone has realised.

The items on this list are collected for recycling in other counties in England. Many people have requested food waste bins similar to the ones used in Farnham.

There is a major problem with contaminated waste streams in that people putting the wrong items into the recycling bin leads to LESS recycling because, for example, the contractor for bottle recycling will only take bottles and rejects batches of waste containing other items. HCC do try to remove some of the contaminants and it says on their website, "Removing all these 'contaminants' from recycling bins and sending them for disposal costs Hampshire taxpayers £1 million a year!"

Q3 What do we wish to put out for kerbside recycling collection?



It seems that being able to recycle pots and trays would be a very popular move with these scoring 89% and 87% respectively. Over half of the respondents would like to see plastic bags, shredded paper and cardboard, food waste and electrical items to be collected for recycling. It is interesting that only 57% voted for food waste though. There has been some publicity suggesting that more people would like to have that.

Q4 Anything else you would like to be able to recycle?

The following list comprises the *incorrect* answers to Q2 "What do you think you are able to put in kerbside recycling bins?"

*Plastic food trays, Yoghurt pots, Plastic bags, Food waste, Aluminium foil
Christmas trees (not artificial), Batteries and small electrical items*

Most items on this list appeared in the answers multiple times. Other popular suggestions were:

Textiles and rags (items too far gone for charity shops), expanded polystyrene, light bulbs, rubble, small ferrous bits, wine screw caps and jar lids, plastic flower pots, cooked food waste, tetra-paks/ juice cartons, printer cartridges, water filter cartridges

A few individual comments were as follows:

Dog poo (it seems you can get street lights powered by dog poo methane!!)

"I think having electrical items collected from homes once a month would be great."

"Just all the things other places recycle"

Q5 What do you believe happens to the waste that goes in your refuse bin?
(Multiple choice: Landfill, Incineration, Goes abroad, Don't know)



Less than 10% of household waste from Hampshire goes into landfill (just bulk collection items unsuitable for the incinerator) and little if any is sent abroad. The presence of incinerators ensures that local waste avoids those destinations but arguably incinerators bring their own problems.

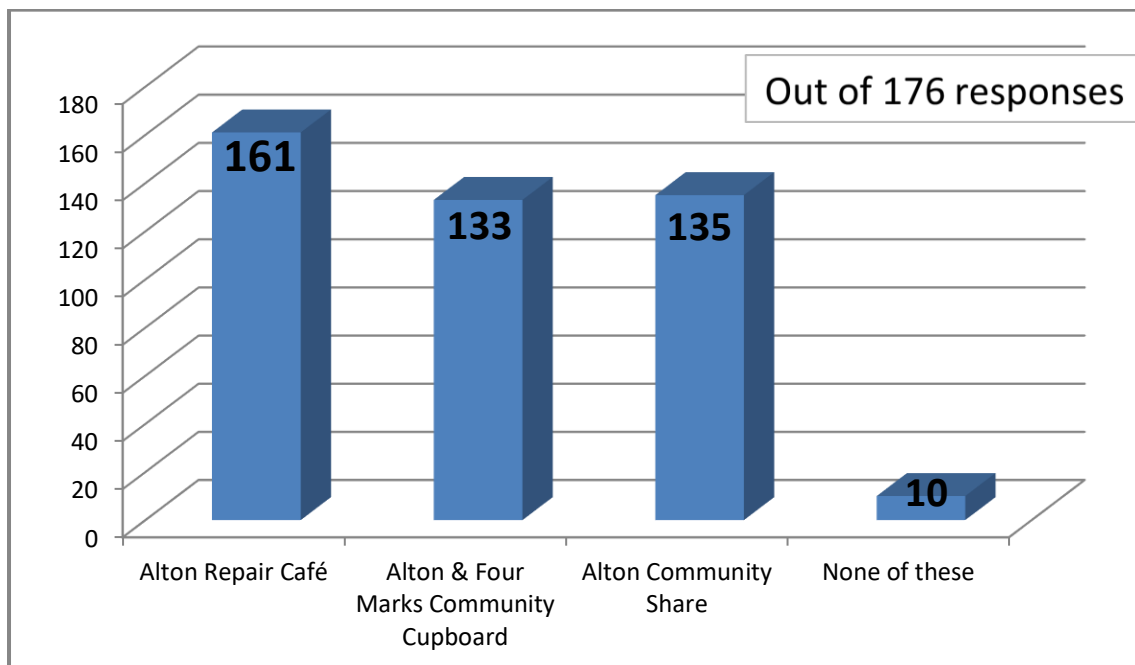
However it was surprising that 51% of respondents thought that their waste goes to landfill and only 36% selected the correct answer.

These links to the Hampshire County Council Website are helpful.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/whattodowithwaste/yourwaste>

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/recycleforhampshire/whatweneed>

Q6 Have you heard of these ACAN groups? Click all that apply:



It is gratifying to find that quite a large proportion of respondents had heard of the various ACAN groups, perhaps unsurprising as many people received the survey through us. However 40 new people requested to be added to our newsletter mailing list!

Q7 Any other comments on recycling and reducing waste?

The most common comment was that people felt there is a lack of information and communication about what can or cannot be put into recycling. There is, in fact, quite a bit of information on the Hampshire County Council website, and the East Hants District Council website has links to the relevant pages. However many made the comment that they are unlikely to go online, they would like the information "in front of them". It is actually quite time consuming to find answers to their questions on the website. A couple of people mentioned that they put any plastic with a 1,2 or 3 designation on it into recycling rather than sticking to the bottles only request. Several pointed out that there should be more information about the problems of contaminated waste streams.

Three people wanted to know more about what happens to waste after sorting. One wanted reassurance that waste wasn't being sent abroad, another whether recycling actually occurs and another wanted to know what was being done to stimulate the end markets for recycling in UK.

It was felt that if collection was standardised nationally then it would be easier for people to get it right. There were a few references to superior systems in Netherlands, Germany and elsewhere.

One commenter said, "When kerbside recycling started here in 2001, all plastic of types 1, 2 & 3 could be recycled. This has since been limited to plastic bottles only (with no plastic type specified). So, I can recycle less plastic now than I could 20 yrs ago. Why? Please would the

council reverse this decision and also increase the range of other waste which can be collected.”

Another very common complaint is the low rate of recycling recorded in Hampshire compared to other counties in the UK (especially Wales). Respondents repeatedly wanted to know why this is the case. Some of the comments were somewhat strongly worded.

A third frequent comment was to do with the role of supermarkets and their reliance on single use plastic. There were two comments on 4-packs of cans of beans or tuna with an extra plastic sleeve were better value than single cans. “Supermarkets should do more to reduce single use plastic”, “Get rid of best before dates”, “Supermarkets should take back plastic” “Producers should pay for disposal and fund councils”. Several referred to the need to REDUCE plastic use generally and also to change people’s habits. One said “Better to reduce waste eg use Fill-up shop and buy local (eg butchers) with far less packaging.”

Quite a few comments were made about the lack of food waste collection. Some wanted more frequent refuse and recycling collections and a couple called for separate rag collections.

A few comments were made about HWRC sites. “I would like to see the tip offering an improved sales area for reusable items”. “We shouldn’t have to pay to dump small amounts rubble or soil. It encourages fly tipping” and “Recycling sites should be accessible to non-car owners.”

Some individual comments: “Feel helpless”, “Ban leaflet drops”, “Cloth nappy library or voucher scheme should be introduced” , “Do spot checks on people’s recycling bins - fine contaminators”

And we ALL go with this one! “The mess by the side of the road on A31”

Next steps – We are communicating the key messages of this report to councillors and officers in the Waste Prevention, Recycle and Disposal departments in the county and the district councils. We are making this report available to the public via our website, newsletter and social media sites.

We would like to find out WHY the EHDC’s position in national recycling league tables was 267 out of 341 local authorities in 2019 – 2020 and whether it would help to campaign for more suitable plastics reprocessing plants in the UK. We will report back on this in due course.

Reference: <https://www.letsrecycle.com/councils/league-tables/2019-20-overall-performance/> ANNUAL RECYCLING LEAGUE TABLE FOR ENGLAND