

Moving the food waste mountain

ZERO WASTE NATION

IF THE GOVERNMENT'S 'ZERO WASTE' AIM IS TO BE MET THEN WE HAVE TO GET BETTER AT DEALING WITH THE FOOD WE THROW AWAY. KATE CAWLEY CHAMPIONS ANAEROBIC DIGESTION

If you are looking at your company's sustainability plans you can't afford to ignore what has just happened across the Irish Sea.

The Republic of Ireland has recently published draft legislation on the separation of commercial food waste. How long will it be before we have to face something similar in the UK?

Defra has already formed an Anaerobic Digestion (AD) Task Group which aims to make it an established technology by 2020 for dealing with waste and providing renewable energy to be fed back to the national grid. And recycling food waste can also help companies reduce their

handled in one contract then incorporating food waste collection as a new extra element can actually be cost neutral.

At Cawleys, for instance, we can provide such a comprehensive service; right down to any hazardous waste they produce. It makes commercial good sense to look at the whole picture.

Food is the heaviest element of food waste and with the standard rate of landfill tax currently at £40 a tonne, and set to rise by £8 a year until it reaches £72 by 2013, the more weight and waste you can divert from landfill the better.

The average household green wheeline bin would weigh 80 kilos if full of food waste, but only 35 kilos with general waste, so that gives you an idea about the difference it can make by removing food waste from general waste streams.

We have invested heavily in cutting-edge solutions for commercial clients, ranging from a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) in Luton, which at 72.5% has the highest recovery rate for mixed materials in the country, to our fleet of bespoke food waste collection vehicles.

We had to commission our own vehicles for food waste collection to take account of hygiene and weight. The vehicles include different compartments to spread the weight and highly sophisticated systems for weight measurement. This enables us to provide customers with an individual report outlining the amount of food waste they have diverted from landfill and the amount of electricity and fertiliser it has generated.

Clients who have already signed up to this sort of service include contract caterer Charlton House at its Treasury and T Mobile client sites and BaxterStorey at its Slaughter & May unit.

In some instances the cost sector caterers have approached us directly to provide food waste recycling and waste management at a number of sites and sometimes a contractor has put pressure on the client to explore food waste recycling.

“Instead of sending food waste to landfill where it produces methane, it is turned into fertiliser or converted to electricity”

Kate Cawley is business development manager at Cawleys, a third-generation family business that has been operating for over 60 years in waste management and recycling. It runs the UK's only commercial food waste to anaerobic digestion (AD)



customers will probably double that this year.

But as a country we don't currently have the capacity to deal with commercial food waste in this way. There are only 10 AD plants in the country and only three of those can handle commercial food waste.

It will take time for more AD plants to come on stream, so in the meantime we have to look at options such as in-vessel composting, rendering of animal by-products and waste to energy, which can all help make a dramatic difference to the amount of food waste going to landfill.

It will happen, though at the moment we are way behind other EU countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.

And in our enthusiasm we must not ignore the major issue that concerns caterers – cost. But if a customer takes a holistic view of their

Opinion

Waste Management in Further and Higher Education Institutions



SAVY UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES RECOGNISE THAT A LARGE PROPORTION OF WASTE IS NOT AN UNWANTED SUBSTANCE BUT RATHER AN UNDER-USED RESOURCE. AND WITH MUCH OF THE NEW GREENTECH BEING DEVELOPED BY THE SECTOR, THERE IS EVEN MORE REASON TO DEPLOY IT THERE.

the end products are 'green' electricity and fertiliser.

Using facilities such as MRFs (materials recycling facilities) enables Further and Higher Education Institutions to recycle and recover around 60 per cent of their general waste. But universities and colleges will also generate waste that must be handled with care and

of human origin – must be handled with due caution and sensitivity before they are sent for incineration.

Written by Kate Cawley, Business Development Manager, Cawley's

Universities and colleges face a brave new world of cuts and budget restraints. Landfill tax, on-year, was becoming a hindrance to growth in staff requirements as universities and colleges take waste recycling and having a

is also increasingly important. witness the rise of the University Green League, environmental benchmarking and the growth of sustainability awards such as EAUC's 'Green Gowns'.

Putting all these factors together means that Further and Higher Education Institutions are signing up to greener systems of waste disposal. Food waste recycling schemes which diverts food waste from landfill, processing it instead by anaerobic digestion are becoming increasingly popular;

is required to register with the Environment Agency and must dispose of waste through the correct channels.

Waste chemicals, often decades old and either banned under current legislation or unidentifiable, can be a major issue. Older laboratories may contain asbestos that must be removed with extreme care under licence. Radioactive and explosive materials, interesting scientific specimens, stuffed and pickled specimens – including octopus, lizards and items



Food waste in landfill produces damaging greenhouse gases.

Cawleys' Food Waste Collection Round takes restaurant food waste for anaerobic digestion.

Our public relations programme helped Cawleys:

Increase incoming sales calls

Build strategic industry partnerships

Deliver award winning staff engagement programmes

Win nominations and awards: Association for Organics Recycling,
Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply, Green Bang, Grocer Gold.