

## Tackling Food Waste in Bristol – A Collaborative Approach

Food waste is recognised as one of the significant challenges facing waste producers and waste collectors alike. The Mayoral Food Waste Conversation presents a real opportunity to bring together experience, ideas and innovation to start to address food waste in Bristol.

Tackling commercial food waste in Bristol must be done in a way that respects the waste hierarchy, and which brings together stakeholders to address the problem:



**Prevention and Minimisation** can only be achieved by encouraging producers and retailers to adjust their practices. The council could engage with Bristol food retailers to adjust practices (e.g. discounting of food about to go out of date, adjusting stock control practices) to seek to reduce the amount of waste food. Eunomia could undertake research and analysis of this problem and the potential for changes in practice to have an impact, and come up with an action plan.

**Re-use** can be achieved by working with food waste charities and retailers to enable more food to be donated when it would otherwise be thrown away. This isn't just about getting supermarkets to "play ball" – but also about capacity building in the voluntary sector. Could supermarkets be encouraged to provide financial support to food waste charities that save them the cost of throwing food away?

**Recycling** food waste through anaerobic digestion is part of the government's strategy for compliance with the waste hierarchy. However, there are challenges involved in making the financial side of food waste collection work – many attempts at commercial food waste collection have been made, and many have failed. The problem is often that there are too few customers, and the costs of collection and disposal make the service uneconomic.

Eunomia has recently worked with Bath Business Improvement District (BID) to introduce a centrally procured waste and recycling service available to all 600 of its members – including a low cost food waste service. The contract offers market-beating prices on all waste and recycling streams. Bristol's BIDs (e.g. Bedminster, Clifton, Broadmead) could

offer similar services – and if all three were to work together, it could change the economics of food waste collection in the city entirely.

Eunomia is already looking to support Bedminster BID in developing a waste and recycling offer for its levy payers, but on food waste in particular, the wider the participation the better. Could the city council supply a low cost food waste service, piggy-backing on its household waste collections?

**Energy Recovery** of food waste can also be improved by collaborative procurement. At the moment, the destination of commercial waste may be an energy from waste plant, or may be landfill. However, if they centrally procuring a commercial waste collection, which can out-perform other collectors on price, BIDs can specify that collections must send zero to landfill – this was the outcome in Bath. And because of the great price that can be offered, the end result will be far more businesses sending any food waste that is not prevented, re-used or recycled for energy recovery, instead of it going to landfill.

If we're going to respect the waste hierarchy on food waste, the best way to kick-start the process is through collaboration. But collaboration on food waste won't just happen on its own – it needs to be set up and run, and needs access to expertise. BIDs and food recycling charities have the feet on the ground and the will to make a difference – and with expert assistance and a little support to get things going, could make a huge difference to food waste in Bristol.

#### About Eunomia Research & Consulting

Eunomia is a Bristol-based employee-owned waste, recycling and environmental consultancy with an international reputation for expertise. We work with local authorities, national governments, devolved administrations, the European Commission and private sector bodies to tackle a wide range of waste and recycling problems. We advise on policy and procurement, and have a strong track record on dealing with food waste.

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17 May 2013