

CHRIS RICHARDS - MET OFFICE

When Chris Richards arrived in August 2012, the Met Office were recycling an impressive 76% of waste. Tasked with meeting an ambitious target of 80% recycling for 2012/13 however, Chris far surpassed expectations, recycling 83% of all waste in his first few months as Facilities Manager.

Rethinking our recycling; saving us time and money.

Working in partnership with companies that uphold as stringent environmental commitments as his own, was crucial to Chris' vision for the Met Office. Having investigated the potential methods for increasing recycling efficiency within the business, Chris found that industrial waste sorters used by the current contractors were both less efficient and more energy consuming than separating waste at source. He therefore made it a priority to switch our recycling collection and disposal to Coastal Recycling - a Devon-based leader in the industry, who collect pre-sorted waste streams and have been pioneers in implementing the most energy efficient waste sorting technologies. Therefore, in order to successfully encourage staff to recycle 'at source', the user experience of waste disposal facilities was at the heart of Chris' initial improvements, with considerable time spent simplifying the signage surrounding each refuse stream.

At first, Chris began by refining the numerous different waste streams from a vast and confusing 26, to just 10. After liaising with contractors, it transpired that recycling plastic bottles with their lids on was both more energy, and therefore financially, efficient. By ensuring such practice was actioned, Chris minimised the number of waste streams used, whilst maximising financial returns.

Furthermore, whereas equipping the 20 office stations with 6 plastic recycling bins at £108 each, would have cost the Met Office £12,960, Chris found cardboard alternatives costing just £8, making a saving of £12,000. Additionally, these can be recycled at the end of their lifetime, as can the bags within them, reducing 30kg per month of waste in plastic bags that would otherwise go to landfill.

ENGAGING WITH COLLEAGUES

As a diverse workforce, the level of engagement with sustainability initiatives varied considerably within the Met Office. Chris therefore utilised the annual Met Office Expo to promote recycling to entire staff population, by filling a section of 'The Street' - a communal space at the heart of Exeter HQ - with waste gathered from within the organisation. Consequently, 28 staff members were inspired to become 'Recycling Champions', leading the drive to make sustainability integral to the office routine. In December 2013, formal training was provided for the role - indicative of the Met Office's dedication to improving waste management - an ethos that first attracted Chris to the organisation, and one which he has nurtured and developed.

Utilising an atmosphere of friendly competition between departments, Chris created a monthly 'Floorplate League Table', detailing the percentage of waste disposed as landfill within each area of the office. The results were published on the Met Office intranet, to promote further interest and engagement in the recycling scheme. During January 2013, offices were encouraged to take part in a mass 'clear out' of old files and unwanted magazines to be recycled, whilst plant rooms reused or recycled old floor tiles, pumps and redundant spares that had been obstructing the workplace.

Chris was also instrumental in the introduction of multi-coloured, reusable KeepCups. Taking forward an initial staff

suggestion for such items, he negotiated a 5 pence discount with our catering provider, on all hot drinks purchased at the onsite cafes by staff using a KeepCup. This alone significantly reduced demand for, and waste from, paper cups.

CONTINUING AMBITION

Further to this, Chris set himself a target to see if 100% recycling was achievable within his floorplate of 100 people. This led to the creation of a recycling bin entitled 'if you're not sure put it in here', allowing him to identify which waste items staff found most confusing to discard. From this, a definitive list of items was produced, and posters giving clear instructions on their disposal were displayed next to recycling points throughout Exeter HQ.

The trial also revealed interesting patterns in the psychology of Chris's office workers, with the order in which the bins were positioned impacting on the proportion of waste recycled correctly. From habit, workers would deposit refuse in the same location each day, regardless of labelling on the bin. Chris therefore discovered that maintaining a consistent order of waste streams across departments was a simple, but vital, cornerstone to ensuring maximum recycling efficiency.

BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

As a personal member of Devon Wildlife Trust, Chris arranges an annual showcase of their work, and runs similar events with the RSPB, in order to strengthen Met Office ties to environmental charities, whilst exposing our almost 2000 strong workforce to the efforts and importance of such groups.

Alongside his work as Facilities Manager, Chris is part of the Biodiversity Working Group within the Met Office, and has both promoted, and taken part in, a 'Biodiversity Planting day' where group members grow flowers from seed, before planting them to



All Plastics



Plastic Bags Pens Cup lids



Cling Film Clean Food Trays Bubble Wrap

Note: Please no bottles or contaminated food packaging



Contaminated Packaging



Sandwich Containers Soup Cups



Yoghurt Pots Crisp Packets



Cardboard



Cups Clean Food Packaging



Envelopes Tetra Pak

Large boxes to be collected by Helpdesk (3990)

Waste Audit November 2012 - Floorplate Recycling Figures

Floorplate	Could be recycled in a Month (%)
B2	54
F2	60
D2	64
College	65
DG	69
A1	69
C2	70
D1	70
C1	71
Gym	71
E1	72
Restaurant	72
A2	74
F1	74
B1	75
G2	77
E2	79
G1	81

enhance species diversity at Exeter, including: Field Scabious, Foxgloves, Evening Primrose and Goats beard. In addition, Chris has given up his own time to provide guided tours of the grounds to visitors, in order to raise awareness of the business' commitment to ensuring sustainable use of the environment, as well as allow others to enjoy the unique surroundings that we benefit from daily. Thanks to the dedicated work of the Biodiversity Working Group, the Met Office has been awarded the Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark, in recognition of the continual improvements that are being made to land management onsite.

Furthermore, Chris has donated materials for, and negotiated the free construction of, 'bee hotels' to encourage solitary bees to flourish onsite. This is in addition to two hives owned and managed by a local bee keeper, with whom Chris has co-ordinated an annual honey sale for Met Office staff, a scheme which not only raises awareness of the importance of bees to maintaining biodiversity, but also encourages employees to 'think local', through sustainable and ethical food choices.

As a representative of the Environment Working Group, Chris attends quarterly meetings to gather ideas for 'quick win' solutions to reducing employee impact on the environment. In his capacity as Facilities Manager, Chris collates ideas from across the full range of departments, for low cost

schemes that can be easily integrated into the daily life of staff.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

In order to encourage sustainable forms of commuting, Chris has devoted a significant amount of time and resources to meeting the needs of the staff population who cycle to work. A major achievement of his has been setting up a pool bike scheme, whereby 11 bikes are available for free hire, allowing staff to cycle to local meetings, or into the city centre during breaks. This resource has been well-received by staff who cycle socially, as well as visiting scientists staying in accommodation nearby.

Also popular with staff are the 'Dr Bike' sessions organised and promoted by Chris. These operate 8 times a year, are advertised on the staff intranet and across the site by Chris, and give employees the opportunity to have a free bicycle MOT whilst at work. At last count, 171 staff bikes were parked in the three onsite bike sheds – a testament to Chris's ongoing efforts to make cycling to work an appealing option.

TOUGH CHOICES

Despite his infectious optimism and enthusiasm, having such high standards for sustainability has occasionally presented Chris with difficult decisions. Having achieved an impressive 98% local recycling of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), with the remaining 2%

sold on for reuse further afield, it was a huge set-back for Chris when the recycling contractors relocated to Dumfries. Their move jeopardized the low carbon aspect of our WEEE removal, and so to prioritise commitments to carbon reduction, Chris made the decision to retender to the WEEE waste contract.

RECOGNITION AND IMPACT

In recognition of the improvements to recycling and financial savings made by Chris, he was presented with the Met Office Award for Excellence - Sustainability category, in October 2013. Even more valuable however, has been the feedback Chris has received from staff, who state that the positive behaviours implemented at work, have been carried home and inspired them to help their friends and family to improve their domestic waste disposal.

Having already worked in partnership with Exeter University to advise on efficient methods of recycling, Chris continues to strive to make the Met Office an example of innovative waste management, and hopes to work with more local businesses in the future; advocating and supporting the implementation of such schemes.

What was once considered an ambitious target of 80% of waste recycled, has been converted to a 'Business as Usual' model for the Met Office and a figure which is constantly being improved upon. As of July 2014, the 2014/15 financial year looks set to hit 85% at source recycling; an extraordinary feat, pioneered by Chris himself.