

# Recycle Station

## Bath Spa University... on the road to 'zero waste to landfill'

*Bath Spa has recently been recognised as a First Class university in the People and Planet University League Table 2015.*

The University has made significant strides over the past year, towards its goal of 'zero waste to landfill', ably assisted by Leaffield Environmental.

The journey started around eight years ago, with an attempt to segregate waste streams at source, both internally and externally. As the number of recycle streams expanded, the project became increasingly complicated and consequently less and less effective.

That said, the University still managed to recycle over 50% of its waste, indicating a latent will amongst students and staff to 'do the right thing' and be more environmentally aware.

The decision to more than double the number of live-in students was the catalyst to revisit the recycling problem, as Sustainability Manager Dr Julian Greaves explains: "To continue recycling at source we would have had to isolate seven waste streams and that would have meant having no less than seven separate bins in each collection location. Clearly that was far too complex and unlikely to work well.

"We found a contractor to handle three recycle streams, food waste for composting or anaerobic digestion, mixed recycling for material recovery and residual waste for energy and then sought a supplier that could meet our requirements for collection bins.

Having spoken to several bin manufacturers we came to the conclusion that Leaffield Environmental were the only company that really understood our requirements and were willing to develop products to meet them."

### Designing the right solutions

Leaffield Key Accounts and Business Manager Vince Wright carried out a preliminary survey and made initial recommendations that involved the Leaffield design team. In the words of Dr Greaves: "We formed a close partnership that is still working very well."

The initial focus was to design and manufacture an economical bin for mixed recycling that could be used in

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existing residential kitchens, where the available kit space could accommodate three individual bins – two for mixed recyclables and one for general waste. The EcoAce Envirobin was specifically designed for this purpose: a simple bin with WRAP-compliant, colour-coded lid and graphics, easy-carry handles and a capacity of 62 litres.

To improve the overall efficiency of the waste collection and transport operation they decided, at an early stage, to adopt a bagless approach. Black bags cost money, create waste in themselves, enable users to 'hide' bad behaviour and contain a lot of air that takes up room in collection bins. This move not only increased 'bin fill' efficiency. It also resolved the problem of liquids dripping from bags and staining carpets and put an end to the unsightly black bags that previously piled up around the external waste areas, causing litter problems from wildlife ripping open the bags.

### Bins for every location

The first hurdle over, the team turned its attention to the new student halls of residence, which were under construction. The objective was to make provision for the collection of the





aforementioned three waste streams throughout the campus, along with segregating glass in kitchen areas for safety. Due to very tight space constraints in the kitchen areas, stacking bin concepts were developed and a rectangular, slimline design settled upon. This all-new Envirostack bin has a spacious capacity of 52 litres and is now used in stacked groups of four in all communal kitchens.

The decision was taken to have dedicated recycling centres in other communal areas throughout the University, again to segregate the three waste streams. For Bath Spa's new award-winning academic building, a pedal-type bin was chosen based upon Leaffield's Steribin. Several modifications were made to meet Bath Spa's requirements, including a removable plastic liner to comply with the bagless strategy, a handle to comply with disability requirements and clear, simple, consistent signage. For use in



corridors, receptions and high footfall areas across the rest of the University's academic buildings, Leaffield's stylish, slimline, Meridian bins have been deployed. Again, the three waste streams are accommodated only this time having a 28-litre liner for general waste, a 63.5-litre liner for mixed recyclables and a 10-litre food caddy that sits within the mixed recycling liner.

External recycling collection has not been overlooked. Leaffield's Envirobank recycling bins again accommodate the three waste streams although in larger volumes. The Envirobank 240, as its name suggests, is used to take 240 litres of mixed recycle while its smaller brother, the Envirobank Split, has two apertures and can accommodate up to 90 litres each of food waste and general waste.

#### Apprehension and education

Dr Greaves continued: "Our new approach to recycling is proving very successful and has gained good acceptance from students, staff and the existing cleaning team alike."



There was some apprehension about possible odours arising from food collection, which was a concern to the team. To prevent this becoming an issue, we have included a bin-cleaning rota in the management strategy, which seems to be working well and is more than offset by the £10,000 per year saving on black bags.

Recent focus has been on educating users on how to differentiate between the waste streams and embedding responsible behaviour, commensurate to Bath Spa's goal of developing global citizenship amongst its student population. Comprehensive, simple and consistent graphics and signage alone will not automatically overcome potential contamination problems.

As well as lots of face-to-face interaction, the team is developing more fun ways to engage, such as a humorous rap video explaining the intricacies of identifying exactly what waste goes into each waste stream – it could turn viral!



Watch the rap video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGoXhCHc3oE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGoXhCHc3oE)

Early indications are that recycling rates have increased to over 70%, which is great but also shows there's still more to do! 