

Recycling Bin Investigation: Results

Followers of the Free Newspapers Cost the Earth were invited to assist the campaign monitor the current provision of recycling bins outside of commuter hubs across London. The investigation took place throughout January 2009 and was conducted primarily through the campaign website at battlefront.co.uk and through the campaign Facebook group.

The results of the investigation have been grouped into the different regions of London and then separated into examples of **Poor**, **Reasonable** and **Good** provisions of recycling facilities based upon the following parameters:

- Presence of/Number of Recycling Bins - in relation to the amount of exits
- Distance from Station Exit - the bin's position maximise collection potential
- Maintenance of bins – whether they are overflowing with papers

The results were collected by campaign followers on their journeys to and from work, so the inspections were generally taken during peak rush hour periods. This allows us to make good judgements on their level of maintenance and suitability to deal with recycling demand.

Central London

Poor

Blackfriars -

Exit 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8: No recycle bins, space for at least one bin per exit

Exit 9 & 10: There is 1 recycle bin at each exit, well positioned

Warren Street - No recycling bins outside of exit

Russell Square - No recycling bins outside of exit, one recycling bin about 30 meters down the pavement

Farringdon - No Bins

Barbican - No Bins

Holborn – No Bins!

Oxford Circus - Small recycle bins on Oxford St itself but out of 7 exits; only one had a recycle bin within 5m!

Chancery Lane - 4 exits and no recycling bins!

King's Cross and St Pancras Station – No recycling bins are present outside any train or tube exits.

Euston Station – 12 recycling bins are present, but 50m away from the closest exit and therefore achieving minimal effect.

Marble Arch – No recycling bins, two exits.

Reasonable

Tottenham Court Road - One exit has a small recycling bin 20m away from exit.

One exit has no bins but lots of distributors around it

However, there is a line of 4 recycling bins on the other side of the junction at TC Road, where there is no tube exit and these should be redistributed to more useful places.

Goode Street - has a recycling bin a short walk outside on Tottenham Court Road.

Baker Street –

Exit onto Baker St: 2 recycling bins 10m to the left of exit, could be closer to actual exit whilst bins should be placed to right of exit too.

Exit on to Marylebone Road: No Bins!

Good

Embankment - River side exit: 2 bins well positioned

Strand Exit: 4 bins progressively place up street, well positioned, although there needs to be a bin to the left of the exit where there is an alternative street exit.

Temple - There are 2 recycle bins 15m left from exit, well positioned. There is however no bins to the right of the exit, although there is plenty of space, therefore another 2 bins should be put it.

Covent Garden - 5 bins directly outside of exit, catches almost all passengers - very good!

Marylebone Station – 2 bins to right of the main exit, catching flow of commuters, 1 recycling bin to the left of the exit next to taxi rank and bus stops.

Side exit has 2 recycle bins.

The City

Poor

Moorgate - No Bins, the station has at least 4 exits as well!

Monument - No bins - The station has 6 exits at least

Bank -

Exit 1: One recycle bin, space for 2 more

Exit 2: No recycle bins, no space on pavement

Exit 3 & 4: No recycle bins, space for loads

Exit 5: One recycle bin, space for 3 more

Exit 6: No recycle bins but 4 post boxes - therefore there is room for bins as well

Exit 7: No recycle bins, space for 2 more

Exit 8: No recycle bins, loads of space for more

Exit 9: No recycle bins

Mansion House - No recycle bins, three exits

Reasonable

N/A

Good

Cannon Street - There are 2 recycle bins, one is perfectly placed 5m from exit, one bin is 20m to the right and therefore not in the most effective location. Space for loads more!

North

Poor

High Barnet – No recycling bins present

Archway – No bins, two exits.

Reasonable

Angel - One bin outside of exit but not obvious as it is a mixed bin with different holes for normal waste, paper and plastic. Also far too small to deal with demand.

Tufnell Park – One recycling bin but not immediately present outside of exit – instead there is a normal bin 3m from exit which is 'stuffed' with free newspapers.

Caledonian Road - One Recycling Bin - stuffed with papers - need more or better maintenance

Seven Sisters - at least one.

Good

Wood Green - 2 recycling bins outside, one to either side of the station's only exit. They are black and quite unnoticeable though.

East

Poor

Old Street - None, although There are recycling bins on old street on the walk to Pitfield Street. They are pretty big. But, for all the Old Street tube announcements reminding you to recycle your paper or risk a fire hazard, there are no directions to these bins or any others nearby....would be a bit sensible if they could at least direct you after shouting at you to recycle!

South

Poor

Vauxhall - exit (3 & 4 from underground) in between tube and mainline station, no recycling bins even though there are 2 evening people handing out papers and about 6 metro points in the mainline and tube station.

Clapham Junction - 2 bins at front exit, but 5m to right of exit where as majority of commuters exit to the left.

London Bridge - No Bins outside of Tooley St and Guy's Hospital Exits

East Putney - No bins!

Worcester Park – No recycling bins but a Metro distribution stand

Elephant & Castle - I have never seen any recycling bins

Reasonable

Putney (Mainline) - 1 bin outside of station, good position but always full as popular commuter route and situated in between two popular bus stops - need more!

Denmark Hill - has a paper recycling bin but its always too fill (overflowing) so that nobody can use it by afternoon rush hour. More or bigger bins needed!!!

Good

Clapham North - 4 Bins present outside of exit but to the right where as main traffic of people exit towards left so a redistribution of two bins to the left may prove more effective

Balham - Recycling bin is positioned outside station

Clapham Common Tube Station – 3 bins well located outside of one exit, 1 bin well located at 2nd exit but none present at the third exit.

Barnes Bridge Railway station - has two recycling bins down the steps from the station

West

Poor

Shepherd's Bush Central Line station - there are no bins at all

Edgware Road (Hammersmith and City Line exit) –

Exit to the left – 2 recycling bins either side of bus stop

Exit to the Right (towards Edgware road) – No bins! Major flow of commuters go this way too.

Reasonable

Notting Hill Gate –

Exit A: No Bins!

Exit B: 2 bins and a normal bin.

Exit C: No bins!

Exit D: 2 Bins, with normal bins too catching good flow of commuters

Paddington - One exit has 2 recycling bins in good position, there are some bins in the locality but no very close. There are no bins on the large street exit of Paddington where there is plenty of space and no bins from the other main underground exit onto street.

Good

Ladbroke Grove – 2 recycling bins and a normal bin

Lancaster Gate – 2 recycling bins directly outside of exit with a normal bin too – very good!

Queensway –

Exit Queensway road: 5 recycling bins on. 2 by exit and then 3 by bus stop catching maximum amount of commuters

Exit Bayswater Road: 1 recycling bin, could do with one more at least

Holland Park – 2 recycling bins and a normal bin

Baron's Court - There are recycling bins but they're not noticeable

Recycling Bin Investigation: Analysis

The results from the investigation that FNCTE performed proved more optimistic than expected. A fair proportion of stations inspected had at least one recycling bin within the vicinity of an exit. However, optimism does not mean success. In most cases, the provision of recycling bins was inadequate in relation to the number of exits the station had whilst bins were often placed in positions that did not maximise collection ability and were poorly maintained, often found overflowing with newspapers before rush hour had finished.

Our analysis focuses upon the following aspects of recycling bin allocation:

- **Number of Recycling Bins** placed at station exits in relation to demand
- **Positioning/Location** of Recycling Bins to maximise usage by commuters
- **Maintenance** of Recycling Bins to make sure they are of use throughout week
- **Peak Periods of Demand** for recycling facilities
- **Complimentary Facilities** for waste disposal

Number of Recycling Bins

Free Newspapers Cost the Earth believe that a formal review process should be initiated to inspect the needs of each individual train and London Underground station to make sure that the appropriate number of recycling bins are placed outside each station in the most appropriate locations based upon levels of use by commuters. Commuter popularity statistics can be collected primarily from ticket barrier records to determine daily usage, whilst those stations in the outreaches of zones 4-6 can be inspected in person.

It is imperative that these statistics are collated for peak rush hour times, as free newspapers are distributed at peak times and therefore the demand for recycling facilities has to match the peak number of commuters.

For example, Putney mainline station has 1 recycling bin in a very good location, investigators can see how long it takes for the recycling bin to be filled in one rush hour and then cross check that against total amount of passengers leaving the station to calculate the ratio of passengers per filling of a recycling bin so that all stations are then equipped with the appropriate level of recycling facilities.

The amount of recycling bins required per number of commuters can be calculated by identifying the number of newspapers it takes to fill one standard recycling bin and then making calculations based upon existing experience of stations with recycling bins outside.

Positioning/Location

It is imperative that when recycling bins are placed outside of transport hubs, they are placed in positions that the majority of commuters pass when leaving the station. From basic observations of commuter behaviour, unless facilities are made the most user-friendly as possible and require minimal levels of effort from the commuter, then they will not be used appropriately.

Maintenance

Further to the investigation, there should be a review of the maintenance of recycling bins. Investigators for FNCTE often complained that the recycling bins at their local stations were always overflowing and could not be used by half way through the rush hour. This is unacceptable and more importantly, counter productive.

To combat this, FNCTE suggests the complimentary strategy of providing the appropriate level of bins at each station to meet demand, as already discussed, whilst also ensuring daily collections of waste at recycling points, at least on days when free newspapers are distributed – Monday to Friday.

Peak Periods of Demand

The nature of free newspaper distribution and commuter behaviour requires a planned response. The Metro is distributed weekday mornings at train and tube stations as far as zone 6. The majority of the commuters at these stations travel into central London and will exit stations within zones 1 and 2. Therefore it is imperative that there is an appropriate level of recycling bins outside of all zones 1 and 2 stations to absorb the 750,000+ copies of the Metro distributed every morning.

Meanwhile, The London Lite and thelondonpaper (900,000 papers in total) are distributed in the evenings within zones 1 and 2, primarily by hand, to commuters on their way home. A large proportion of these commuters will exit stations in zones 3-6, the residential areas of London and hence recycling bins are required outside all stations in the suburbs as well. Although the number of passengers exiting stations in zones 4,5 and 6 reduces the further commuters are away from the centre, papers are left on carriages by commuters throughout the journey of a train/tube and thus there is a demand to provide recycling bins at all exit points along travel routes.

This analysis excludes free newspapers that are distributed in London at Network rail stations and find themselves being transported to stations all around the country or internationally on the Eurostar.

Considering the different demands on recycling facilities in different locations dependent on the time of day, waste collection strategies should be planned to compliment times of use and aid the maximum collection potential of all recycling facilities.

Analysing commuter behaviour to understand the demand on recycling facilities is key to developing an effective strategy of urban wide recycling. FNCTE's investigation has identified the need for the most comprehensive recycling scheme to be initiated in London's West End. From the Holborn to Notting Hill, this area of London is subject to an intense recycling demand both in the morning and evening as many commuters will socialise in the central parts of London in the evening despite it not being a particularly residential area in comparison to more suburban parts of London.

We have observed that the boroughs of Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea have a good level of recycling facilities on offer; however the current provision is still unable to meet demand. Considering the levels of demand that these two boroughs face, we believe they should be in receipt of extra local authority funding for public recycling schemes.

Complementary Facilities

Finally, our analysis of the current provision and use of public recycling bins at transport hubs has led us to the following conclusions:

All recycling bins that are placed at transport stations need to be within 5-10 meters of the exit to catch the attention of commuters. Furthermore, any recycling bin should be complimented by a standard waste bin so that commuters do not contaminate recycling material with normal waste. This is vitally important to allow the provision of recycling bins to be economically viable, as when given no alternative waste disposal methods, commuters will place all waste in recycling bins.

Barriers to Putting Recycling Bins on Street

Through consultations with Camden and Westminster Councils, Free Newspapers Cost the Earth have come to understand that the following barriers exist when attempting to put recycling bins on streets.

Extracts from Consultation with Camden Council: Keith Moffit, Leader and Lynn MacDonald, Press Officer

Q: What is Camden's current provision for on street recycling bins? Have Camden increased their amount of paper recycling bins in response to the wealth of free newspapers that flood the system?

A: The Council was one of the first London boroughs to introduce paper recycling bins around commuter locations more than five years ago. We have over the past two years had to increase the number of bins and the servicing levels with its associated costs to the borough.

Q: What are the barriers and difficulties that Camden face in initiating these schemes and maintaining them?

A: Clearly we can put as many bins out as necessary but they do require high levels of servicing if they are not to be overflowing and seen as an eyesore – which would impact badly on the Council and our residents enjoyment of the borough they live in. Most containers in this borough require emptying twice a day and this is a costly operation which the Council has to fund.

Q: Are there any directives from central government/GLA on improving public recycling facilities?

A: The major driver is the national recycling targets and our own waste disposal waste strategy targets. These are to reduce overall waste arising in the borough (to reduce household waste collected per household by five per cent by 2010), to maximise the amount of waste recycled (35 per cent of household waste in Camden to be recycled by 2010 and 10 per cent of commercial waste collected by the authority to be recycled by 2010) and to increase spend on green purchases (25 per cent of Camden businesses to sign up to the Mayor's Green Procurement plan by 2010, 30 per cent of all Council purchases to be made from recycled materials by 2010).

Summary of Barriers

- **Cost to the Local Authority:**
 - Each recycling bin costs around £400 to produce (although the marginal cost is sure to reduce if a large quantity is ordered as co-ordinated by a new public recycling policy framework)
 - Maintenance – A new recycling collection vehicle costs around £120,000 and its value depreciates annually.
 - Each recycling vehicle requires 1 driver and 2 loaders, each paid a salary of between £20,000-£27,000 per annum
 - Associated human resource administration costs of implementing and managing scheme

- **Street Clutter:**
 - Local authorities have to consider the positioning of each bin so that it does not obstruct ('clutter') the natural flow of pavement users, especially in busy areas such as transport stations.
- **Ease of collection**
 - Recycling bins, whilst also avoiding cluttering pavements, have to be in easily accessible locations for street collections vehicles and loaders to access on collection routes.
- **Land Ownership**
 - In some locations, the land outside of stations is privately owned by transport companies such as Network Rail. This prevents councils placing recycling bins in vital places such as Euston and King's Cross stations.
- **Lack of Central Government Legislation/Directives**
 - To FNCTE's knowledge, there is no direct legislation regarding recycling on street waste and ensuring the direct provision of 'on-the-go' recycling facilities, instead councils are expected to act as they see fit.

FNCTE's analysis:

Cost to Local Authority: We predict that the cost to local authorities is the major inhibitor to a satisfactory public recycling scheme. We strongly believe that the Government should provide an appropriate dedicated fund to all urban local authorities to provide recycling bins at all stations, on the completion of a Government investigation.

The disparity in services provided is also evident from our findings in our investigation as wealthier councils such as Camden, Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea are able to provide higher numbers of bins per station than in other localities, even once increased demand is taken into consideration.

Free Newspapers Cost the Earth feel passionately that a satisfactory public recycling bin scheme should not have to compromise other areas of local authority spending but that the value of sustainability should be recognised by Government and funded appropriately. As the Stern Report pointed out, taking measures to tackle climate change now will be much cheaper than responding to future devastations if business as usual is allowed to continue.

Street Clutter: This is an important issue but one that FNCTE feels is less valued than the need to be sustainable. Maximising recycling rates should be the priority and thus street clutter regulations should be flexible to fit those needs.

Ease of Collection: If appropriate financial and thus physical resources are made available to local authorities to hold regular collections then this issue becomes of less importance although it is an important consideration to ensure efficiency of waste collections.

Land Ownership: Any government regulation must cover instances of private land ownership at transport stations and must ensure that recycling solutions are negotiated at these locations as often these locations are at the busiest national stations.

Lack of Central Government Directives: We believe that there needs to be central government directives implemented for all city based local authorities to ensure that there is an agreed level of on-the-go recycling facilities in all urban areas. Free Newspapers are distributed in 16 cities across the UK so this issue is relevant to the whole of the UK.