



Summary of the report 'Targeting additional ferrous metals through local authority recycling programmes'

**Commissioned by Corus Steel Packaging Recycling
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Aim of the research: To provide Corus with a better insight into local authority communications programmes to promote recycling and increase participation of residents.

Methodology and processes

Three phases of research were undertaken:

1. Telephone interviews with local authorities to obtain detailed profiles on best practice in communication and promotion
2. Survey to obtain local authorities' perceptions on the appropriateness of recycling different categories of steel cans
3. Survey to obtain information on communication activities, funding, measuring participation etc

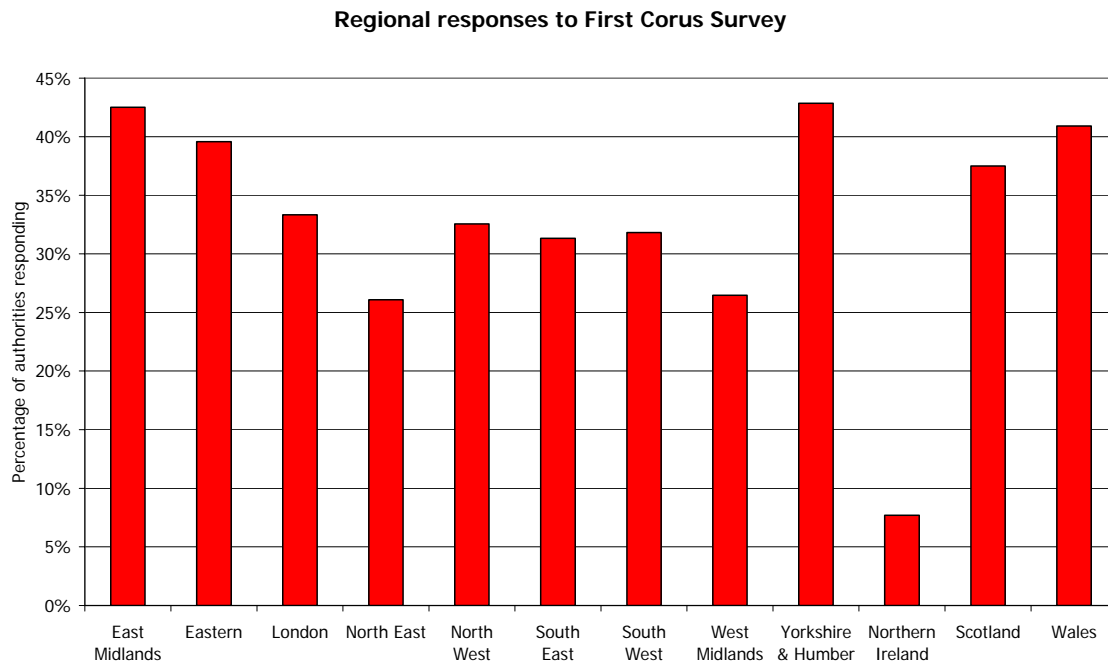
The general conclusions of the research are:

- Those authorities who have thought about and carried out communication and promotion prior to, during and after the introduction of a scheme tend to have a higher recycling participation rate
- It is vital to ask residents for their views to ensure that the recycling scheme offered is what they want – to understand the amount of recyclables and types of recyclables that they are likely to put out
- A major factor in the success of a recycling scheme is the involvement and training of collection crews in the planning stages - by the time of the roll out, crews should already be fully committed to it as "ambassadors"
- Getting 100% cross party political support prior to the introduction of a new scheme makes it much easier to deal with residents concerns and complaints
- Website information and updates should be considered a high priority. It is also important to consider the cultural diversity of residents and, if appropriate, provide a facility to translate information into other languages
- To be able to measure the impact of communications activity, participation rates should be monitored prior to and following the communications activity

First Survey

The first survey was sent to just under 1000 local authority contacts. Responses were received from 167 people, covering 143 local authorities (some responses were received from more than one person within the authority).

The following table shows a breakdown of regional responses to the first survey:



Materials suitable for inclusion in a kerbside recycling programme

Respondents were questioned about which steel containers they considered appropriate for inclusion in their own particular kerbside collection.

Type of steel container	Currently promote	Would consider promoting	Hadn't thought of this one	Consider hazardous	Might contaminate other recyclables
Food cans	166	2	0	0	0
Pet food cans	157	7	0	0	1
Drinks cans	164	4	0	1	0
Steel aerosols	110	21	1	24	6

	Currently promote	Would consider promoting	Hadn't thought of this one	Consider hazardous	Might contaminate other recyclables
Paint cans	9	11	11	84	71
Closures - i.e. metal caps on glass jars, beer bottles, sauce bottles, etc.	40	62	38	4	18
Polish tins (furniture, shoe, etc)	35	56	59	11	16
Fancy containers and giftware - e.g. biscuit tins, chocolate tins, whisky bottle in a tin at Christmas	52	76	26	0	6
Square or oblong metal containers for DIY and automotive products, e.g. thinners, paint stripper, wood stains, brake fluid, etc	7	25	20	86	51
Cigar tins e.g. small Hamlet, Cafe Crème, etc	27	71	61	1	0
Metal cosmetic containers (e.g. some lipsticks and perfumes are sold in a tin)	20	54	78	1	13
Cone-topped containers - e.g. Brasso, Evo-Stick	11	35	62	35	30
Lever-lid tins for powders - e.g. milk powder, creamer, coffee	50	64	44	0	2

In fact, all of the above steel containers, or “tins”, are easily recyclable. It is important that no risks are taken with hazardous contents and, in this regard, it is important that the containers are empty and dry. If they are not, they should be recycled via a special facility at a civic amenity site.

The report highlighted that as well as concerns about certain products being hazardous or potentially contaminating other materials, many local authorities face restrictions on the collection of certain types of steel container, which have been imposed by collection contractors, methods of processing, etc. The following are examples of comments made by respondents:

- We would need to consider the environmental effects of asking householders to rinse some of these items - and consider that most probably wouldn't bother!
- Would like to collect aerosols but am concerned that they are considered hazardous.
- [Recycling Company] have told us NO AEROSOLS please.
- We collect materials that are sanctioned by our chosen contractor for co-mingled separation at their MRF. For example they will not accept bottle tops or lids and I am

unsure of their position on some of the other items listed but I would consider promoting all recyclable metal cans if the contactor will accept them.

- We have been told by reprocessors that we are unable to take any tins larger than food tins on the kerbside scheme.
- We wouldn't be keen on promoting unless Corus gave assurances to our kerbside collection contractor that inclusion of such containers wouldn't cause reject or affect quality/value of the materials they collect. Then logistics would be an issue with some of the larger container types (e.g. paint tins) filling collection capacity too quickly.

Corus Steel Packaging Recycling, who commissioned this research, adds:

- Corus understands that some people may be unwilling to rinse out food cans, but in fact these cans are easily recyclable, and an effective communications campaign would try to encourage more residents to rinse them out for recycling, by expressing the benefits of so doing in a meaningful way
- Steel aerosols are certainly easily recyclable – millions are recycled every year. They should be empty, placed uncrushed into the collection bag or box, and the local authority should ensure that they are sent by their waste management contractor to a Corus “CanRoute” centre, along with the other steel cans, where they will be safely processed for recycling by Corus
- Steel lids and caps are easily recyclable, and Corus would encourage their inclusion
- The size of the container, within the range normally encountered in the household, is not a problem. Whether it is a large biscuit tin, or a small steel drinks can, Corus would again encourage their inclusion

Promotional Free Gifts

Local authorities were questioned about which free gifts they felt were the most appropriate to hand out to the public (irrespective of cost) to encourage them to recycle cans. Of the 167 respondents who took part in this survey:

- 97 respondents felt that a fridge magnet which also allows residents to check if metals are made of steel was appropriate
- 56 respondents felt that a kitchen cleaning brush to assist in cleaning cans was appropriate
- 43 respondents felt that a can crusher was appropriate
- 42 respondents felt that a drinks can/bottle opener was appropriate
- 35 respondents felt that a tin opener was appropriate

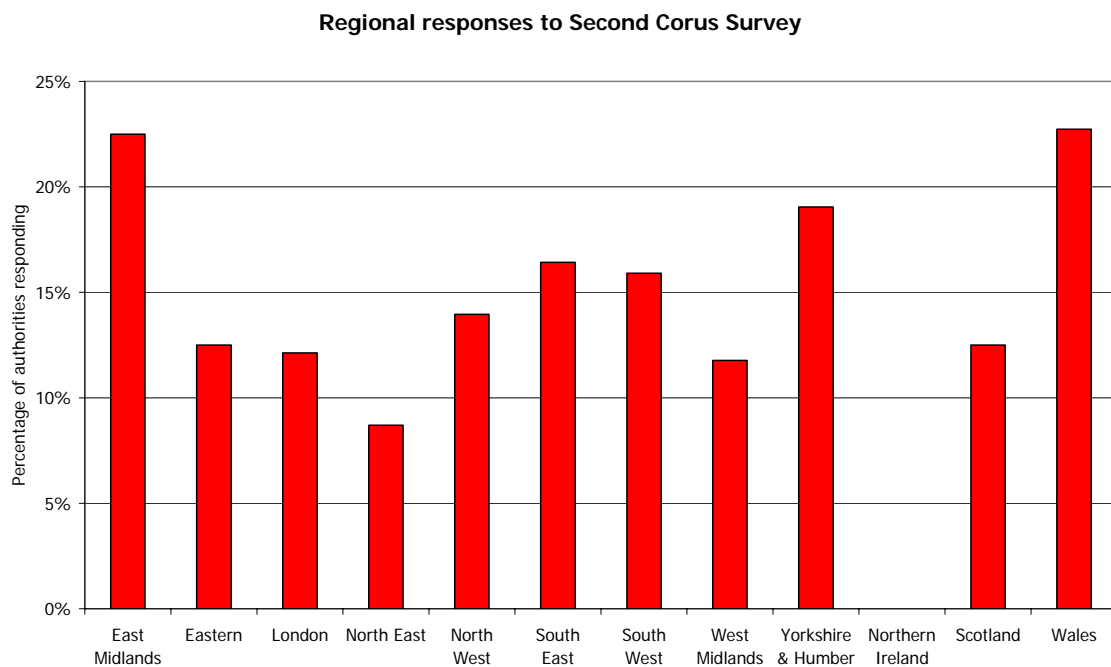
Second Survey

The second survey was sent to those people who completed the first survey i.e. 167 people. Responses were received from 64 people, covering 62 local authorities.

This survey sought to find out more detailed information on the following issues:

- funding
- effectiveness of campaign
- level of priority of recycling
- legislation and drivers

The following table shows a breakdown of regional responses to the second survey:



Funding

As the availability of funding, whether internal or external, has a direct bearing on the level of communication carried out, local authorities were asked if Government funding had been received for a promotion and communication campaign.

- 42 said yes
- 19 said no
- 1 was unsure

Local authorities were questioned about whether they would prefer government funding to be shared fairly between local authorities, rather than bidding for funding.

- 42 said yes
- 11 said no
- 10 were unsure

Local authorities were asked whether funding (or the lack of it) is the primary factor influencing the level of their promotional activities.

- 43 said yes
- 5 said no
- 3 were unsure
- 10 said not really

Effectiveness of Campaign

42 local authorities responded to having undertaken a communications programme. They were then asked whether the Government funded campaign was carried out by Council staff, external support or as a joint venture

- 24 were internal
- 2 were external
- 16 were joint ventures

Of these 42 local authorities, some were still mid-campaign or did not respond to the questions about participation monitoring. Those who did respond with information of participation monitoring were as follows:

- 8 monitored participation after the campaign
- 23 monitored participation prior to and after the campaign

When questioned about the effectiveness of the campaign

- 27 felt that it was effective
- 0 felt that it wasn't effective
- 14 were unsure

When questioned whether they saw a marked improvement in participation following the campaign

- 14 said they did see a marked improvement
- 16 were unsure whether they saw a marked improvement
- 4 didn't really see a marked improvement

Is recycling considered high priority?

When questioned whether they felt recycling was considered a high priority in the past year by their council/councillors

- 31 said yes
- 20 said no
- 3 were unsure
- 8 said not really

Legislation and drivers

Legislation is having an impact on recycling. The threat of fines, especially LATS fines, is spurring some local authorities into further action to increase recycling rates to comply with legislation.

When questioned about the effect legislation has had on increasing the importance of recycling within their council over the last few years

- 49 felt that it had had a major effect
- 10 felt it had has a minor affect
- 1 thought it had had no effect at all
- 3 were unsure of the effect

35 respondents felt that LATS is now becoming the main driver for recycling. Other key drivers mentioned by respondents included

- BVPIs
- Demand by residents/public expectations
- Recycling targets
- Cost of landfill

Priority materials

Local authorities were asked to list the main materials they either currently collect or would like to collect in approximate order of priority. Some of the responses are provided below:

- *Paper, textiles, glass, cans, plastic bottles are currently collected. Kitchen waste, cardboard and garden waste collections are planned. To meet LATS, the priority is now on collecting the BMW fraction. Paper, kitchen waste, cardboard, garden waste, textiles is the priority order, followed by glass, cans and plastic bottles.*
- *Green waste, newspapers and magazines, mixed glass, cans (all prioritised by weight)*
- *Main materials we would like to collect from more residents in order of priority: 1. Garden waste, 2. food, 3. cardboard, 4. all plastics.*
- *We currently collect glass, paper, green waste and cans - priority is given to weight, as the recycling figures are tonnage based. Whilst the public want plastic and cardboard recycling, the politicians will not fund it as we have already reached our target. What is best for the planet is not a consideration.*
- *I know of one LA who started collecting green waste and found that they hit their target with that one material, so politicians did not collect anything else as the "box had been ticked". This tonnage-based system leaves local authorities disinclined to collect cardboard and particularly plastic as they require a lot of effort for little weight gain.*
- *Paper, glass, green waste, cans, textiles, plastics (done in order of weight).*
- *Garden waste / paper / glass / cardboard / cans /plastics (in this order of importance due to weight and quantities of material needed to have the biggest impact in improving our performance).*
- *Importance of materials determined by weight and capture rate.*

The priority given to weight is understandable, but it is quite misleading to use it as the only guiding principle. For example:

- Steel cans are abundant in the household and residents want to recycle them
- There is a ready stable market
- They are easy to recycle
- The total weight is a significant contributor to targets, even though the weight of an individual can is low
- Inclusion of cans in a kerbside cans improves the economics of the scheme, and makes the whole scheme more efficient

Promotional activities

The effectiveness of different promotional methods varies considerably within different authorities.

Respondents were questioned about which promotional activities they carry out prior to or on the introduction of a new kerbside recycling initiative, and which were used for on-going promotion. The following table highlights the responses:

Which of the following promotional activities do you carry out, prior to, or on the introduction of a new kerbside recycling initiative, and which do you use for on-going promotion of an established scheme? Please answer Yes or No and give a 1 to 5 rating for which you find the most appropriate for your residents in terms of new schemes and established schemes.						
Scheme Introduction / Roll-out	Yes?	Rating 1	Rating 2	Rating 3	Rating 4	Rating 5
Door stepping	20	0	3	4	13	9
Road shows	41	3	4	25	11	4
Advertising on the radio	18	6	6	9	3	2
Press articles	57	1	4	29	17	5
Leaflet to residents	60	1	0	13	28	16
Letter to residents	38	1	1	7	15	19
Information pack to residents	28	0	0	5	11	15
Council newsletter	55	1	10	29	9	4
Calendar	45	2	5	3	20	16
Website	55	4	15	22	10	2
On-going promotion to an established scheme	Yes?	Rating 1	Rating 2	Rating 3	Rating 4	Rating 5
Door stepping	34	2	2	9	10	11
Road shows	30	2	4	21	8	1
Advertising on the radio	14	6	6	9	3	1
Press articles	56	1	8	25	16	3
Leaflet to residents	48	1	1	16	24	5
Letter to residents	26	2	5	8	12	7
Information pack to residents	15	2	2	5	6	6
Council newsletter	55	1	13	27	8	3
Calendar	40	1	3	8	19	9
Website	56	4	15	21	13	2

In summary, these results show that for the introduction of a new kerbside recycling initiative, the three most common choices of promotional activity were 1) leaflet to residents, 2) press articles and 3) Council newsletter. Door stepping was considered to be the least appropriate communications method for the introduction of a new kerbside recycling initiative. In terms of effectiveness, websites, press articles, radio advertising and council newsletters were relatively well rated.

The most common communications method varied when questioned about which promotional activities they carry out for ongoing promotion of an established scheme. The three most popular choices in order of preference were 1) press articles, 2) Council newsletter and 3)

calendar or website. Advertising on the radio was less common for the ongoing promotion of an established scheme, but relatively effective.

Website communication

When questioned about how they rated their website overall in terms of keeping it updated, making it user friendly for the public, helpful hints and tips etc

- 2 felt that their website was appalling
- 15 said it was not good
- 24 said it was average
- 19 said that it was above average
- 3 said that it was excellent

Only 11 respondents said that their website had a facility to translate into other languages.

45 respondents keep their website regularly updated with new information on recycling at least every couple of months.

Participation rates

There was little apparent correlation between participation rates and recycling performance, probably because there are differences in the way that participation rates are calculated, and because they show only that a householder puts out at least some recyclable material, at least once over a certain period of time.

Conclusions

Getting to know your residents

In the main, when recycling schemes are introduced, councils have little knowledge of the purchasing patterns of different groups of residents within their authority. Some authorities roll out schemes with little real idea of the amount of recyclables or types of recyclables that residents are likely to put out. Without such knowledge it is difficult to target specific items. With such knowledge a range of focussed communication activities can be carried out.

It has been recognised for some time that more work needs to be done nationally in understanding the relationships between household expenditure and the amounts and types of waste produced. This will take some time but in the meantime there is much that local authorities can do at a local level.

Some authorities produce different types of promotional material to target the range of cultural and other groups within their area.

Listening to residents

Introducing a collection scheme without involvement of the public is likely to result in unnecessary resistance. Although it is difficult to please everybody, getting the majority on your side saves problems following the roll out of schemes. Even within the same authority, different groups of residents have differing needs. It is essential to engage the public prior to

the introduction of schemes and ask for their opinions, rather than just introducing a scheme that you think is best for them.

Collection crews

A successful scheme is one in which collection crews are involved from day one in the planning stage of any new scheme. Rather than introducing new schemes and then expecting crews to just collect materials, a good scheme is one in which the advice of crews is sought in the planning stage. By the time of the roll out of any new scheme, crews have already taken ownership of it, know exactly what's involved and what's expected. As a result of their day-to-day dealings with the public through collections, they are also able to help the public and monitor for any contamination of recyclables. The importance of having committed and well-trained collection crews on board should not be underestimated. They can be very effective communicators for the development and growth of the scheme.

Cross party support

Getting 100% cross-party political support prior to the introduction of schemes makes it much easier to deal with residents concerns and complaints. Some residents have a habit of complaining about any new scheme as a matter of principle, even before they have had a chance to try it for themselves. The public generally does not like change and often perception is far worse than reality. With support from the Council and cross party support from Councillors, residents soon accept new schemes when they realise that their complaints are going to get them nowhere.

Getting cross-party support for fortnightly refuse collections is particularly important. In the main, local authorities who have reverted to a weekly refuse collection have done so as a result of political pressure.

Structured Communications

A successful communications programme is one which is based on well-researched information on the particular area in terms of its residents and patterns of consumption, and has structured communications for both the introductory and established phases of the scheme.

Within a programme, the use and rated effectiveness of various communications exercises has been measured. Well-maintained websites with good links to other useful websites are particularly important.

ENDS