

Public Attitudes to Civic Amenity Sites and Waste

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Summary

The role of civic amenity sites is rapidly changing. Whereas once they were simply places where people could dump their household waste, they are now playing an essential role in the UK's recycling effort. This is emphasised by Defra in 2005 stating that of the household waste recycled in the UK, 58% was from these sites.

As yet, little research has been done on these sites in the UK, despite their importance concerning the amount of recyclate collected. The aim of this research was therefore to investigate who was using these sites, how, and for what purpose. It was also to explore the attitudes and awareness of respondents concerning recycling and civic amenity sites. In order to achieve this a questionnaire took place at three of Swansea's five civic amenity sites; these were at Clyne, Penlan and Tir John. All three sites differed in location, general characteristics and the waste materials they took for recycling.

The general characteristics of site users were found to be similar across all three sites. There were a higher percentage of men using the sites with the modal age category being 50-59. Most respondents were in full time employment or retired and, as expected, the majority of users travelled there by car.

It was found that locality was the key reason for people choosing to use a particular site with the exception of Tir John, which was the only site in Swansea that accepted household rubble. As a result, 41% of respondents using Tir John travelled for over 10 minutes to reach the site, compared to 14% at Clyne and 5.9% Penlan.

Regarding the materials taken to the three sites, general and garden waste (and rubble at Tir John) were brought by the highest number of users. Clyne had the highest percentage of people taking materials that were recycled such as card, garden waste and wood. However, between 19 – 29% of respondents were recorded taking household rubbish to the three sites and reasons given for this ranged from 'convenience' to 'missing the collection'. Only a small percentage (5% at Clyne, 9% at Penlan and 2% at Tir John) of those people taking household rubbish to the sites actually stated that they had done so due to 'unreliability' with the collection itself. When respondents at Tir John were questioned as to the content of their household rubbish it was found that half of the respondents had included materials that could have been recycled onsite.

The majority of respondents were found to be generally satisfied or very satisfied with all aspects of the civic amenity sites, which included the quality of signage onsite, staff and access. There was also the desire to be able to recycle plastics at both Penlan and Tir John.

Less than 2% of respondents that used civic amenity sites had found out about them through some form of media publicity, indicating that the opportunity is there for the

local authority to increase usage if they wish to. The waste materials that respondents were least aware could be recycled at the sites also tended to be the most harmful to the environment once in landfill, such as batteries and oil.