What happens to my recycling?

Aluminium cans  melted in furnaces and re-moulded into new cans for food and drink
Food and garden waste  turned into compost
Glass bottles and jars  melted down in furnaces and re-moulded into new glass bottles and jars
Paper and cardboard  pulped down, then dried and rolled out to create more paper, cardboard, newspaper, tissue paper, toilet rolls and egg boxes
Plastic bottles  flaked and re-moulded into new bottles, traffic cones, wheelie bins and fleece material for hats, scarves, etc
Plastic containers  flaked and re-moulded into new plastic containers e.g. yoghurt pots, and can also turned into a solid board as an industry replacement for chipboard
Steel cans  melted in furnaces and re-moulded into new cans for food and drink and parts for cars
Tetrapak cartons  turned into plasterboard liner

Search on-line for videos of all of these recycling processes to find out more about what happens after the recycling materials leaves our facility.

Tours of the Materials Recycling Facility

Tours of the Recycling Factory are available to members of the public, school classes and community groups. All tours need to be booked in advance. Tours include a short presentation, a video of the machinery in action and then out into the factory to view the machinery and staff at work from the safety of a raised viewing gallery. Children’s tours also include activities and crafts.

To find out more and make your booking:
Visit our webpage  www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/recycling-tours
Email Waste Education  wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Telephone  01908 252312

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1 Weighbridge
The weighbridge is a pair of weighing scales set into the road. Lorries are weighed when they enter the MRF and again when they leave. By weighing the lorry full and empty we can calculate how many tonnes of recycling were in the lorry.

2 Tipping Hall
The lorries unload their recycling onto the tipping hall floor. A digger truck loads the recycling into the bag-splitting machine to open the sacks. The recycling falls from the bottom of the bag-splitter onto a conveyor belt, which carries it into the factory for sorting.

3 Glass Bays
Glass bottles and jars collected from households and recycling banks are tipped in the yard. A digger truck pushes the broken glass into concrete storage bays. When there is enough it's loaded onto a truck and taken to the glass factory for recycling.

4 MRF Machines and Sorting Cabins
The recycling is sorted using hi-tech machines and people in picking cabins.

Pre-sort cabin
Large items which can't be recycled need to be removed before they cause problems or block up machines.

Ballistic Separators
These machines sieve the recycling to separate cans and plastics from paper and cardboard.

The recycling is shaken by a set of moving metal slits called screens; round heavy bottles and cans roll backwards off the screens, while flat light paper, card and plastic bags travel forward over the top of the screens. The small pieces like shredded paper, bottle tops and ring pulls fall through holes in the screens onto a conveyor belt underneath.

Paper Cabin
In the paper cabin staff sort paper and cardboard. Cardboard and rubbish are removed from the paper and put down chutes. Plastic bags and pink sacks are removed by a large vacuum tube which sucks up the bags as they pass on the conveyor belt.

Magnets
Cans and plastic bottles travel on a conveyor belt passing under three large magnets. Cans and lids made of steel are attracted by the magnets, which pick them up and drop them onto a small conveyor belt and into a storage bunker.

Eddy Current Separator
Aluminium cans and plastic bottles pass through the eddy-current separator. This machine repels aluminium cans, foil and foil lined juice cartons onto a small conveyor belt and into the aluminium storage bunker.

Plastics Cabin
In the cabin operatives pick out coloured plastic bottles and check that the machines have sorted items correctly.

Plastic auto-sorts
Computers are used to scan plastic bottles and packaging passing by on the conveyor belts. When computers identify objects made of plastic they use powerful air jets to blow it onto a smaller conveyor belt and into a plastic storage bunker.

Bunkers
Under the paper cabin are twelve cages, called bunkers, which store the sorted recycling. When the bunkers are full the contents are emptied and sent to the baling machines.

Baling Machines
Two powerful baling machines squash the recycling into large cubes and tie it with wire straps. The bales are picked up by fork-lift trucks and stacked in the yard.

Rubbish Compactors
Any items left on the conveyor belt travel to the rubbish compactors. Rubbish which can't be recycled is used in a power plant to create energy and heat.

6 Education Room and Offices
The MRF has a classroom and a viewing gallery where schools and community groups can find out about recycling, enjoy activities and tour the MRF in safety.