



## Frequently Asked Questions

Why don't we take all types of glass?

We only take what is known as 'container glass' - which means bottles and jars. The other sorts (which we don't take) are mainly flat glass and pyrex. Both flat glass and pyrex need to be much stronger than bottle glass (per millimetre of thickness). Because of this extra strength, the furnace that melts it needs to be running at a higher temperature than it would for containers. So, these other sorts of glass can't be mixed with bottle glass.

Why don't we take all types of plastic?

The short answer is that we haven't got room in our lorries. There are 13 different types of plastic in common use in the UK and most of them are recyclable. However, even though an increasing number of manufacturers now use old plastic instead of oil as their raw material, each manufacturer will only want the type of plastic which is most suitable for the product they manufacture. At the moment we collect two types - plastic milk bottles (HDPE) and carrier bags (LDPE). If we added general plastic it would be a nightmare to separate out each type to make it saleable. If we try to sell mixed plastics we would probably have to pay a merchant to ship it to China (where labour is cheap) for it to be re-sorted ready for remanufacture. If we chose to add one extra type it would probably be clear plastic bottles (PET) because they're easily recognisable for sorting and there's a lot of them out there in the waste stream. The only thing that's stopping us is the problem of how to fit them into the lorry. We could expect to pick up 3 cages of clear bottles to every 2 cages of milk bottles so the impact would be enormous.

Where does all the material go to be recycled?

We sell the material to a variety of places. Some goes to a merchant who resells it to a re-processor whilst we sell other materials directly to the re-processors.

Paper – we sell this directly to a paper mill in Aylesford, Kent. It is re-processed into new newspaper.

Glass – We sell to a company called Recresco. Unfortunately they only re-process clear glass in this country so our 'mixed colours' goes off to Spain where it's made into more greenish coloured bottles.

Aluminium cans and foil – This goes to Warrington where it's re-processed into more cans.

Steel cans – They go to Corus Steel in South Wales where they're re-manufactured into more steel products.

Plastic bottles – we sell them to a firm in the midlands. They use as many as they've got a need for in their production of new plastic items, such as water butts, composters, garden seats and plastic road bollards. The remainder is sent to China where it is further sorted and then re-manufactured into new plastic products.

Plastic bags – this is too contaminated to be used without re-sorting so it is all exported to China.

Tetrapaks – These go to Sweden , although Tetrapak Ltd is currently negotiating with a manufacturer in the South East of England and it is planned that they will extract the paper fibre (which is very high quality) to produce paper carrier bags (for takeaways etc)

Dry cell batteries – they are sorted into different types of batteries then the metals are removed for recycling. After that the heavy metals (nikel, zinc cadmium etc) are recovered for re-use.

Textiles, shoes and handbags – the best stuff gets exported to developing countries. However, if it's not good enough for re-use then it gets broken down and used as engineer's wipes or insulation.

Why don't we take other types of metal?

Any organisation which handles waste has to be licensed by the Environment Agency. There are various types of licence available. Anyone handling metal has to have a full scrap dealer licence to allow them to handle scrap cars with all the pollution issues around oil, petrol, battery acid etc. However, if the only metal you're handling is food and drink cans you are exempt from having to get the full licence and can get a much simpler version. This is the type of licence we've got.

We recommend that scrap metal from your household is taken to Ashley or Punchbowl Recycling centre to be recycled.

Why don't we collect the same materials as other councils?

Recycling is a relatively new activity and is still developing. Different collection schemes are still experimenting with different materials and different collection techniques so there is still very little standardisation from one area to the next. This will undoubtedly come with time.

Why don't we collect at the same time of day each fortnight?

The public often find it quite inconvenient that our collection times vary and I think that eventually we're going to have to standardise this. The way we will do this is to decide on a starting point for each route and do it in the same direction each time. This will need to be done in close consultation with the drivers and direction arrows marked on the map so that different drivers will know.

What happened to Mid Devon Community Recycling?

The company experienced financial problems as a result of the recession, when the value of certain scrap materials dropped and, crucially, householders cut back on their spending so there was less material to recycle. In the end the best solution was for the Council to run the service in-house, employing staff that used to work for Mid Devon Community Recycling. This transfer took place in February 2010 with no disruption to the service provided to householders. We have made some improvements, providing new workwear to the collection crews and

What if my bin hasn't been emptied?

If you think we have missed your collection of recycling, organic waste or general refuse, you can report it on Mid Devon District Council's web site:

<http://www.middevon.gov.uk/eworks/missedcollection/missedcollectionreport.asp>

When are we going to start collecting every week instead of fortnightly?

We would very much like to make our collections weekly - we know it will capture more material for recycling as well as creating more jobs. However, at the moment we just can't afford such an expensive improvement to the service but going weekly is in our business plan.

Why don't we take wet clothing?

Wet clothing goes mouldy and is no good for re-use or recycling. If we mix wet clothing with the rest of our stock the mould will spread and the quality and value of our product will drop.

How do we get a new recycling box?

You can ask our collection crews for a box and if they've got a spare one on board they will supply it there and then. You can also request a new by contacting the District Council: tel 01884 255255 or e-mail [customerservices@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@middevon.gov.uk)

How many Boxes can each house have?

Up to 4 boxes per house.

Why do you need it all separated?

All the recyclables we pick up are a raw material for a manufacturer somewhere and the income we get from selling the materials to that manufacturer substantially reduces the cost of the service to council tax payers. A manufacturer who makes recycled paper, obviously doesn't want to buy glass or cans so if we are to have a good market we obviously have to separate it all out. If we were to collect the materials mixed and sort them out ourselves – like they do in Exeter – it would be expensive and it would never produce as high a quality product. So it all boils down to cost – if we collected it all mixed up, council tax would have to rise.

Why didn't you take my black bag full of recycling?

Our standard answer on this is, "I'm sorry, we assumed the bag contained refuse". We ask the public not to use black bags for their recycling. However, if they have no other way of putting it out to us then they need to put a very clear, large sign on it saying 'Recycling'.

What days of the week are my waste and recycling collected?

Every year we post a collection day calendar to all households in Mid Devon. If you need a replacement calendar, or just want to ask for your next collection day, please telephone Mid Devon District Council on 01884 255255 or e-mail [customerservices@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@middevon.gov.uk).

### **Why hasn't my box or bin been returned?**

Occasionally a recycling box or a brown bin can be mistakenly left on the lorry, returned to the wrong house, or stolen. Please contact [customerservices@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@middevon.gov.uk) or telephone 01884 255255 if this happens. A replacement box or bin will be delivered within the following two weeks.

### **Can you recycle junk mail?**

Yes. White paper and catalogues can go in the black box for recycling. Envelopes are a low-quality types of paper and should go in the brown bin for composting. It helps if you can remove the plastic windows. Better still, avoid junk mail by writing to the Mailing Preference Service, Freepost 22, London, W1E 7EZ asking them to remove you from the mailing lists. This is a free service.

### **Do I have to take the labels off tins and jars?**

Labels do not have to be taken off as they get removed in the recycling process. However, it really helps us if you give bottles, jars and tins a rinse before putting them in the recycling box.

### **Can I have a lid for my box?**

Yes - lids are provided free of charge on request. Please contact Customer First on [customerservices@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@middevon.gov.uk) or 01884 255255.

### **I have too much to fit in my box; what should I do?**

Recyclables can be put out in extra bags or alongside your recycling boxes. The plastic bags will be recycled as well. However, we are happy to give an extra box if this makes it easier for you to recycle. Please contact Customer First on [customerservices@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@middevon.gov.uk) or 01884 255255.

### **Can I put animal waste in the brown bin?**

Bedding and droppings from vegetarian animals like rabbits can go in the brown bin for composting. However, cat and dog waste should be put out with your general refuse.

### **Can I have another brown bin for extra garden waste?**

No - it is not the Council's policy to collect unlimited amounts of garden waste. The brown wheeled bin is intended to contain food, cardboard and a reasonable quantity of garden waste. If you have more garden waste than you can fit in the brown bin, there are some other options:

- Compost your waste at home, using a garden composting bin
- Take the waste to one of Devon County Council's recycling centres. These are open 7 days a week and provide a separate skip for compostable garden waste.
- For a one-off collection of a large amount of garden waste, please contact Customer First on 01884 255255 and ask about *bulky waste collections*.
- Some villages in Mid Devon have their own community composting groups. Please visit [www.dcrn.org](http://www.dcrn.org) for a list of these.