

Eco Champions

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

AUGUST/ SEPTEMBER 2023

Wheelie bins have arrived in MK!

The way Milton Keynes City Council collects waste is changing from the 4th September. The new wheelie bins will be helpful in increasing recycling rates in the city. As Eco Champions, we thought you should know how the Council have made these bins as eco friendly and circular as possible.

What makes wheelie bins a more sustainable option for waste in MK?

Annually, 11 million single use plastic sacks are used to contain recycling for each household in Milton Keynes. By introducing the red lid and blue lid recycling bins, residents will be able to place their rinsed recycling items straight into the bin without using sacks.

Further advantages of switching to wheelie bins include:

- higher levels of recycling,
- better quality recyclable materials,
- fewer injuries as a result of lifting sacks for residents and collection crews,
- less street litter from sack spillage,
- easier to monitor the misuse of the bins, to support better recycling.



Reducing single use plastic sacks

The new wheelie bins will hugely reduce our reliance on single use plastic sacks. Clean and dry recycling can be placed directly into the red and blue lid wheelie bins without using sacks.

The only waste that should be bagged is non-recyclable rubbish that is intended for the black bin. Waste that goes in the black bin tends to be 'dirty' waste and so bagging it will help to keep your wheelie bin cleaner and is safer for our crews.

The non-recyclable waste can be contained in any type of sack, not only black sacks. Leftover clear or pink sacks can be used to contain the waste in the new black bin

This issue:

Page 1 -
Wheelie bins have
arrived in MK

Page 3 -
What happens to your
non-recyclable waste?

Page 3 -
Eco Warriors: The
Walnuts School
Recycling Project

Page 4 -
An interview with MKCC
Waste and Recycling
Eco Champions

Page 6-
The Circular Economy

Page 7-
Small Wins: Packaging

Page 7-
Get involved: Repair
Café



Hard plastics are ground up into pellets which are then melted down and moulded into the shape of the wheelie bins.

The wheelie bins are plastic... how is that sustainable?

To make the new wheelie bins as circular and eco friendly as possible, MKCC chose a UK based manufacturer who uses recycled plastic.

The Waste team had a tour of the IPL factory in Rotherham. where the bins are made and go through quality control. Yes, the wheelie bins are plastic, however the black parts of your wheelie bins are made from 100% recycled plastic!

Hard plastics are ground up into pellets which are then melted down and moulded into the shape of the wheelie bins. The coloured lids are made in the same way and from 50% recycled plastic. When the plastic pellets are melted, a UV resistance formula is added to protect the bins from UV light, extending it's lifespan to 15- 20 years or more.

The wheelie bins are tested thoroughly to ensure they are strong enough to withstand daily use. Testing equipment mimics everyday actions such as bumping up and down curbs or being lifted by collection vehicles.

The waste team's highlight was the drop test, where a bin containing 100kg of plastic pellets is dropped from a height to ensure that they are strong enough to last.

In a world first, each bin lid states the size and the colour of the bin in braille. There are also notches on the lid to differentiate between recycling bins.



Each lid depicts the items that can be placed into each bin.

For more information about what goes in each bin, visit www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/mk-recycles-a-to-z

MKCC have also made the new wheelie bins as inclusive as possible by adding braille and notches



Where does your non-recyclable waste go?

Waste that is disposed of in the black bin and black bag are considered non-recyclable but that doesn't mean it isn't useful. When it arrives at the Waste Recovery Park in Wolverton, the bags are split and the waste is sorted via various processes to remove recyclable and organic waste.

Recyclable materials are sorted again and then baled to make it easier for transportation to companies where these materials will be used again in new products.

Organic waste is moved to an anaerobic digester where it is heated for 28 days to produce compost. The gas from this fermentation process goes into an electricity generator that feeds into the national grid.

Any waste that is left after these processes goes into advanced thermal treatment (ATT), also known as gasification. It is heated to a very high temperature and turned into syngas which then powers turbines and produces electricity. From September, the electricity generated from this process will charge the electric vehicles in the new fleet via a private wire.

This process only produces clean emissions and is so efficient that less than 5% of Milton Keynes waste is sent to landfill.

Less than
5% of
Milton
Keynes
waste is
sent to
landfill.



Recycling at The Walnuts School, Hazeley

Eco Warriors at Walnuts School in Hazeley have been working on a project to improve recycling in their classrooms ahead of the new wheelie bin launch in September.

Students have placed visible recycling bags in each classroom for paper, cardboard, and clean plastic packaging. They are ready to move into the next phase of their new recycling project in the new school year in September.

We are focusing on reducing food waste and using food that would otherwise be thrown away.



If you are interested in finding out more about this, get in contact with us!

Every school has an eco story and we would love to hear about yours! If you work in education and would like to shout about the good things you are doing to educate our young people about sustainability, email wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk. For more information about educational resources or Eco Warriors, visit: www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/environment-and-waste-education.



Waste and Recycling Eco Champions: an interview with Gin Corrado and Rebecca Trowse from Milton Keynes City Council

1. What does being an Eco Champion mean to you?

Rebecca: To be able to be an ambassador, to share the messages and support staff and residents' understanding. It means the ability to demonstrate the work of the City Council in sustainability.

Gin: I feel its really important that I can play a part, even by advising my parents in making their own home greener it will make a difference. Simply by showing what waste goes into which current recycling sack means they are helping the cause, this has obviously expanded to the forthcoming wheelie bins which they are keen to start to using.

2. How does sustainability influence your everyday life?

Rebecca: Sustainability is a major part of my role, leading the City Council to meet its Sustainability Strategy.

Gin: From switching off electrical appliances to shopping for 2nd hand products, I am always on the look out where I can recycle and reuse. I'm a big fan of buying books from the charity shops and online stores that have old books. I am even in the habit of filling up my water bottle and taking it with me rather than buying a bottle from a shop.

"Share the knowledge and keep learning, even by making a small change to your own habits it will have an influence on others – together we achieve more."

-Gin Corrado





"Get involved!
Find out what's
happening in
your area, share
the messages
and lead by
example to make
MK a great place
to live and work"

-Rebecca Trowse

3. What is your top piece of advice you would like to share for other Eco Champions?

Rebecca: Get involved! Find out what's happening in your area, share the messages and lead by example to make MK a great place to live and work.

Gin: Share the knowledge and keep learning, even by making a small change to your own habits it will have an influence on others – together we achieve more. Having delivered in excess of 80 local events, many residents didn't know that they could request a 23l food bin instead of putting their food waste in the garden bin, this made it more accessible for those with little garden waste.

4. Tell us an exciting fact about the new wheelie bins or waste collection system

Rebecca: The pilot scheme increased recycling and produced less residual waste. Electricity generated from our waste will refuel the fleet for our Waste and Environmental Services Contract.

Gin: Really exciting that we can turn the waste from the black bins into electricity for our fleet of new electric trucks! This part of the new wheelie bin project speaks volumes on how far we have come and that we are aiming to be greener in all that we do – can't wait to see it in action!





A circular economy is about shifting our attitudes into seeing the value of an item and its materials, rather than throwing it away. It is considering what is already in the system before buying new.



The average electric drill is only used for 11 minutes in its lifetime!

The Circular Economy

The general consensus is that a circular economy is far more preferred than the current 'disposable society' model.

The circular economy considers everything. It is not just about what we are throwing away, but also taking ownership of the products we buy. The model involves extending the life cycle of products through sharing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing in order to bring both production and waste to a minimum.

Reuse

Consider if your items could have a second life. An old tea pot could be used in the garden as a planter, old jars can find many uses in decoration or storage, clothing fabrics can be up-cycled into new items or used as cleaning rags

Re-home

Consider buying second hand. Charity shops, second hand furniture shops and online platforms such as Vinted, Facebook Marketplace, Ebay, Too Good to Go and Olio have a lot to offer. Also consider selling or giving away things you no longer need. Everything from clothing to food, plants, electrical items, paint, furniture and more can be re-homed.

Rent or Borrow

Libraries of 'things' are growing in popularity offering opportunities to borrow everything from games to DIY tools, sports equipment and more. Clothing such as prom dresses can be rented and clothing or school uniform swap shops are great ways to avoid buying new items and save money.

Repair

Repairing the things you already own can bring a whole new life to an item, from repairing a piece of clothing or up-cycling a piece of furniture. Gadget repair workshops and repair cafes are great options to help fix broken items.

Recycle

The last thing to consider is whether the item or the materials can be recycled <https://www.recyclenow.com/recycle-an-item> is a helpful tool to find out what can be recycled and where to recycle it.

For more about the circular economy; 'The Circular Economy Playbook' podcast by Re: London has some great information. Keep Britain Tidy have some fantastic resources on their website alongside their 'Buy Nothing New Month' campaign and Oxfam share some great tips within their 'Second Hand September' campaign, which is coming soon for 2023.



Small Wins: Packaging Recycling

Whilst a circular economy is desired, in our current society there are still many barriers. One big issue is the packaging of products, making it difficult to adopt a circular economy. Refill shops are a great option to cut back on packaging. However these are not currently accessible to everyone. The good news is that there are some great schemes in Milton Keynes to recycle the materials which cannot be collected by kerbside recycling.

Blister packs – Superdrug collects and recycles empty medicine blister packs.

Soft plastics and crisp packets – including fruit and vegetable bags, bread bags, salad bags, sweet wrappings, crisp packets and more. These can be returned to be recycled by supermarkets.

Make up and toiletry containers – plastic makeup containers can be returned to certain Boots, Tesco, Superdrug and Sainsbury stores.

Find out more about where these materials can be recycled at:

<https://www.recyclenow.com/recycling-locator>



Get involved: The Repair Cafe



On the second Saturday of the month, the pop up Repair Cafe is held at The Old Bath House Community Centre in Wolverton. This community initiative promotes repairing rather than throwing things away. There will be 'repairers' ready to help to repair everything from textiles, bikes, clocks, electronics (no microwaves) and more. It is also a chance to meet likeminded people and talk about ideas for repairing and up-cycling over tea, coffee and cake.

The next event is on Saturday 9th September at The Old Bath House Community Centre, 205 Stratford Road, Wolverton, MK12 5RL. Contact repaircafe@oldbathhouse.org for more information.

Coming up in the next issue... Sustainable Celebrations

Inspiration for environmentally friendly celebrations, including:

- Gifting
- Decorations
- Food
- Special occasion outfits



We always love to hear how Eco Champions are celebrating our environment.

Send us an email at wasteeducation@milton-keynes.gov.uk to be featured in the next issue.



If you're not already subscribed and you have enjoyed this newsletter, sign up to become an Eco Champion and keep updated with all the latest eco news!

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/eco-champions