

aerosol recycling

Aerosol recycling takes off in the UK

Around half of local authorities throughout the UK have added empty aerosols to their recycling schemes in the last couple of years. Since a market opened up for recovered aluminium aerosols, aerosol recycling has really taken off in the UK after many years of struggling to get off the ground.

Each year the UK uses around 600 million aerosols, which is equivalent to about ten cans per person, with approximately 65 per cent of aerosols made from tin-plated steel, and the rest from high-grade aluminium. In total this represents almost 30,000 tonnes of reclaimable metal that can be recycled each year.

This means that the UK is now getting closer to the aerosol recycling rates of some of its neighbours around Europe. For example, Germany estimates that over 80 per cent of its aerosols are being recycled, and the Netherlands has reached a 78 per cent level for recycling steel, which includes aerosols.



Explains Dr Paul Jackson, technical manager at the British Aerosol Manufacturers' Association (BAMA), "Aerosols can make a real contribution to local authority metals recycling schemes. For example, a tinplate

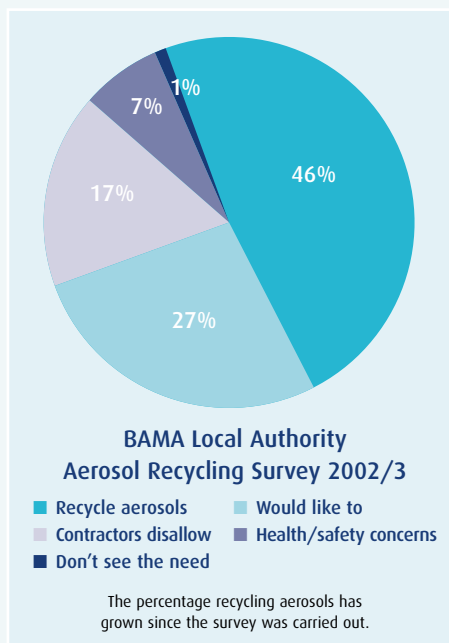
aerosol can weigh nearly five times more than a drinks can and nearly ten times more than a small pet food can."

Empty aerosols

BAMA is constantly in touch with local authorities to encourage them to take empty aerosols in their schemes. So far nearly half of local authorities are accepting empty aerosols for recycling, with most of them actively encouraging householders to dispose of them with other household cans at can banks or in kerbside collections. On top of this, around a third of local authorities are keen to add aerosol recycling to their list of activities.

"We're here to help"

Dr Jackson said: "As well as trying to find out which authorities are recycling aerosols, we are keen to find out why others are not doing so. We know that some have health and safety concerns. If any authority is unsure of the right procedures, we are here to help them with practical advice and guidance."



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Dr Jackson, (BAMA)

See page 4 for the latest advice and materials provided by BAMA on recycling aerosols



You can do it...

Many local authorities have already taken advice from BAMA and are now including empty aerosols in their recycling schemes. Here are some typical examples of just a few of the many successful schemes that are being run by councils throughout the length and breadth of the country.



Eric Bell, Derwentside District Council

DERWENTSIDE DISTRICT COUNCIL

When Derwentside District Council decided to investigate the possibilities of aerosol recycling, its environmental officers turned first of all to the Internet to research the feasibility.

As Derwentside's Recycling Officer Eric Bell explained: "We had realised for some time that aerosols could be part of waste recycling, but we were put off by concerns about health and safety issues. Then we researched a number of recycling advice websites, such as the one run by BAMA, and this convinced us that not only was it feasible but that it was also safe and advantageous."

BAMA's site (www.bama.co.uk) offers practical advice and resources to help local authorities. More advice is available on the special local authority section of the [recycle-more.co.uk](http://www.recycle-more.co.uk) website, which can be found at http://www.recycle-more.co.uk/b2la/b2la_intro.html.

BRIGHTON & HOVE DISTRICT COUNCIL, SUSSEX

There are about 119,000 properties covered by Brighton and Hove District Council, which first introduced recycling through bring banks 20 years ago. In September 2002 the council started accepting empty aerosols at its 150 can banks and it is now collecting about 13 tonnes of metal a month, of which it estimates about two per cent comes from aerosols.

In addition there are kerbside collections which cover 60 per cent of the city. Since April 2003 empty aerosols have been included in these collections and these have already started to increase overall tonnages. Anna Jones, Technical Assistant at Brighton & Hove District Council, said: "We first became aware of aerosol recycling when we received an information pack from BAMA last year. We followed their advice about such things as health and safety and we've put their stickers on all our bring containers.

"Although the present amount of aerosols is not very large, we expect to see an increase in a few months' time, once the public start including them in their kerbside collections. This should also help us to meet - or even exceed - our recycling targets for the year."

"...we've had very good feedback from number of cans we get, which has boos

Hannah Phoenix, Assistant Environmental Protection Officer, Worcester C

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL, OXFORDSHIRE

The Vale of White Horse District Council in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, which claims to have been at the forefront of recycling for many years, has a total of 25 recycling sites and first introduced kerbside collections in 1992.

It has just started accepting empty aerosols in its kerbside collections, which cover 75 per cent of the 47,000 households in the area.

Although it is still early days, the council is optimistic that expanding the range of recyclable materials will bring positive results. At present 16 tonnes of metal are being collected from can banks each month.

Derek Vickers, Waste Strategy Officer at the Vale of White Horse, said: "We looked into the possibility of collecting empty aerosols in early 2003 and consulted with BAMA and our contractors, ECT Recycling, who confirmed that it was perfectly feasible and safe. We started promoting the new collection scheme at the beginning of the year and it got fully under way in February. I'm pleased to say that it has all been very straightforward and easy to implement."

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL, ESSEX

Braintree District Council is responsible for about 57,000 households. Following extensive research, and after seeking advice and guidance from BAMA in the summer of 2001, Braintree Council began collecting aerosols in its recycling scheme in December 2001. The council began actively promoting its new scheme to the public three months prior to the launch, and it has continued to promote the scheme to all householders through quarterly and annual newsletters and through the use of BAMA can bank stickers. Today Braintree District Council recycles about 1,000 cans a week through a central materials reclamation facility (MRF), 70 can-bank sites and weekly kerbside collections.

Ian Haines, Environmental Policy Manager at Braintree District Council, said: "We have not had any problems from recycling empty aerosol cans - they are all baled at high pressure with other metal cans. The only difficulty has been to convince the public that aerosols can now be recycled."



WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL, EAST SUSSEX

Wealden District Council has about 80 public recycling sites which serve the needs of approximately 61,000 properties in the area. In addition, nearly two-thirds of these properties (approximately 38,000 households) are involved in the council's Integrated Recycling Scheme. The scheme involves two wheely bins per household - one for garden refuse and one for general refuse - plus a Blue Box for recyclable items such as newspapers and magazines, junk mail, cans and foil. Items in the Blue Box are pre-sorted into different categories by residents and, since December 2002, empty aerosols have been added to the approved list of recyclable items.

Alison Redman, Senior Waste Management Officer at Wealden District Council, said: "It is still early days, but we have already had good feedback from many residents who have said they didn't know they could recycle aerosol cans. They've told us they think it is a very good idea."

"I'm pleased to say that it has all been very straightforward and easy to implement."

Derek Vickers, White Horse District Council



the public and we've noticed a marked increase in the overall
sted the overall weight of metals each month."

It's worth doing...

More and more local authorities are finding that it's worth their while to include aerosols in their recycling schemes. After all, every bit counts when it comes to achieving recycling targets, as well as meeting compulsory reductions in landfill.



Valuable materials

There are markets in the UK for the materials recovered from recycling aerosols. Aluminium aerosols are accepted by secondary metals dealers and by Alcan who provide a specification for local authorities (available on the BAMA website www.bama.co.uk). Steel aerosols are accepted by many secondary metals dealers, including the Save-A-Can scheme.

So when it comes to recycling aerosols, it's definitely worth doing – and BAMA can help local authorities to make it happen too.

The basic precautions recommended by BAMA to local authorities are as follows:

- Leave aerosols mixed in with other metal waste – do not segregate and concentrate them.
- Ask householders to remove loose plastic parts such as over-caps/lids.
- Educate householders to put only empty used aerosols in can banks or kerbside collections. Householders must not pierce or squash the aerosols.
- Ensure that you are taking the usual health and safety precautions for a well run Material Reclamation Facility, especially ruling out sources of ignition.
- Although flammable gases can be released within the baler or in the finished bales, tests show that any flammable atmosphere generated dissipates very quickly in the surrounding air.

We can help you

BAMA is ideally placed to help local authorities and waste contractors with practical advice and guidance on how to include empty aerosols in recycling schemes in their areas.

As Sue Rogers, Director of BAMA, says: "We have been working on aerosol recycling for the last ten years and we wish to share our knowledge and practical expertise with local authorities and their contractors. We are here to help local authorities in whatever way we can."



BAMA provides free information and guidance for any local authority that is considering setting up an aerosol recycling scheme. It supplies a comprehensive selection of literature, ranging from detailed independent health and safety reports to information leaflets and free supplies of eye-catching labels to stick on can banks encouraging the public to recycle aerosols.

BAMA also has a website at www.bama.co.uk where local authorities can download a wide range of this information and support material, including:

- a guide to recycling post-consumer aerosols
- copy and images for use in spreading the word to householders
- artwork for kerbside collection boxes

A4 labels for can banks can be ordered free.

**For further information please contact:
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e-mail: enquiries@bama.co.uk
<http://www.bama.co.uk>**

