



## Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1. Why don't we take all types of glass?

Answer 1. We only take, what is known as 'container glass' - which means bottles and jars. The other sorts (which we don't take) are mainly flat glass and pyrex. Both flat glass and pyrex need to be much stronger than bottle glass (per millimetre of thickness). Because of this extra strength, the furnace that melts it needs to be running at a higher temperature than it would for containers. So, these other sorts of glass can't be mixed with bottle glass.

Question 2. Why don't we take all types of plastic?

Answer 2. The short answer is that we haven't got room in our lorries. There are 13 different types of plastic in common use in the UK and most of them are recyclable. However, even though an increasing number of manufacturers now use old plastic instead of oil as their raw material, each manufacturer will only want the type of plastic which is most suitable for the product they manufacture.

At the moment we collect two types - plastic milk bottles (HDPE) and carrier bags (LDPE). If we added general plastic it would be a nightmare to separate out each type to make it saleable. If we try to sell mixed plastics we would probably have to pay a merchant to ship it to China (where labour is cheap) for it to be re-sorted ready for re-manufacture.

If we chose to add one extra type it would probably be clear plastic bottles (PET) because they're easily recognisable for sorting and there's a lot of them out there in the waste stream. The only thing that's stopping us is the problem of how to fit them into the lorry. We could expect to pick up 3 cages of clear bottles to every 2 cages of milk bottles so the impact would be enormous.

Question 3. Where does it all go after it leaves MDCR?

Answer 3. We sell the material to a variety of places. Some goes to a merchant who re-sells it to a re-processor whilst we sell other materials directly to the re-processors.





**Paper** – we sell this directly to a paper mill in Aylesford, Kent. It is re-processed into new newspaper.

**Glass** – We sell to a company called Recresco. Unfortunately they only re-process clear glass in this country so our 'mixed colours' goes off to Spain where it's made into more greenish coloured bottles.

**Aluminium cans and foil** – This goes to Warrington where it's re-processed into more cans.

**Steel cans** – They go to Corus Steel in South Wales where they're re-manufactured into more steel products.

**Plastic bottles** – we sell them to a firm in the midlands. They use as many as they've got a need for in their production of new plastic items, such as water butts, composters, garden seats and plastic road bollards. The remainder is sent to China where it is further sorted and then re-manufactured into new plastic products.

**Plastic bags** – this is too contaminated to be used without re-sorting so it is all exported to China.

**Tetrapaks** – Tetrapak Ltd are currently negotiating with a manufacturer in the South East of England and it is planned that they will extract the paper fibre (which is very high quality) to produce paper carrier bags (for takeaways etc)

**Dry cell batteries** – they are sorted into different types of batteries then the metals are removed for recycling. After that the heavy metals (nikel, zinc cadmium etc) are recovered for re-use.

**Textiles, shoes and handbags** – the best stuff gets exported to developing countries. However, if it's not good enough for re-use then it gets broken down and used as engineer's wipes or insulation.

**Fluorescent tubes** – The trade rounds also take fluorescent tubes. These go to Durham where the metal is removed for recycling. The glass is then crushed, washed and recycled. The heavy metals such as mercury are then extracted from the washing liquid for re-use.

Question 4. Why don't we take other types of metal?

Answer 4. Any organisation which handles waste has to be licensed by the Environment Agency. There are various types of licence available. Anyone handling metal has to have a full scrap dealer licence to allow them to handle scrap cars with all the pollution issues around oil, petrol, battery acid etc. However, if the only metal you're handling is food and drink cans you are exempt from having to get the full licence and can get a much simpler version. This is the type of licence we've got.



Question 5. Why don't we collect the same materials as other councils?

Answer 5. Recycling is a relatively new activity and is still developing. Different collection schemes are still experimenting with different materials and different collection techniques so there is still very little standardisation from one area to the next. This will undoubtedly come with time.

Question 6. Why don't we collect at the same time of day each fortnight?

Answer 6. The public often find it quite inconvenient that our collection times vary and I think that eventually we're going to have to standardise this. The way we will do this is to decide on a starting point for each route and do it in the same direction each time. This will need to be done in close consultation with the drivers and direction arrows marked on the map so that different drivers will know.

Question 7. Are we the Council?

Answer 7. No we're not. We are a completely separate, not-for-profit organisation working in close partnership with the council. It's quite important that the public understand this because they're often quite hostile to the council and once they realise we're a separate organisation they tend to be much more friendly and co-operative.

Question 8. Why haven't you emptied my brown bin?

Answer 8. The brown bin compost collection is completely separate from the black box collection.

Although we offered to do the compost collections, the Council decided to carry out these collections themselves using their own lorries. Because they had spare lorries this was their cheapest option.

Question 9. Why don't we take cardboard?

Answer 9. The reason for this is much the same as the reason we don't take other types of plastic – we just don't have room for such a bulky material on the lorries. It's not really a problem for households that receive the council's compost collection because they can put cardboard in their brown bin. However, there are about 6,000 rural households who don't yet receive that service from the council and until that service is extended to cover their areas they will just have to put it in their rubbish bag. However, if they are able to take it to their nearest recycling centre (either Punchbowl, Crediton or Ashley, Tiverton it will be recycled there.



Question 10. When are we going to start collecting every week instead of fortnightly?

Answer 10. We would very much like to make our collections weekly - we know it will capture more material for recycling as well as creating more jobs. However, at the moment the council just can't afford such an expensive improvement to the service but going weekly is in our business plan and we've given the council a quote for doing so. Our guess is that it will be two or three years before they can afford it. Our recommendation is that we operate a trial of weekly collections in Cullompton town centre, which would be about the right size area to cover with 1 additional lorry.

Q11. Why don't we take wet clothing?

Answer 11. Wet clothing goes mouldy and is no good for re-use or recycling. If we mix wet clothing with the rest of our stock the mould will spread and the quality and value of our product will drop.

Q12. How do we get a new recycling box?

Answer 12. You can ask our collection crews for a box and if they've got a spare one on board they will supply it there and then. If they haven't got one spare, your best bet is to phone our depot and we'll get one delivered to you on your next collection day.

Q13 How many Boxes can each house have?

Answer 13. Up to 4 boxes per house.

Q 14. Why do you need it all separated?

Answer 14. All the recyclables we pick up are a raw material for a manufacturer somewhere and the income we get from selling the materials to that manufacturer substantially reduces the cost of the service to council tax payers.

A manufacturer who makes recycled paper, obviously doesn't want to buy glass or cans so if we are to have a good market we obviously have to separate it all out. If we were to collect the materials mixed and sort them out ourselves - like they do in Exeter - it would be expensive and it would never produce as high a quality product. So it all boils down to cost - if we collected it all mixed up, council tax would have to rise.

Q15. Why don't you take polystyrene from trade customers?

Answer 15. At the moment the markets for recycled polystyrene aren't very well developed so it wouldn't be an easy product to sell. Additionally, polystyrene is difficult



stuff to bale and we would also need to store an awful lot of it before we had enough to make a full bale.

Q16. Why didn't you take my black bag full of recycling?

Answer 16. Our standard answer on this is, "I'm sorry, we assumed the bag contained refuse". We ask the public not to use black bags for their recycling. However, if they have no other way of putting it out to us then they need to put a very clear, large sign on it saying 'Recycling'.

Q17. What day do the council collect?

Answer 17. Our crews won't be able to tell people that level of detail but the public can either look on the council's website or phone the council for that information.