

## Scotland's 1<sup>st</sup> Zero Waste Town: our journey

In 2014 Sustaining Dunbar commissioned a study with support from Zero Waste Scotland to develop a project proposal, which formed the basis for our area being awarded funding to be Scotland's 1<sup>st</sup> Zero Waste Town. The Zero Waste Dunbar (ZWD) Project ran from September 2014 to March 2017 as a pilot community engagement initiative, which aspired to accelerate the implementation of Scotland's Zero Waste Plan in the Dunbar Ward by 2025.

Scotland's Zero Waste Plan sets out the Scottish Government's vision for a zero waste society.

This vision describes a Scotland where:

1. **All** waste is seen as a resource;
2. Waste is minimised; valuable resources are not disposed of in landfills; and,
3. Most waste is sorted; leaving only limited amounts to be treated.

Moving to be a Zero Waste Town is an ambitious project. While we knew the transformation of the scale required would not be complete by March 2017, we indeed succeeded in starting the process of enabling our locality to seriously rethink and embed changes that will lead to zero waste to landfill. We have also demonstrated it is possible to put in place a number of the necessary conditions for a more circular local economy.

*"The measures within the Zero Waste Dunbar (ZWD) project are rooted as much in civic pride and renewal as they are in instilling a new culture of waste as a resource. With a blend of marketing initiatives and hands on support for householders and business, the Zero Waste Dunbar project aims to facilitate conditions that will provide stimulus for a closed loop economy, which currently is only embryonic". 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2014, A Study on behalf Sustaining Dunbar by: Philip Immirzi, Get the Point Ltd in partnership with Crispin W. Hayes, CW Hayes Associates*

The ZWD Project Objectives were designed to engage with Schools, Households, Businesses, East Lothian Council and relevant stakeholders to enable all to:

- get a better understanding of what their waste is made up of now;
- identify ways and take action to reduce their waste;
- identify ways to reuse their waste;
- identify ways to recycle more;
- identify ways to benefit more from our waste as a local resource; and
- identify ways to develop a local circular economy

### **Zero Waste Scotland Indicators of success by March 2017:**

- Recycling rate moving towards 70%
- High uptake of food waste collections rolled out by ELC
- Increase of re-use activity within the community
- Schools actively engaged with the 4 Rs – Redesign; Reduce; Reuse; Recycle

- Improved knowledge of waste reduction, recycling and resource efficiency amongst businesses

### **How well did we achieve our project objectives?**

- The ELC food waste collection service launched in April 2015 gave the ZWD Project a really positive head start and a practical peg to build upon – the timing was perfect and is likely the biggest driver behind the increase in household recycling uptake in our area.
- We have active Facebook pages (2,600 members), twitter and website and have engaged with over 6000 residents (face to face, door to door, via events and via ZWD shop) in our Ward.
- Providing the Recycling on the Go service at local events through the early stage of the project and contracting a local PR Consultant helped us to raise the profile of project and engage with wide cross section of the public.
- Getting out to meet with people at local events and door to door widened engagement to households, age and gender and enabled to start where people were at with regards to waste reduction, reuse and recycling.
- We gathered local baseline data from which to gauge change overtime.
- The ZWD office was a steady flow of people calling in to get advice and support.
- The ZWD project was adopted and Zero Waste aims endorsed by the Local Area Partnership – Zero Waste Town principles and aspirations now form part of the Local Area Plan.
- All 6 of our Schools now have the infrastructure and systems in place to carry out full recycling, including a food collection service. An estimated 29,253.6 kgs will be diverted away from landfill this year!
- The new food waste service at schools will be able to divert approximately 30,000 KG of waste annually
- Waste audit findings indicate a 52% decrease in waste going to landfill from our schools. These findings and lessons learned have been shared with all 6 schools and ELC Education.

- We have a Zero Waste Dunbar Project representative on the Learning for Sustainability Scotland Steering Group to try to raise the profile of Zero Waste Objectives in relation to giving children their entitlement to Learning for Sustainability in schools.' As this is more the remit I work within on this steering group.
- ELC Education are now motivated by the learning and cost saving opportunities as a result of the uptake of recycling, outcomes of the school food waste collection and reuse initiatives we trialled at our schools.
- Over 200 households, 6 schools and 120 businesses participated in the Go Zero Challenge to reduce waste to landfill.
- 270 pupils took part in the Pupil Pledge to make a personal commitment to reduce their own waste.
- 5 of our schools took up the offer of CPD teacher training in Zero Waste aims and objectives to ensure a learning legacy beyond March 2017.
- Dunbar Grammar School (owned by private business) has gone from no recycling to a full recycling system installed and funded by ZWD project and serviced by ELC.
- Seconding our Business Officer from ELC Waste Services – accelerated progress in ways, this would not have been possible otherwise.
- We built positive relationships with our local businesses and are members of the Dunbar Traders Association
- We have a very good relationship with ELC Waste Services who will support the aspects of the ZWD Project legacy moving forward beyond March 2017.
- A “Zero Waste Shed” was established on our local HWRC which was used to communicate Zero Waste messages and was a great success – making it easier for residents to divert waste away from landfill for reuse and manufacturing.
- A Zero Waste Business Pack was developed and distributed to all our business in our ward to give them information about their waste

management responsibilities and how they can get support to reduce, reuse and benefit more from their waste. ELC has adopted the Zero Waste Business Pack and will now distribute throughout the county.

- A 5 Star Awards system was designed for Businesses. The aim of this award scheme was to enable businesses to communicate with the public that they are playing their part and committed to becoming a Zero Waste Town.
- The ZWD Project has diverted over 34 tons of waste away from landfill and 12831 kgs of textiles for reuse in 6 months.
- We now have waste diversion operations in place for the ZWD reuse legacy in our ward (and county!).

### **What we learned**

1. full co-operation of the local authority was central to the success of this project
2. the local authority level economies of scale and logistics were the main drivers for the current waste management systems and this underpins uniform solutions at the expense of diversity in locally appropriate or bottom up solutions. For this reason we were not able to replace single mixed waste capture on our High Streets and parks with separate capture-recycling bins as planned. Our only way forward was support the Local Area Partnership to lobby for a full recycling service for High Streets in our area;
3. creating an environment in which it is possible to develop new partnerships and responses is central to success and in the two years we had on the ground we have succeeded to facilitate this to happen.
4. most of the people we engaged with were really keen to move towards being a Zero Waste Town.
5. Very few people (10 out of 3000) indicated they would only be driven to go the extra mile to zero their waste if they could see the rational of “what’s in it for us” and had an expectation that interventions should provide a return, financial or otherwise. For example “if we reduce the amount of waste going to landfill then will this be reflected in our council tax?”
6. Communities Resource Network Scotland CRNS provided useful and practical support to our project.
7. Having a Project Board with representatives from Zero Waste Scotland, ELC Waste Services, CRNS and Sustaining Dunbar ensured we had affective guidance and support for the project from start to finish.

The ZWD pilot programme enabled all stakeholders to learn about some of the opportunities and constraints we have to significantly reducing the amount of waste going to landfill and to help realise that our waste is our resource.

We have achieved all of the Zero Waste Dunbar Project objectives, on time and within budget. We are confident that the project outcomes have started the process of embedding the right local conditions (partnerships, attitudes and behaviors) and foundations (ensuring that there are enabling policies and infrastructure) to enable Dunbar to continue to work to become a Zero Waste Town.