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Recycling City Sheffield
May 1989

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Learning From Sheffield's Story as the First 'Recycling City'

Dr Henry Irving, Leeds Beckett University



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
& SOCIAL SCIENCES

Sheffield to become Britain's pioneer for recycling cities

By Gareth Hugh Davies

In 1989, environmentalists will see one of their most cherished articles of faith put into practical effect when Sheffield becomes Britain's first demonstration recycling city.

During the three-year pilot project, local people will be encouraged to visit a network of collection sites to dispose of their rubbish in order to save much more — the environment organization Friends of the Earth estimates that at least half of what the average household throws away can be rendered down and used again.

The disposal sites will be located in the convenient places where people already expect to find bottle banks — in housing estates and shopping centres — but will contain a range of receptacles into which people will be invited to place their refuse.

There will be newspaper 'igloos' — self-closing metal bins — and containers for all types of tin cans, plastics and textiles. The British Soft Drinks Association is drawing up plans for a container to receive the large plastic drinks bottles, one of the most intrusive and persistent pieces of litter. The disposal sites will also receive bulkier items such as furniture.

The project, which will be overseen by a recycling co-ordinator appointed by Sheffield City Council, will be a

working demonstration to visiting members of other local authorities, voluntary groups and industry. Progress will be monitored during the life of the experiment by an independent assessor.

The organizers hope that the project will then be replicated in other cities. The first imitator is likely to be Cardiff, about six months after the Sheffield scheme begins officially in May.

The inspiration for a city-wide experiment in recycling came from Friends of the Earth, which discovered that after promoting it for years to largely indifferent decision makers, it was an idea whose time had come. Early this year FoE and UK 2000 convened a working party including representatives from central and local government and industry and sent out invitations to 13 city councils mainly in the north to submit tenders.


"We avoided the mueli belt cities in the South of England like Oxford and Cambridge because people would expect this sort of thing to work there", said Trewin Restorick, re-cycling co-ordinator for UK 2000, the government-supported environment improvement alliance. Sheffield was chosen because it had little experience of practical recycling which might predispose it to success

and undermine the experiment.

"This is the first serious attempt to draw together local and central government, the voluntary sector and industry in an attempt to test the most sensible option for dealing with our waste, by recycling as much as possible", Mr Restorick said. "It is no longer a harebrained environmentalist's dream. We are running out of the land-fill sites where we currently dispose of 90pc of our rubbish. The other main alternative, incineration, is not widely used and its future will be in doubt when new EEC pollution regulations are in place."

Mr Restorick said that in the past, recycling groups had collected things without ensuring there was a market for them. This time, the reclamation industry has committed its support. FoE has negotiated national deals with paper merchants to guarantee a price for paper and magazines.

The entire scheme will cost about £250,000. The organizers are looking for a private sponsor to help to publicize the scheme nationally and educate local schoolchildren, as well as to set up private agencies to collect items from the houses of old people who are unable to reach the recycling sites, and offices which currently throw away huge amounts of paper.



LOCAL STUDIES
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RECYCLING CITY

A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE


"Friends of the Earth has been working on recycling and resources issues for many years. Never before have the opportunities to promote recycling been as great as they are today. We are moving into an era of massively increased environmental awareness, not just among the general public, but in government and industry as well."
(Jonathon Porritt, Director of Friends of the Earth)

the idea behind recycling city

the partnership

funding

the sheffield model



There has never been a national initiative to promote recycling through practical demonstration. A variety of recycling schemes such as those in Leeds, Birmingham and the London Borough of Richmond have been in existence for a number of years, yet they have not been widely publicised or replicated.

Following a proposal by Friends of the Earth's UK 2000 Projects Unit, representatives from the reclamation and packaging industries, central and local government and the voluntary sector came together to form a National Working Party. Each sector made a formal commitment to developing four cities as models of good recycling practice and agreed to take on specific responsibilities. This working partnership is one of the unique achievements of "Recycling City" and has enabled many obstacles to be overcome.

As a pilot project, Recycling City required a high level of start-up funding, which was shared between the organisations involved and the sponsor, British Telecom, whose decision to support the project was vital to its development. British Telecom are providing £225,000 over three years, which is being used to co-ordinate the project, produce education and promotion materials and facilitate the establishment of new and innovative community recycling ventures.

In May 1989 Sheffield was launched as the first "Recycling City". The first stage of the project was to saturate the city with fixed collection points (banks):

- Sites were allocated by the Local Authority. Containers were provided by the reclamation industries who continue to service them. Materials collected are paper, glass, steel and aluminium and for the first time in the UK, plastics.
- The voluntary sector formed an affiliation, SCRAP (Sheffield Community Recycling Action Programme) to promote the scheme and recycling issues within the City, and distribute income generated by banks.
- An A-Z guide to recycling facilities has been produced by the SCRAP Development Workers.

The Times, 27 December 1988, p. 13

UK 2000, 'Recycling City: A Partnership for the Future' (c.1989)



Launch of 'Save-a-can' © Picture Sheffield



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Sheffield from Manor Lane © JR James Archive



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SHEFFIELD RECYCLING CITY

THE FIRST TWO YEARS

Report for the Department of Trade & Industry, Department of the Environment, the Industry Council for Packaging & the Environment (INCPEN) and Friends of the Earth

October 1991

What were the results?

- Over 50% of Sheffield residents recognised the scheme
- Overall recycling rate of 6-15%
- Some evidence of confusion and contamination, esp. at bring sites
- Belief that kerbside schemes were required to increase UK recycling above c. 10%

MISCELLANEOUS
3863 M
PAPERS

Please follow these simple steps:

WE COLLECT:

- Newspapers and magazines (but not other types of paper)
- Glass bottles and jars
- Plastic bottles, bags, wrappings and containers (except margarine tubs)
- Food and drinks cans
- Household batteries (but not car batteries)

PLEASE HELP US BY

- Rinsing bottles, containers, jars and cans
- Flattening your cans (taking care with the sharp edges)
- Taking tops off bottles and jars
- Tying your newspapers into bundles (or putting them in bags) and not mixing them up with other items
- Putting out only the materials on this list.

PLEASE PUT YOUR BOX OUT

- as close to the pavement as possible
- only when it is full
- by 8.00 am on collection day


IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG, PLEASE

- call Sheffield 562415
- put your box out the following week if it hasn't been collected. We may not be able to collect in bad weather.

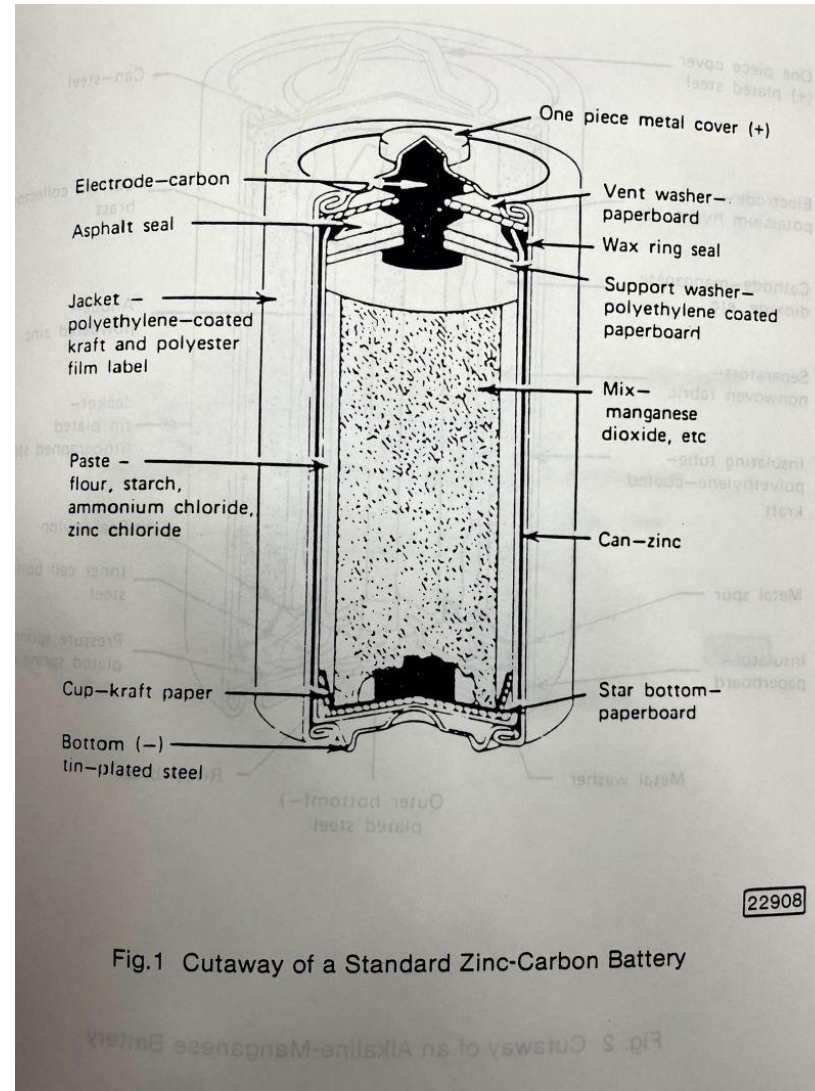
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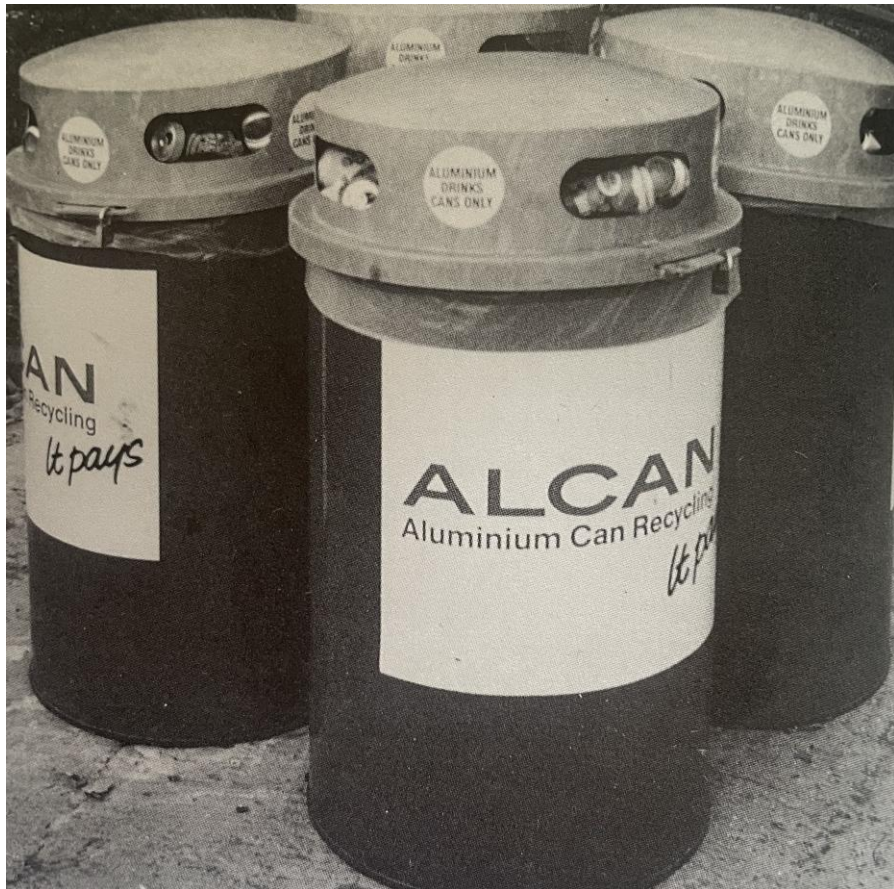
A Ikuwe, 'Aspects on Small Post-Consumer Battery
Recycling' (1991)

What does this mean for 2026?



1. Local authorities are key, but have never worked alone
2. Success depends on stakeholders working in the same direction
3. We have come a long way ... but still face some of the same challenges

Thank You!



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