



## ZERO WASTE CHALLENGE WEEK

'How Low Can You Go?'

Experiences and feedback from the residents of Gloucestershire.

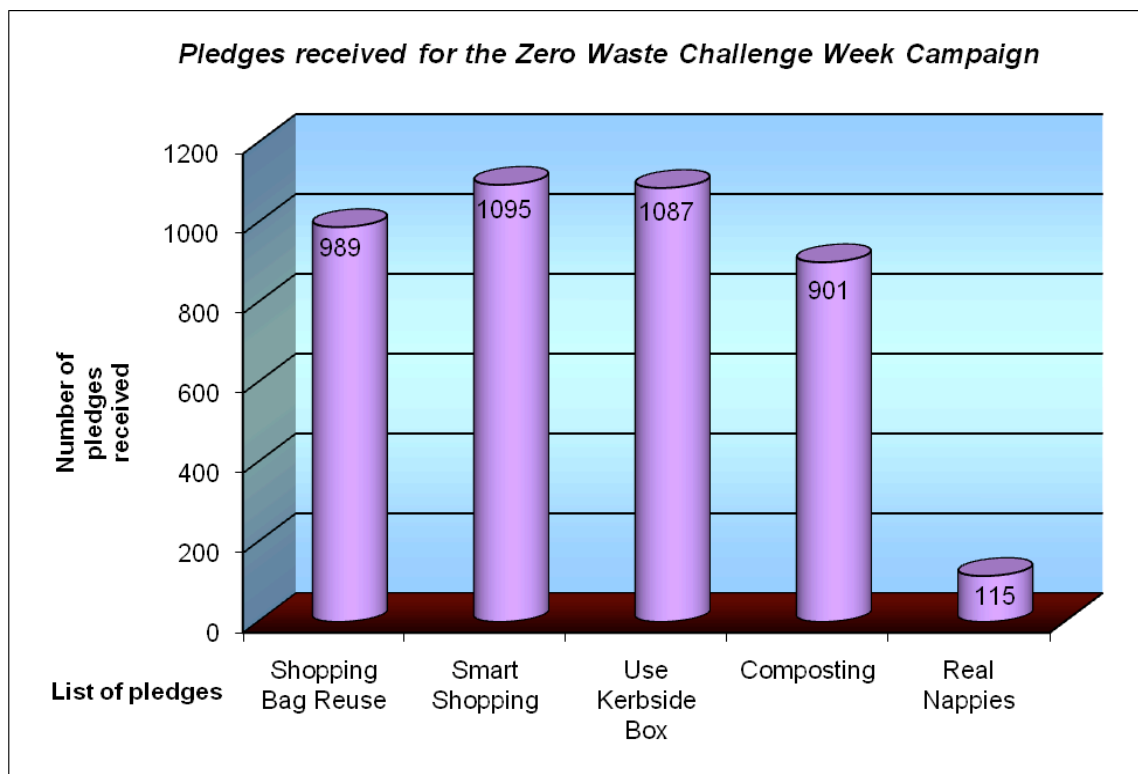
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## Introduction

The Zero Waste Challenge Week was a very high profile and successful campaign focussed on the reduction of waste sent to landfill over a week running from January 26<sup>th</sup> to February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009. The campaign received a unparalleled amount of media coverage achieving a total advertising value equivalent (AVE) of £32,913 with 67 articles about the campaign being published both locally and nationally. 1,300 residents, schools and communities signed up for the challenge with 270 monitoring and feedback forms being sent back, approximately a 20% return rate. All the information from the forms was collated and the comments analysed so that common concerns and themes from the campaign were identified.

## RESULTS

During the challenge week residents reduced their waste to landfill by an average of 3.8kg per household, with most residents achieving a 50% drop in the amount of waste they sent to landfill. If the 3.8kg waste figure were extrapolated across the county we would have achieved our long term 60% recycling and composting target. Residents were asked to identify which actions they would like to pledge to undertake during the campaign when signing up to take part. The graph below details the pledges we received from the 1300 residents who signed up to the campaign.



Graph 1 – Pledges received for the Zero Waste Challenge Week Campaign

The most common concerns raised by the residents about their experiences through the challenge week were as follows: -

- The volume of plastic packaging, mostly related to the food trays and tubs that residents had to deal with during the week. This also raised their awareness of how much packaging they would normally be placing in the bin on an average refuse week

- Residents became more aware of the amount of food waste, which gets thrown away and started asking how this can be managed and dealt with especially in respect of the meat and bones element.
- Elderly residents were concerned with pill packaging and whether this could be recycled.
- The storing of extra recyclable materials throughout the week also was an issue for some residents.
- Some residents wanted to know where local facilities were located for items such as batteries and light bulbs.
- The campaign also increased residents awareness of the range of bring bank facilities which are now available at the HRC's and at local recycling points, for example tetra packs & foil recycling banks.

We also asked residents to give us information about the types of actions they took throughout the week to reduce their waste. The main actions that residents reported taking to reduce their waste were:-

- Changing of shopping habits away from supermarkets.
- Looking for local suppliers i.e. farmers markets, veg box schemes.
- Increased planning of meals and shopping trips.
- Some started bulk buying commodities i.e. washing powders etc.
- Greater use of compost bins in gardens or garden waste collection systems offered by the local authority.
- Some started using real nappies instead of disposables.

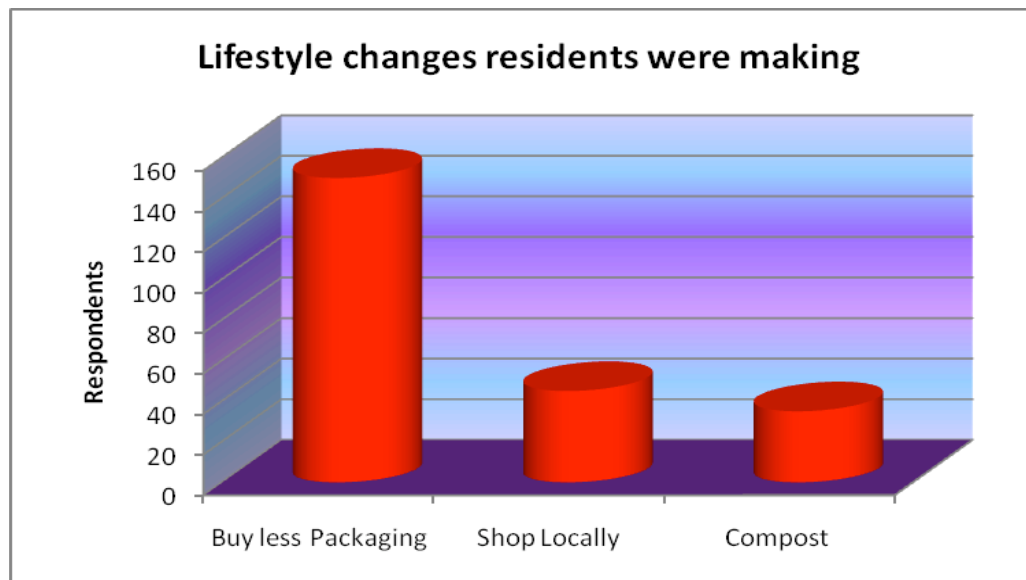
Some residents also reported that during the week they started to bake more items at home, for example cakes and flapjacks, which not only helped them to achieve their aim of reducing waste but they found unexpected bonuses too, such as gaining satisfaction from producing food from scratch.



Graph 2 – Actions that residents took to reduce their waste production.

## THE FUTURE

We asked residents to give us some information about the types of lifestyle changes they made and which of these they were likely to continue with after the campaign week. Detailed in graph 3 is some of the changes that residents stated that they would continue doing, these range from buying foods with less packaging to avoiding purchasing goods at supermarkets, where residents believe the source of much of the excess packaging they have to put in the bin arises.

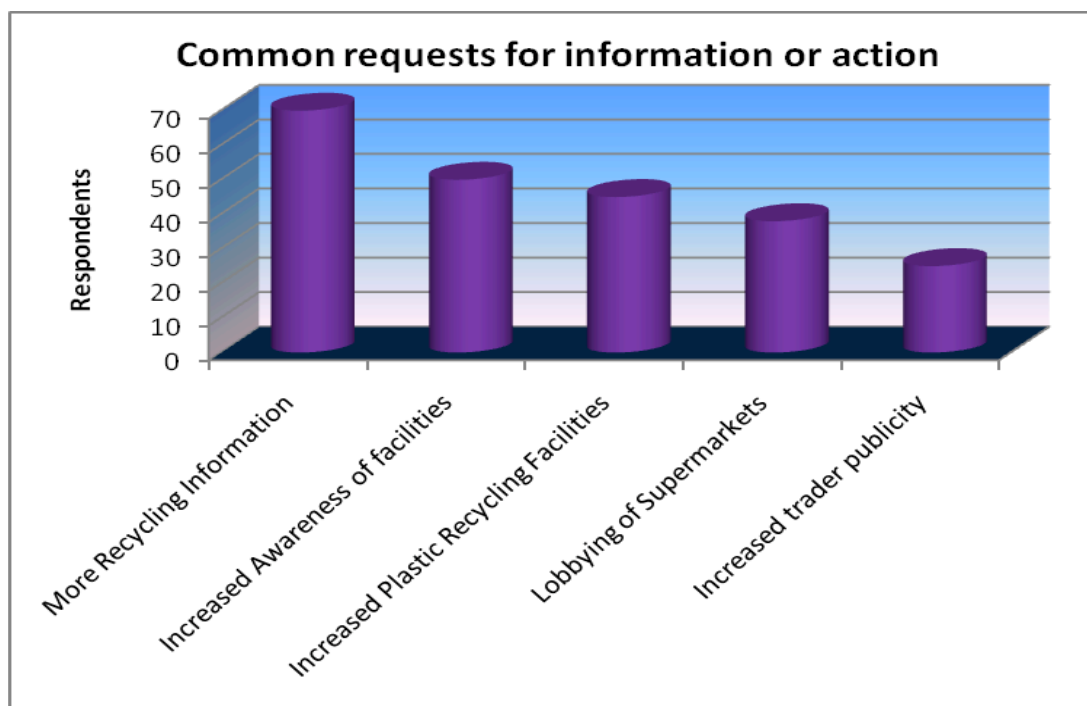


Graph 3 – Lifestyle changes from taking part in the challenge.

Residents were also asked what tips and information they found to be the most useful and to provide any suggestions for the future development of waste awareness campaigns. The main responses to this question are summarised in graph 4. Most of the comments centered around the need for increased levels of recycling information especially for the more difficult to recycle materials and where the facilities for these are located. Many of these questions can be answered by the recycle now website <http://www.recyclenow.com/> which is also full of other useful and relevant information, a link from the Recycle for Gloucestershire website is available from the links page to this additional information resource. The Recycle for Gloucestershire website is presently going through an update which will give it increased functionality and the potential for further growth and development of the site following feedback from residents and site users.

Another popular request was for increased publicity of the challenge week with traders across the county. Some residents were asking at local shops for items to be placed in their own containers to find the trader knew nothing about the event but when the reasons were explained they were very supportive of campaign objectives.

Many residents also wanted the County to lobby the supermarkets and work with them to try and reduce packaging. We do this through the Local Government Association so that our position is strengthened with the large national retailers. Many of the large retailers are already working to reduce packaging through product re-design and light weighting, further information about this can be found through the Coultard Commitment pages on the Waste Resource Action Programme (WRAP) website [http://www.wrap.org.uk/retail/courtauld\\_commitment](http://www.wrap.org.uk/retail/courtauld_commitment). We also work closely with supermarkets and retailers across the county to support the national work to reduce packaging but also to raise awareness of packaging reduction and the actions we can all take at a local level.



Graph 4 – Information and Actions requested by participants.

There was a suggestion for parish magazines to have a recycling column, this could potentially be achieved through the 'where I live' reporters and the press officers for the local authority. Another idea, which came through from residents responses was about the potential for hints and tips or a weekly top idea to be available. The Recycle for Gloucestershire website is undergoing further development and refinement which will enable this type of service to be available to residents and web users. The character of 'Aunty Rubbish' could be developed as a mechanism for responding to resident's questions and concerns about waste and recycling issues.

Residents were also keen to see an increase in the range of plastics which can be collected for recycling, for example yogurt pots and tubs. This is a service which is commonly requested by residents across the county at both roadshow events and displays. This type of service provision will be kept under review, with potential outlets and partners for the recycling of these materials being explored further as opportunities arise. The plastics recycling market is still in the early stages of development and further progress will be made in this area as capacity at reprocessing facilities becomes available.

Questions were also raised about the environmental impacts of additional trips to the HRC or bring bank sites, as residents were utilising these mechanisms more during the week to boost their recycling activity. 'Carbon accounting' is becoming an increasing focus for waste management and information already available would indicate that there is usually a net benefit in carbon terms when recycling many typical items i.e. cardboard. We would always recommend that all trips to the HRC or bring banks should be made as part of another journey wherever possible as this will help reduce the impacts on local environmental quality.

The campaign team would like to say a huge 'Thank You' to all the residents across the county who took part in this campaign, without your enthusiasm and commitment this campaign would not have achieved the results and the level of success that it did.