

Recycling

On Tuesday 16th February, Kylie Kavanagh of South Cambs District Council, came to talk to us about waste management. It is vitally necessary that we should re-cycle more of our rubbish, because we are rapidly running out of space in landfill sites. There are many other important reasons to increase re-cycling. Regulations require the Council to reduce the amount which they send to landfill and we are taxed at £150 a ton on the excess waste. Currently we produce 2,000 tons per month. The target is to reduce this by 75%. Waste in landfill also creates methane, a much more harmful greenhouse gas than CO₂. Moreover, if we re-use items, rather than producing new ones, there is a great saving of energy, and therefore of CO₂ and of raw materials. Black bin waste is now sorted to recover items such as metal and glass and after this, materials which will rot down are taken for composting to a special facility.

What can we do to help save waste? Firstly, we can avoid buying more food than we can use. We can plan meals in advance, make a list and buy only what we need. We can remember that food items that are past their 'sell-by' date are usually perfectly good to eat; it is generally quite obvious when they are not. Tesco are now offering vouchers in place of 'Buy one, get one free' so that shoppers do not have to take advantage of the offer at a time when they will not have an occasion to eat it.

Electrical or electronic items should not be put in the black bin. They should be taken to the re-cycling centre and handed in, because many of their components can be re-used. Many shops will now take back old batteries. Cans, tins, foil and aerosol cans can be put in the green box. Glass is widely re-cycled but it is better to re-use the bottles themselves, and manufacturers are being urged to devise schemes for taking returned bottles. Dairies have always done this. Food manufacturers are being urged to use thinner packaging and less of it.

If paper is kept separate and taken for re-cycling, at William Westley school, for example, then it commands a higher price, though it can be put in the green bin. Food waste can now be put in the green bin, though it should be wrapped in newspaper. Special easily-degradable paper bags for food waste are available from South Cambs at www.southcambscaddyliners.co.uk or from tel: 020 8736 0033. Envelopes can be re-cycled and there is no need now to tear out the windows in them. Yellow pages are now made with less dye and so can now be composted. Wrapping paper should not be put for composting as it has all kinds of other substances, such as glitter, on it. Things which cannot be put for composting in the green bin are soil, turf and cat litter.

Since 2005, plastic bottles, including shampoo bottles, can be re-cycled in the green box, as long as they are bottle-shaped, i.e. they are narrower at the top. Soon, though, South Cambs will be introducing a blue bin to replace the green boxes, in which all glass, metal and plastic containers will be able to be placed for re-cycling, including plastic pots for yoghurt etc. This blue bin will include a separate caddy for newspapers and shredded paper. When the blue bin is introduced, the green boxes can then be returned to the Council. At present only 70% of people use their green box.

Further things we can do are to use up left-over food; a recipe book for this is available. Use a Bag for Life instead of plastic carrier bags. Buy refills for domestic products instead of a new container. Avoid convenience food with lots of packaging. Buy loose fruit and vegetables which do not require any packaging. Keep your fridge between 1 and 5 degrees centigrade. Ask about registering to avoid being sent junk mail. By acting together and making sure that shops know our views on packaging, we can deal with the problems produced by excess waste.