



# Mixed material (co-mingled) collections

## The situation

In March 2011, the revised Waste Framework Directive was adopted into UK law. It set out the legal position on how waste should be collected, transported, recovered and disposed of throughout Europe and the UK. One of the provisions requires paper, metal, plastic and glass to be collected separately by 2015. It caused much debate in the industry and cast doubt on the merits of placing 'co-mingled' dry waste in the same collection bin.

Following EU guidance, the dilemma has now been resolved; they may still be collected together as long as it does not adversely affect the quality of the materials that are to be recycled.

In terms of their final destination, some reprocessor lobby groups have suggested that exporting recyclates is problematic. Export of materials which are 'fit for purpose' are an important part of the recycling chain, even more so given the lack of UK capacity for some materials. This is part of the global trading of materials that benefits the UK economy and is more sustainable than other practices. It also underpins the value of the recycling market that creates important revenue for local authorities, something which often pays for the recycling service.

**The seven key issues**

1. Food waste collection and processing
- 2. Mixed material (co-mingled) collections**
3. Mixed plastics collections
4. Management of hazardous waste
5. Energy efficiency and incineration
6. Renewable energy and district heating
7. The End of Waste criteria

The myth is that we must always collect 100% pure material streams.

But even newspapers have staples and inks. In reality it's unnecessary and often wastes taxpayers' money.

Where we  
**Stand.**



We have **international experience** in this field. We've been pioneers in recycling collection for many years, encouraging people to reduce their waste through our contracts with local authorities and businesses. **Experience** tells us that the most **effective way to collect waste** that can be recycled, particularly in towns and cities, is via a single container for paper, plastics and metals and a separate glass collection.\* The different materials can then be separated in a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).

Advances in affordable sorting technology mean that co-mingled collections now present the best recycling solution. Waste can be separated efficiently and accurately without cross-contamination. It's also the system that most households prefer - and the more people that recycle, the more materials we can capture for recycling.

The greatest stumbling block has been the myth that we need to collect pure material streams, such as 100% paper, to support a sustainable economy. But in reality 'recycling' happens at every stage in the process; at the household, on collection, during sorting and finally at the paper mill.

The final processing technologies differ, but they are tolerant of incidental contamination in the material streams and designed to deal with it. This is the most efficient way to globally manage recycling.

As we move towards recycling rates of 50-60%, we'll need to capture more waste material than ever before. By far the best way to achieve that is by co-mingled collections.

\*Some local authorities do insist on including glass due to costs.



**Where do you stand?**

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