

Zero to landfill

Martin McGrath of McGrath Group explains how having a multi-disciplined recycling service has helped them align their environmental performance with the needs of their clients.

Is your recycling partner able to provide full traceability regarding the destination of your wastes while guaranteeing that none of them find their way to landfill?

The burgeoning influence that environmental performance and ethical and social responsibility are now having on commercial decision making in the public sector is having a profound impact on the methodology of recycling operators such as McGrath. Increasingly, clients are looking beyond the fundamentals of cost, reliability and competence and asking probing questions about our ability to deal sustainably with their wastes.

The environmental bar is therefore constantly being raised, which places obligations upon us to explain, and corroborate, how the waste materials are collected and recycled and where they are finally directed to for reprocessing.

Our multi-disciplined service, which encompasses containment, collection, recycling and re-processing, gives McGrath the additional control to influence and report on the environmental aspects of the recycling process.

Having in-house re-processing capabilities at our Materials Recycling Facilities (MRFs) as well as close, long-standing relationships with specialist providers has enabled us to develop, refine and, crucially, report on the sustainability of the entire waste management cycle.

It is well-documented that not all MRFs are equal in terms of environmental performance. At McGrath, we encourage clients to visit our operations and witness real recycling taking place. Those with responsibility for contracting recycling companies should take the opportunity to visit contractors' premises so they can be confident in what is really happening to the materials they dispose of.

At our MRFs a variety of state-of-the-art manual and automatic processes sort and segregate the wastes we collect or receive into discrete material streams. Many of these are re-processed on site, such as timber, rubber, aggregates and glass. In 2008 we successfully applied for £600k of fund-



ing from the Wastes Resources Action Programme, which contributed to the installation of state-of-the-art technology to recycle rubber (tyres) and timber materials.

Other recycling streams such as metals, paper/card, plastics and food are transported to specialist local supply chain partners. Our in-house environmental team continuously research the market and monitor these processes to ensure we are using the very latest technologies and methodologies. We have been able to introduce a number of closed-loop recycling processes (in which materials are fed back into their original supply chain) that enhance the environmental integrity of the re-processing system.

We are also able to exert commercial influence on our supply chain to decrease the amount of recycled material that is exported.

In June 2011 we invested nearly £700,000 in new equipment and infrastructure that enables waste residues, materials too small or integrated to be separated for recycling, to be compacted and packaged for waste-to-energy (WtE) re-processing. This is the final piece of the jigsaw in our three-year quest to achieve Zero-to-Landfill – another key aspiration that helps public sector clients demonstrate their own environmental credentials.

While the recycling process and destination of the materials are key environmental

factors, many of our public sector clients have gone further and asked us to demonstrate and report on the energy consumed during the collection/recycling processes to ensure its sustainability and integrate this data into their own carbon reporting.

We are currently in the process of integrating carbon data into our standard waste reporting, which will quantify the CO₂ reduction that our recycling has generated. We have also looked closely at the sustainability of our logistics operation to identify ways in which we can minimise the fuel expended and pollution/CO₂ emitted during the collections process.

The introduction of multi-compartment vehicles that can collect two or more waste streams simultaneously while integrating GPS transport management systems has enabled us to reduce overall vehicle movements during the collection of wastes by over 40%.

Our end-to-end multi-disciplined recycling service gives the control that is necessary to identify ways to improve the environmental performance of all aspects of the waste management system and gather and submit the empirical evidence that enables our public sector clients to demonstrate their own environmental achievements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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