

Convenience Waste - Tackling Waste Prevention – An integrated Retailer-Consumer Approach, Service Station Convenience Store

Lead Authority

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Programme Summary

Changes in work and lifestyle expectations in recent years has led to the emergence of the 'Convenience Consumer' who is identified as cash-rich, time poor. This has resulted in a dramatic rise in the use of service station convenience stores for the purchase of 'on-the-go' fast food comprising of snacks, sandwiches, beverages etc. as well as newspapers, magazines and 'top up' grocery items. All sectors of the community from teenagers at lunch, to workers buying breakfast rolls to mothers collecting and delivering children to school and other activities use these outlets as fast food suppliers. The products of their very nature are packaged in disposable materials and attempts at reuse have been minimal with limited success. At present this market is growing with associated shifts in consumer culture. It is at this point that behaviours are becoming embedded in lifestyle habits. The initiative aims to reverse the present trend towards greater quantities of waste materials generated through convenience shopping towards a more sustainable culture.

This initiative proposes to measure the type and quantity of packaging materials generated, the amount of other disposable products purchased such as newspapers and batteries and the amount of 'back door' waste generated by the retailer (especially biodegradable waste); identify the critical triggers for purchasing and the associated behavioural patterns of the convenience lifestyle and initiate new procedures and practices for the retailer and consumer.

The process will follow the framework used by the U.K.National Resource and Waste Forum: Phase 1 Information gathering, Phase 2 – work development, procurement and Phase 3 programme delivery and evaluation.

The aim is to reduce the waste generated and increase resource efficiency through the use of less materials, reusable containers and packaging that has a better eco-design. This will be done through comprehensive audits of inputs and outputs at the retailer level and of consumer acquired wastes; through analysis of consumer behaviour and patterns and examining the relationship between consumer and retailer and through the testing and monitoring of alternative packaging and marketing tools.

The initiative will be conducted by Wicklow County Council in partnership with the Statoil Service Station on the Dublin Road in Bray in consultation with the local community, green schools, and other convenience outlets. This Statoil Station is the fifth busiest in the country with a daily customer footfall of approximately 2000. About 600 food items are sold daily, 120 hot drinks, 400 soft drink PET bottles, 600 packets of cigarettes, 900 units of sweets and small snacks and 600 newspapers/magazines. They offer reduced cost incentives for coffee/tea purchasing for refilled customer owned containers and have already reduced food packaging impact through increased use of biodegradable/renewable materials such as paper and wood. The store is keen to reduce its own waste which is 9 by 1100 litre wheelie bins of mixed cardboard and biodegradable waste per week and to encourage best practice among its customers. The service station has detailed daily recording of purchases by type and quantity, which will assist surveying and auditing. They also work within a corporate policy of 'lean retailing' including less waste through avoiding over purchasing and resource efficiency and conservation. The model produced in this trial can be further rolled out to the other four Statoil service Stations in Wicklow and twelve in the rest of the region.

Outcomes

The proposal would develop a working case study that would be replicable in any part of Ireland at convenience store locations.

1. Improved design of in store generated packaging – a move from disposable to materials with less environmental impact or reusable or compostable
2. Reduced quantities of 'purchased' waste by customers
3. Reduced waste generated at the back door
4. More effective handling of residual backdoor waste such as recycling and composting
5. Raised public awareness of 'prevention' rather than recycling
6. Improved purchasing practices for all products towards less waste