

# recycling on the go

## a youth perspective

May 2011



## Foreword

Today's youth are by far the largest consumers of beverage cans, many of which are drunk away from the home. The question of how to increase "on the go" recycling rates for the 16-24 year old demographic has often been aired, but how many times have they themselves been asked to offer recommendations? So we decided to remedy this and sponsor a research report challenging young people to look at the issues and create their own solutions.

I have to say it has been a pleasure working with such an enthusiastic and constructive group. Their attitudes and views are at the same time both challenging and balanced. It is also important to note that the report itself reflects the research and views of the authors themselves rather than those of the Can Makers.

The Can Makers are supportive of efforts to increase the volume of metals coming back into the recycling loop from the waste stream. Each drinks can recycled displaces its own weight in raw materials and saves up to 95% of the energy needed to produce another can. The industry's focus on recycling has resulted in a threefold improvement over the past decade to a point now where the rate in the UK is approaching 60%. Reflecting our commitment to improve this still further, the industry sponsors a range of projects and initiatives including Every Can Counts and metal matters. We hope this report contributes to increasing "on the go" rates in the future. The Can Makers are considering how to take forward the issues raised in the report and will be discussing the findings with interested parties.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the authors for their time and commitment to this project. I hope you find this report both interesting and insightful reading.

**Geoff Courtney**

Chairman

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## About the Can Makers

Members of the Can Makers work together specifically to promote the benefits of the drinks can and aid communications between the industry and its customers: the brewers and soft drinks manufacturers and the retailers, as well as the packaging industry, the media and consumers.

The Can Makers was the first organisation in Europe formed to promote drinks cans. It is now part of a European network set up under the auspices of Beverage Can Makers Europe (BCME), which includes similar organisations in France, Germany and Spain.

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## Executive summary

This report aims to provide a practical solution or solutions to the challenge of increasing recycling rates of people whilst “on the go”. Through an analysis of the messages, branding and infrastructure currently in place, as well as consultation with a cross section of the youth demographic we have been able to identify several practical and achievable ways to increase rates of “on the go” recycling.

We have examined the culture behind recycling in the UK in terms of what the key messages should be as well as how and where they should be applied. Traditional media remains a strong method of communication to consumers. Our own research suggests that social media may not be the most appropriate platform for messaging, though we recognise that this may be subject to change in future as it is an emerging medium.

Looking to the future, we have identified several long term goals and strategies to embed a culture of recycling into the public. Suggestions include an increased level of education surrounding the issues of recycling and sustainability, whilst encouraging and incentivising young people to recycle more (particularly “on the go”) through social enterprise projects.

We discovered that despite a willingness to recycle there is a knowledge barrier in terms of what can be recycled and where. This report has found that this problem can be addressed in the immediate future through relevant campaigns that engage with young people effectively. Standardisation of recycling branding that is used both on packaging, and at the point of disposal, will reduce confusion and create a simple message of what can be recycled.

Finally, for any benefits to arise from a change in consumer behaviour, it is fundamental that there is an increase in the availability and accessibility of the physical recycling network; ultimately, if the infrastructure does not exist, then people cannot, and will not, recycle “on the go”.

Put simply, more bins!

## 1. Introduction

This report has been commissioned by the trade body the Can Makers. Members are the manufacturers Ball Packaging Europe, Crown Bevcan UK and Rexam Beverage Can and their raw materials suppliers. These leading manufacturers are concerned with the environmental impact of drinks can packaging, as well as other forms of mass produced packaging.

The Can Makers have collaborated with onechocolate communications to come up with a way of connecting with a young age demographic and delivering a message to encourage recycling whilst “on the go”.

Over a course of 3 months, five students from across the UK have worked with the Can Makers and onechocolate to identify the issues and solutions to the amount of packaging waste produced in the UK, and have created this report in the hope of bringing forth fresh ideas to get people to recycle more.

The students are:

**Leonie Harrison Byrne**  
**City University London**

Leonie has completed the Foundation Degree; Live Music Event Management and Production and is now undertaking the BA Creative Industries Degree. Leonie has a big interest in the environmental sustainability of live music events which is now a major concern across the industry.



**Rich Gorman**  
**Bangor University**

Rich is a 2010 graduate in BSC Sustainable Development and is currently working at Bangor University Students' Union as Vice-President for Societies & Sustainability.



**Adam Cooley**  
**Oxford Brookes University**

Adam is currently studying for his final year of an Environmental Sciences degree. He is a former Environmental Officer for the Students' Union.



**Paul Gold**  
**Leeds University**

Paul has completed a history degree and is now the Community Officer for the Student's Union whilst undertaking a sabbatical.



**Ben Middleton**  
**Plymouth University**

Ben is in his third year, studying for a Geography BA. Ben is Environment and Ethics Chair for Plymouth Students Union Parliament as well as running a society aimed at increasing awareness of environmental issues.



## Report aims and objectives

The project team has been tasked with identifying the possibilities for encouraging young people to recycle “on the go”. Increasingly fast paced lives have led to an explosion in consumption of food and drink whilst “on the go” i.e. on transport or whilst walking. For the purposes of this report, recycling “on the go” has been interpreted as:

*‘Disposal of waste in recycling facilities at any point on public transit routes, either on public thoroughfares in urban areas or on public transport.’*

Recycling is often seen as one of the main measures of how sustainable a town or city is, with strict recycling targets being enforced from central government and through councils. As more and more waste is produced, the availability of natural resources (particularly plastics made from oil) is in danger and space for land fill is becoming increasingly scarce. Furthermore, with the problems of climate change becoming ever more apparent, the extremely energy intensive primary production of materials is being addressed.

Increasing recycling rates is therefore a serious issue that has implications beyond the creation of waste itself. Moreover, recycling is a real problem that requires real, practical solutions. As such this report hopes to give practical ideas for increasing recycling, particularly amongst 16-24 year olds.

### Aim:

- To provide a practical solution or solutions to the challenge of increasing recycling rates of people whilst “on the go”.

### Objectives:

- Approach the key messages and branding currently used in promotion of recycling and assess its effectiveness.
- Approach the existing availability of recycling facilities and the possibility for a standardised recycling network over the UK.
- Identify practical additions to the current recycling infrastructure that will enable greater use of recycling facilities.
- Make suggestions for long term solutions to increasing recycling.

In order to complete these objectives, recycling literature and previous research has been used in conjunction with our own, independent research survey carried out on the student bodies over the five institutions shown in the introduction and covering a sample of 100 students.

## 2. Branding and messaging

For any improvements in recycling infrastructure and messaging to be truly effective over the UK, they must be accompanied by a well-considered publicity campaign to promote and encourage increased “on the go” recycling amongst young consumers. Three key messages must be considered:

What should the message be?

How should this message be delivered?

Where should this message be delivered?

### What should the message be?

In the past, the Can Makers has found it difficult to select the right message to use in communicating the benefits and importance of recycling beverage containers. The right message is crucial if consumers are to become more aware and begin engaging in sustainable behaviour.

The Ipera study commissioned by the Can Makers on message development reveals a number of key attributes that help make a message compelling:

Messages should not

- ✗ Make vague and unsupported statements
- ✗ Focus on benefits the manufacturer reaps
- ✗ Replicate other product’s messages
- ✗ Evoke anxiety or guilt about recycling
- ✗ Refer to the ill-defined concept of sustainability

Messages should

- Make specific and evidenced statements
- Demonstrate that recycling works
- Show recycling produces no loss in quality over and over again
- Have personality or humour

Arguably, the competitive benchmark is PepsiCo’s ‘Have we met before’ campaign in the United States (see figure 1). This message satisfies the above ‘shoulds’ and avoids the pitfalls of the ‘should not’s’.

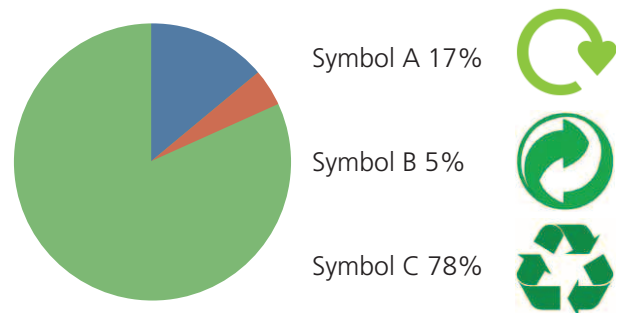
**Fig. 1:** Pepsi’s ‘Have we met before’ campaign has personality and makes specific statements.

Source: Steeman (2009).



**Fig 2:** Student Survey Results – Most recognisable symbol

### Which recycling is most recognisable to you?



Messages should utilise established and widely understood recycling devices. Whilst Recycling Now’s Recycling Mark / On Packaging Recycling Label (OPRL), Symbol A, does not appear to be the most recognisable to our test group, this may simply be due to it being a newer symbol than the older recycling symbol (Symbol C). Furthermore, the OPRL label is the new official recycling symbol in Britain and figure 3 is the symbol placed on most packaging. By using the same symbol as recycling branding, as that on packaging and at the point of disposal, there is a clear linear relationship between the point of sale and the point of consumption.

**Fig. 3:** Recycle Now’s Recycle Mark has established itself as the motif of recycling in the UK.

Source: WRAP (2011).



Campaigns should avoid using individualised or modified forms of standard recycling motifs, as these contribute to the growing plethora of logos used and may confuse consumers (see figure 4).



**Fig. 4:** Mixed messages on product packaging.  
*Image sources: All author. © Coca Cola Enterprises, © Radox.*



The bottle symbol on this beverage can resembles a Möbius loop and as such

evokes recycling connotations, but the message besides the device has no relevance to any recycling message.



This recycling message occupies a relatively significant proportion of the back of this Radox Clean and Pamper label, but the Green Dot device is improperly presented as an equivalent recycling logo – which Valpak explicitly recommend against (Valpak, 2009).



This Schweppes beverage can displays Recycle Now's Recycle Mark, but the Tidy

Man logo may contradict the recycling message by suggesting the beverage container is 'rubbish', rather than a reusable and finite resource.

The Tidy Man logo used by the Keep Britain Tidy organisation advertises packaging as waste rather than a valuable resource. The authors recommend that a new Tidy Man logo is developed which brings together the Keep Britain Tidy message and the recycling "on the go" message. An alternative to the traditional Tidy Man is presented in figure 5 and a modification to the new Love Where You Live logo is presented in figure 6.

**Fig. 5:** The traditional Tidy Man (left) is an iconic brand with decades of publicity. The new Recycle Man builds on this legacy and incorporates the Recycle Mark.  
*Image sources: Left: Keep Britain Tidy ©, Right: A. D. Cooley.*



**Fig. 6:** Keep Britain Tidy's upcoming 'Love Where You Live' campaign is an opportunity to bring together the two important messages of recycling and not littering. The author presents an adapted form of this device which ties together the two messages.  
*Image sources: Left: Keep Britain Tidy ©, Right: A. D. Cooley.*



As called for elsewhere in this report, a campaign and the devices used need to be standardized. Research has demonstrated that standardisation provides the largest benefit to consumers (see Teisl and Roe, 2005). Thus, the optimum compelling message should satisfy the criteria laid out above, and should be delivered according to the following recommendations.

### How should this message be delivered?

#### Messaging through social activities

For "on the go" recycling to effectively target the 16-24 year old demographic, it is important to look at the workplace, schools and universities as centres of social activities and activities that may provide platforms for recycling messaging.

A major area of focus on people's social activities is in the area of physical fitness. The Office of National Statistics suggest that 63% of 16-24 year olds and 63% of 25-34 year olds participate in sport and exercise (Seddon, 2010), whilst the Taking Part Survey (DCMS 2010) suggests that participation is as high as 70% of 16-24 year olds.

#### Football, team sports and the Olympics:

The UK is a country of football players, 'Over 8 million adults play football regularly or occasionally' (Mintel, 2009). Furthermore, football is not only a popular team sport; it is also the UK's most watched sport. There are games all over the country with some large stadiums holding crowds in excess of 40,000 people. This creates an extremely condensed area of population, well placed as consumers of advertising regarding recycling. The same situation will be

present during the 2012 Olympics in London.

Moreover, at major football games, all areas where people will be congregating should have the infrastructure put in place for people to recycle. Parks where people are playing any kind of team sports should also have good recycling facilities, as should the Olympics. With millions of people set to converge on London in 2012, and the majority of waste being disposed of “on the go” as people travel to and from stadiums, the need for recycling infrastructure is extremely important.

#### **Parks:**

Leading on from team sports, during the summer months the UK is famous for leisure activities in public parks, particularly in large cities. During the summer months recycling infrastructure should be particularly prominent in parks as should recycling messaging. The high density of population in parks during peak times makes it a great place for messaging.

Both parks and sports stadiums require far better infrastructure but because they are home to such a high population density, recycling messaging is far more cost effective in these spaces than in other, less densely populated areas.

### **Messaging through media**

#### **Traditional media:**

Traditional media, including TV, is still the primary way of accessing the public. According to the Office of National Statistics, watching TV is the ‘most common pastime’ (DCMS 2010). Some attempt has been made through advertising by groups such as Keep Britain Tidy to make use of TV as a platform for spreading the recycling message. However, research suggests that people of this age do not want to be told what to do. Instead, they want to be informed and educated in order for them to make the decision about what they choose to do themselves.

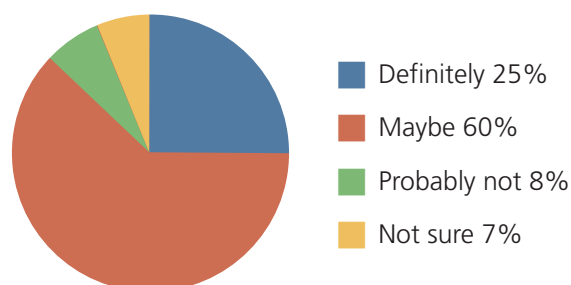
Mintel (2010) found that just under half of 3000 people surveyed (16 years or older) watch documentary type of programmes on TV at least once a week; this is close in comparison to movies and comedy, with news and current affairs the most watched. Similar results were found by Hughes (eds.

2010). This strongly suggests that perhaps the best way of getting a message through to the public would be through documentary type programmes, explaining to the consumer about the necessity of recycling.

Documentary type programmes would also be extremely effective in conveying the recycling process to consumers. Our research suggests that students are not convinced of the fact that recycled materials go into new products (fig 7). If consumers were convinced that by recycling, they are personally reducing the amount of primary materials being used to create packaging, and thereby are having a significantly positive effect on the environment, they may be more likely to make the extra effort to recycle. The optimum message must be delivered in a manner that makes a strong psychological connection between positive environmental values and recycling “on the go”.

**Fig 7:** Student survey results – Recycling confidence

#### **Do you believe the waste you recycle actually goes into new products?**



#### **Social media:**

New / Social media is embedded in the everyday life of the age demographic approached in this report, 60% of 16-24 year olds use social media (E-Society 2010) and social networking is the second most frequent activity by internet and mobile phone users (Mintel 2010).

Currently Facebook holds the largest market share with 54% of internet users surveyed using Facebook, nearly three times more penetration than the other social networking sites (Mintel, 2010). Furthermore, ‘The mobile internet has become synonymous with Facebook access for the 16-24 age groups. This reflects the wide-reaching communication capability

that Facebook provides and its high suitability to the mobile communication needs of the 16-24-year-old' (Mintel, 2010).

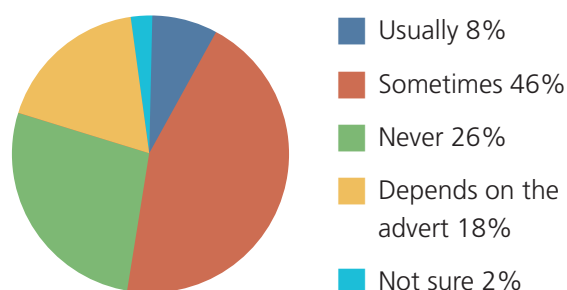
With the growth in use of smartphones, social media can increasingly be used "on the go" thus making it a prime platform for messaging regarding recycling. Advertisements could be used on social network home pages to promote recycling, or to advertise other websites that promote recycling themselves. If someone happens to see one of these messages or adverts whilst on a social media site before leaving the office for lunch for example, or whilst on public transport, recycling messaging would be fresher in their minds, hopefully reminding them to recycle.

However, whereas social media is seen by its users as a social rather than commercial tool there may be resistance to messages given on a social platform. These groups can also appear contrived and insincere; and can sometimes represent poor attempts to 'get down' with the young generation. These groups will only attract people who are already interested in the issue and have independently sought out or joined such a group; the significant proportion of society that is evidently not interested in recycling will not discover these groups and hence miss out on the messages.

Our research suggests that students tend to be selective about the information they consume through adverts on social media (fig 8). The effectiveness of social media as a messaging platform is therefore questionable. Messages must be striking in order to attract interest but must not be seen as obtrusive, a difficult line to tread. Corporate groups and fan pages can be viewed with distrust by young users who may question its authenticity.

**Fig 8:** Student survey results – Effectiveness of social media advertising

#### Do you pay attention to adverts on social media platforms?



#### Apps:

Again, following the growth of the smartphone market, phone apps are becoming increasingly popular. Approximately a quarter of phone users currently use smartphones, but this figure is steadily rising as they become cheaper and more widely available. The market for apps is firmly in place and will become more popular in the near future.

Mintel's Digital Trends Winter- UK- 2010 Report showed that not many people currently use apps on their phone but the market is growing, particularly with regard to the possibility of advertising through apps. 'Computer and mobile manufacturer Apple has sought to commercialise the app industry with the launch of iAd, which will allow brands to target mobile users more effectively' (Mintel, 2010).

Mintel (2010) also conclude that, 'one in three 16-24s has downloaded apps on their mobile for free, as have one in five of all consumers... With a third of 16-24s already well versed in this activity, the future of commerce and marketing is almost certainly going to be app-led'.

The possibilities for use of apps in helping to promote recycling "on the go" are many fold. Small programmes could be used to point to the nearest recycling facilities for example, or free games could be developed that involve recycling in some way. Making fun and easy to use apps, that combine a strong entertainment value with a level of education that does not appear to be 'preaching' to the consumer is key.

**Music and online games:**

Interaction should also be attempted through music and online gaming platforms, 'The online music market is a highly potent area for marketing to 16-24s, offering vast opportunities to target, market to and interact with consumers' (Mintel, 2010). Similar to adverts on social media, adverts on online media stores must be unobtrusive, whilst getting across an important and simple message.

There are two areas of gaming that are emerging that use social media as a type of advertisement; these are 'social gaming' and 'advergaming' (Business Insights , 2009). 'Social gaming' is more of a simplistic game played online and as the name suggests is played on social networking sites. 'Advergaming' is a game made for the specific reasons of advertising or in the case of this report for a cause, the advert is made into a game. A similar report showed that level of social gaming is likely to increase in the next few years (Band, 2010).

The concept that games can be used relies on the same principles as that for apps, they must be fun and useful whilst not appearing to 'preach'. Examples of this on iPod platforms have been hugely popular, and a model example is National Geographic's 'Plan It Green' game (see figure 9).

**Fig. 9:** National Geographic's iPod app 'Plan It Green' delivers environmental messages in a fun way. Source: Apple.



**Message delivery**

**Where should this message be delivered?**

The compelling message should be targeted during the purchase-consumption-discard process which, together, represents the drinking of a beverage "on the go". Table 1 illustrates where the messages should be delivered during each phase of the process.

**Table 1:** Message delivery locations during the drinking of a beverage.

Phase	Location	Example
Purchase	Point of sale (shelves, fridges)	
Consumption	Beverage container unit	
Discard	Recycling infrastructure and bins	

Image sources: Top to bottom: Forrest (2009), Steeman (2009), Philtheone (2010).

The impact of each of the locations can be expressed in terms of the time consumers see and engage with the message. This is illustrated by figure 10 below.

**Fig. 10:** The duration of time consumers are strongly exposed to recycling messages.

Phase	Purchase Time	Consumption	Discard
Point of Sale			
Beverage container			
Recycling infrastructure			

Precious marketing resources should focus on delivering the compelling recycling message at each of these phases, the most important of which are on the beverage container unit itself and on or around recycling infrastructure or bins. Each of these phases is considered in turn.

**POS:**

The shelves, fridges, railway trolleys and vending machines in which beverages are sold for “on the go” consumption should feature the recycling message. These should satisfy a number of the ‘shoulds’ described above, for example by advertising that if the consumer recycles the product it will be back ‘here’ in 60 days, or some other relevant and evidenced message.

POS messages can be delivered in innovative and eye-catching ways, such as using videos of the recycling process on LCD screens, or featuring 2D barcodes that can be scanned by iPhones and other mobiles devices linking to a website describing beverage container recycling (see figure 11). Messages delivered during this phase of the purchase-consumption-discard phase can prime young consumers to begin thinking about recycling their beverage container unit once consumed.

**Fig. 11:** Mobile devices and iPhones can be directed to URLs using 2D barcodes displayed at the POS. *Source: Kemick (2010).*



**Beverage container units:**

As demonstrated in figure 10, consumers are exposed to messages contained on the beverage container unit (BCU) for the longest duration. Messages presented on the BCU need to be eye catching in order to encourage recycling behaviour; making the face of the BCU (rather than the information laden reverse) and the top particularly ideal locations for recycling messages. On cans, the ring pull could be modified to contain the Recycle Mark, reinforcing the recycling message from the moment the consumer opens the beverage until the time comes to recycle it (see figure 12). The author recommends that an adapted Tidy Man symbol is featured on BCUs such as those in figures 5 and 6. This reminds consumers that the container they have purchased can be recycled using on-street infrastructure, and not just thrown away as rubbish in a bin.

**Fig. 12:** A Recycle Mark pressed out of the ring pull can help deliver the recycling message throughout the purchase-consumption-discard process. *Image source: renaissancechambara (2009)*



**Recycling infrastructure and bins:**

Recycling messages should feature prominently on recycling infrastructure. The design scheme should strongly coordinate with the rest of the campaign in order to make recycling familiar and readily recognisable (reducing potential barriers to recycling behaviour). Messages delivered here are likely to be the most important, as they are being delivered when and where consumers need them most (during the moment of potential recycling behaviour).

Traditional bins, also, could be utilised to give directions to recycling bins. Arrows or signage indicating the distance and location of the nearest available recycling bin presents consumers with a choice and could reduce the perceived 'hassle' of finding a recycling bin to place beverage containers in whilst "on the go".

### 3. Design

Whilst it has been shown above that there are many opportunities to spread the recycling message through social media and digital space, this must be coupled with real and practical recycling facilities in order to truly increase recycling rates. The existing public waste infrastructure is fragmented and there is no national cohesion on recycling policy. Despite the general moves to increase recycling through household kerbside recycling, in city and town centres there has been no such consensus on what system works best, and as such, public bin designs vary significantly. In general, most public bins do not separate waste with common designs shown below:

**Fig 13:** Common bin designs



The bin designs above could be in any city or town in the UK. In recent years there has been some attempt at introducing a level of recycling in the public network through dual bins, half general waste and half mixed recycling (fig 14).

**Fig 14:** Dual bin designs



Further designs have become available more recently with a focus on separating recyclable materials rather than having a mixed recycling collection.

**Fig 15:** Experimental bin design

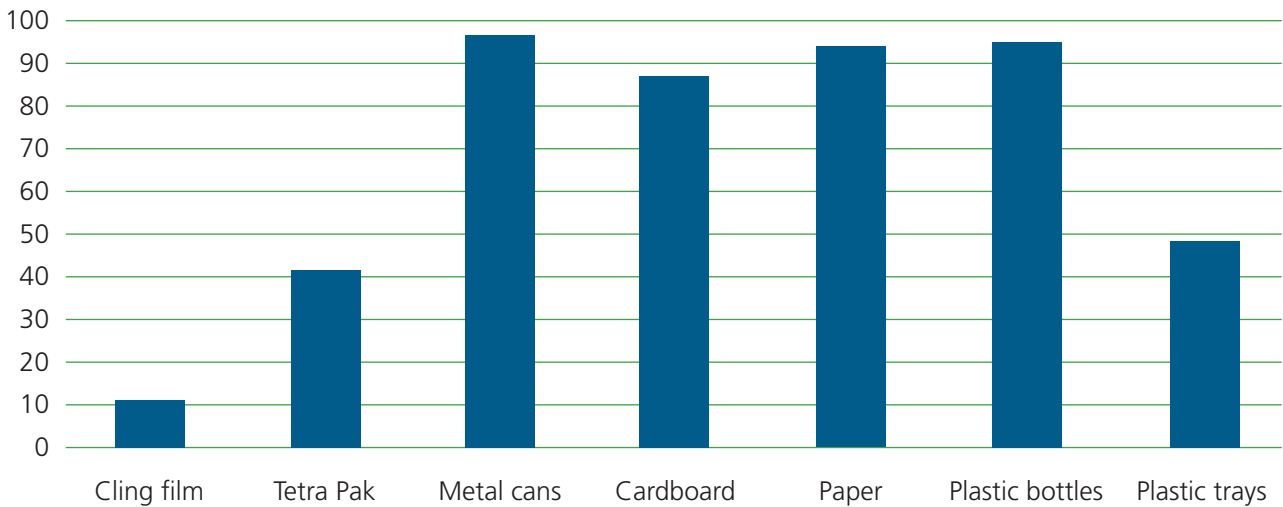


This experimental bin design, created with the Centre for Sustainable Futures in Plymouth, uses a similar approach separating; Cardboard, Cans, Plastic and Paper.

Clearly the variation in bin design up and down the country leaves a gap in the market for a standardised recycling bin network, based upon country wide adoption of the same bin design, or at least principles for design. Any new bin network should make use of the new OPRL labels. Research from the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD, 2008) has pointed to customer confusion as a main cause for poor recycling efficiency, 'Almost two thirds of shoppers (64%) admitted to making mistakes with their recyclable packaging. A third (34%) admitted they were unclear as to what kind of packaging materials they are able to recycle.'

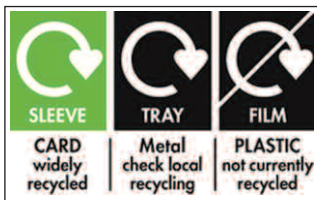
Our research shows similar results. There is significant variation amongst respondents about what materials can be widely recycled as shown in fig 16. It is shown here that a significant proportion of respondents believed Tetra Pak was widely recyclable although it is not. Moreover, 12.6% of respondents identified cling film as recyclable which is incorrect.

**Fig 16:** Student survey results – Awareness of recyclable materials



By using OPRL labels as a standard on bins, consumers will be able to make informed choices about disposal of their waste wherever they are, without needing to research what can and can't be recycled. Also, by using the same design on bins as on packaging it is possible to create a linear relationship between the point of consumption and the point of disposal.

**Fig 17:** OPRL 2011



Although it is important not to overestimate the effect a new design will have on recycling rates nationally until sample test sites are used (to measure changes in behaviour), it can be seen that through a design of this type it is possible to create a more inclusive system for educating the public on what can or can't be recycled. Furthermore through placing recycling symbols in the most visible places in the UK it should be possible to portray recycling as an intrinsic part of everyday life.

Similar design to those bins shown above could easily be adapted to conform to the current OPRL recycling labels, not only for ease to consumers, but also because they are clearly a tried and tested set of labels, which will hopefully become naturally ingrained in the public psyche. On pack recycling

labels are split into very simple categories; metal, paper, plastic, cardboard. It would therefore be appropriate to create bins with individual sections corresponding to these categories. Of course not all waste is recyclable so availability of general waste bins is still essential.

These categories have been adapted and applied to the bins at Plymouth University (fig 18). Here the images have been replaced by the same labels that are present on packaging. The actual physical design of standardised bins could of course take any form but the principle should remain that labels on bins are directly connected to the labels on packaging. This particular design example has been chosen to contrast with the metal bins shown in fig 15 this design is made largely of the same material (sheet metal), and is approximately the same size as the general bins so there should be little difference in production cost. If the production costs are approximately the same for a general waste bin as a recycling design there is little obstacle to adopting the latter. Ideally a similar design could replace all large public bins in the UK.



**Fig 18:** Recycling bins at Plymouth University

However, the cost implications of nationwide implementation of a standardised bin design are noted. In order to help lower the lump sum cost of a standardised bin network to councils, when a council replaces any bin in urban areas under its control due to wear and tear, they could replace the bin with one following the principles of an OPRL based design approach. It would be a gradual process to cover the whole UK in this way, but it would have minimal impact on council budgets.

There may be additional costs in retraining staff on how to use the new bins when collecting waste. Also, new waste collection vehicles would have to be created to accompany the different types of waste as they will have to be stored separately. Furthermore, if bins were replaced gradually there would be little room to make savings on bins purchased through buying in bulk. These cost considerations would certainly have to be taken into account in any national bin strategy but they should not be the determining factor as to whether the scheme goes ahead or not as the issue must be addressed in some way.

#### 4. Infrastructure

“On the go” recycling infrastructure varies immensely throughout the country, not just in terms of design but also in terms of accessibility, location and overall existence; some areas having a dense spread of recycling infrastructure that cannot be missed, whereas in other areas it could be miles before you stumble across a bin that takes recycling as well as / instead of general waste. This obviously poses a massive barrier to increasing “on the go” recycling.

Kerbside recycling has become increasingly standard in most areas of the UK, in fact WRAP (2011) estimate that 9/10 people in the UK have access to a kerbside recycling scheme. This provides an easy and accessible way for people to dispose of their recyclable waste on a domestic or building-based scale and highlights that a key way to increasing recycling rates is to provide the opportunity to recycle as close to the point of consumption as possible.

***“I’ll happily fill my bluebox at home but there’s nothing similar for when you’re not at home”***

[Quote from interviewee, age 21, on their attitude towards “on the go” recycling, 2011]

A large majority of people understand the importance of recycling:

***“Yeah I recycle when I can, I mean it’s pretty important for the planet right?”***

[Quote from interviewee, age 21, on their attitude towards recycling, 2011]

However, despite this growing understanding, a large majority of people will not actively go out of their way to recycle, hence why kerbside collection systems work, it is on people’s doorstep!

***“There just aren’t enough places about to put your recycling, I’m not going to wander about town with an empty bottle looking for the nearest bottle bank, it’ll go in the first bin I see”***

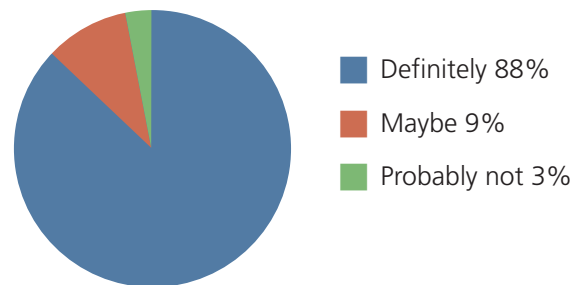
[Quote from interviewee, age 21, on their attitude towards recycling “on the go”, 2011]

For “on the go” recycling, it would appear that infrastructure is definitely lacking in many places, with few opportunities for people to dispose of their

recyclable waste when out and about. “on the go” recycling must be easy, accessible and close to the point of consumption for people to engage with it, yet many public places only have general litter bins around. If there is no opportunity for people to recycle “on the go”, then how can they? This appears to be one of the main challenges towards increasing rates of “on the go” recycling. Research from Defra suggests that 70% of people would recycle more if it was more convenient to do so (BBC 2007) supported by our own research (fig 19.)

**Fig 19:** Student survey results – Desire to recycle

**Would you recycle more if recycling facilities were available and easy to access?**



As a response to this challenge, many areas have begun to introduce ‘multi-chamber’ waste bins on the streets, with a section for recyclable waste and a section for general waste, this is perhaps the simplest (though not cheapest) way for local authorities to improve the distribution and location of recycling infrastructure, by tying into pre-existing waste infrastructure and location networks.

***“If there’s somewhere for me to recycle an empty can, I’ll put it there happily, those fancy bins that they’ve got around the Uni are pretty cool for that, they need them in town.”***

[Quote from interviewee, age 22, on their attitude towards “on the go” recycling, 2011]

As discussed earlier in this report, we feel that this overhaul of infrastructure and standardisation of design is vastly important for increasing “on the go” recycling rates, however it is something which is only being done in certain areas and should surely be something that is standardised across the country.

“On the go” recycling facilities need to be in an area that is accessible and close to the point of

consumption, so that people do not have to go out of their way. Put simply, to achieve the highest recycling rates, recycling needs to be made as easy as possible. Areas of high public concentrations, town centres, parks, inside sports stadiums, outside schools, universities, shops, community hubs and hotspots, stand out as obvious areas to locate recycling facilities.

An area that can be important when considering the location of “on the go” recycling facilities is travel - for what is more “on the go” than travelling? Creating recycling opportunities that are connected with travel infrastructure is an opportunity that cannot be missed when attempting to increase “on the go” recycling rates.

Trains will often have buffet cars that sell consumables in recyclable packaging, yet only have general waste bins; a very simple way to improve rates of recycling would, again, be to locate recycling facilities there as well.

***“I was on a train back home the other day and I bought a bottle of Coke, I went to put it in the bin when I finished and realised that it was just a rubbish bin, I’ve seen loads of people buying bottles and cans, why’s there no recycling bin too?”***

[Quote from interviewee, age 20, on their attitude towards “on the go” recycling, 2011]

Other useful recycling & transport links include placing recycling facilities at petrol stations to give people the chance to empty their car of packaging when filling up.

***“My car’s full of rubbish, I don’t clean it much, usually just chuck a few bits out here and there when I’m getting petrol. [...] Recycling it? Well I don’t really think about that, I guess I just chuck it in the nearest bin that they have, so I don’t know where it goes”***

[Quote from interviewee, age 21, on their attitude towards “on the go” recycling, 2011]

Attaching recycling points to bus-stops would also be very useful in that these facilities would collect waste not only from people utilising public transport, as well as at the same time providing a myriad of collection

points throughout towns and cities for pedestrians too.

In recent years, many bins have been removed from public transport hubs, due to terror concerns – this however is not a barrier to providing recycling points, many general waste bins in stations have been replaced by clear plastic bags, there is no reason that clear bags could not also be used to collect mixed materials for recycling.

Tying the location of recycling facilities into transport networks is a key way to increasing “on the go” recycling rates by creating effective coverage across a town or city that focuses specifically on consumers who are “on the go”.

Obviously, increasing the amount of recycling facilities will have a cost implication, as will upgrading current recycling / waste infrastructure to new designs, however, there is the potential for various organisations, sectors and industries to work together to improve the location and accessibility of recycling facilities.

Ultimately though, if the infrastructure does not exist, then people cannot, and will not, recycle “on the go”.

## 5. Long term solutions

As well as having the requisite infrastructure to make recycling easy and accessible, there is a need to inform; of the why, how and where of recycling. Public awareness campaigns and marketing can show people where and how, but a more holistic approach to why must be taken. This education is necessary to convert those who currently do not recycle and remind those who do that they can do this anywhere, and especially “on the go”.

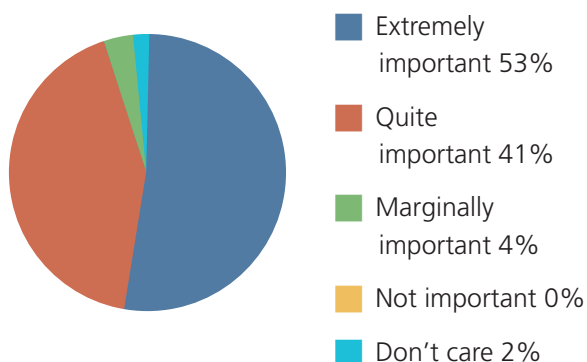
### Education:

The best place to raise awareness of recycling is in educational establishments themselves, where there is an easy accessible and generally receptive audience. This may also be the destination for much “on the go” consumption.

This cultural shift can be seen as a long term goal to put recycling at the heart of our educational systems agenda.

**Fig 20:** Our survey of 100 HE students shows that in educational environments highly saturated with recycling messages, the importance of recycling is already well established. This needs to be spread to all young people.

### How important do you feel it is to recycle?



Many establishments already fulfil this function to an extent, while the NUS work on a number of projects across the student movement. But this needs to be far more widespread and consistent. Below are some existing and some potential projects and strategies for encouraging “on the go” recycling that need to be embedded in our national culture:

### Recycling within the curriculum

The basic facts need to be introduced in every subject at schools and Universities. Some Universities are already piloting schemes whereby each course contains an element of environmentalism, called ESD (Education for Sustainable Development); this needs to be extended into all levels of education and across all institutions, so that it is embedded at an early stage and is not just seen as something certain people or groups need to concern themselves with. Moreover this curricular focus effectively complements wider awareness campaigns.

***“The greatest contribution HE can make to sustainable development is by enabling students to acquire the skills and knowledge that allow them to make a lasting difference. What they learn and what they are taught are therefore critical.”***

HEFCE 2009/03

### Green ‘champions’ – in classrooms, halls of residence, courses and work places

Peer to peer amongst this demographic is the most effective means of spreading a message; so giving an individual or group that are already interested in recycling responsibility within their University accommodation, place of work, course or classroom will help spread this enthusiasm far more effectively than an advertising campaign or being told by a teacher, lecturer or employer.

***“Students should be encouraged to co-create the solutions to encouraging more students to recycle.”***

Recommendation from Leeds City Council report into waste and recycling in student populated areas

### Social enterprise

This is another growing area amongst young people and much of this is aimed at sustainability and environmentalism. Innovation competitions centred on recycling can be set up in Universities and Student Unions across the country to create innovative ideas and raise awareness of recycling as an issue.

A National Recycling initiative centred on Colleges, Universities and student unions could recreate the ingenuity demonstrated in this project, magnified nationally. With the prize being an investment and

the realisation of the winning project, this could encourage innovative ideas amongst the target demographic and see tangible results that can be used as local pilots or rolled out nationally.

Run on an annual basis this could encourage and harness the innovation of our youth and push forward ideas and awareness of recycling through peer-led initiatives.

**Fig.21:** NUSL's academy can be used as a template for a national recycling enterprise competition



### Recycling hubs

Extracurricular activity in areas where young people gather is also important. Schools, Colleges, Universities and Students Unions can act as recycling 'hubs', where people are taught the benefits of recycling and it is inserted into the culture. However, this must go beyond theory and embrace a physical recycling presence.

This needs to start at educational establishments but also continue into other hubs of human interaction; transport networks, hospitals, supermarkets, shopping malls, even pubs and clubs. There needs to be a holistic approach in partnership with all the above, especially in branding. Consistency will help to reinforce the message wherever the individual happens to be.

The main focus must be on public ownership. Whereas we regard our house (and to a lesser extent our workplace) as 'ours', public places lack this sense of ownership. Instilling a sense of ownership into our surroundings will ensure that people think about where they dispose of their waste and how.

***“Devolving power to the lowest level so neighbourhoods take control of their destiny; opening up our public services, putting trust in professionals and power in the hands of the***

***people they serve; and encouraging volunteering and social action so people contribute more to their community.”***

David Cameron on his Big Society, a manifestation of the trend towards public ownership and empowerment to achieve social change (Guardian 2011)

### Green impact

This is an NUS scheme that sees students auditing their University on a number of environmental criteria: Like the idea of 'champions' this fosters a sense of ownership through a sense that students can change their institution. Similarly, young people employed in retail outlets or engaged in certain activities should be encouraged to take ownership of their space and lead on recycling. This would also require industry networks (such as Pubwatch and Best Bar One in the bars and clubs industry for example) and make sure they are also on board with the schemes.

### Every Can Counts

Events are obviously an important aspect of consuming "on the go", but this needs to be a brand recognisable at bars, clubs, off licenses, takeaways, sporting venues and supermarkets. While bars and clubs may not be typically associated with "on the go" waste, they are a destination for drinkers and all areas need to be covered, so that consumers are constantly but gently reminded. Takeaways and off licenses are an important point of purchase and targeting these (through industry bodies or marketing incentives) for awareness campaigns would be beneficial.

### Incentivising recycling

Incentivising recycling adds a new dimension to the education of young citizens and should be seen as an important aspect of any 'on the go' campaign. It shifts the short term benefits of recycling tangibly to the individual involved rather than the manufacturer and is an important supplement to the social benefit that education will be embedding into our culture. Deposit schemes have worked effectively in some countries (particularly in the Nordic countries, Sweden, Denmark and Norway) as a means of incentivising people to recycle. Such schemes work by adding a surcharge to the price of the beverage that can then be refunded on return of the beverage container, creating a financial incentive to recycle.

Such schemes have been run in the UK in the past. However, there is a large knowledge gap as to the effectiveness of deposit schemes, and more definitive research is needed into their role in recycling. Despite this, the idea to incentivise recycling with short term, personal benefits is good and there are many ways, such as the earning of loyalty points, or being entered into a prize draw, that can encourage people to recycle. Reinforcing 'good' behaviour with rewards could also play a large role in building an understanding of the need to recycle in children at an early age.

## 6. Conclusions

This report has demonstrated that “on the go” recycling needs to be easy and accessible in order to increase the number of people who actively engage with recycling and dispose of their waste in an environmentally friendly way.

Integral to achieving this is the improvement of recycling infrastructure and the creation of a greater range of opportunities (e.g. more collection points) for people to recycle in relevant locations.

Specifically, infrastructure needs to be developed that is consistent in design, has branding that links in to packaging and recycling campaigns and is capable of collecting multiple waste streams.

Our research indicates that despite a willingness to recycle there is a knowledge barrier in terms of what can be recycled and where. This can be addressed with relevant campaigns that engage with young people effectively.

We recommend using a combination of modern technologies, media and social networking, and traditional media such as television and radio, whilst targeting educational establishments to deliver this message.

Ultimately, younger people are aware of the need to recycle and the benefits of doing so, creating huge opportunities to increase recycling rates, but only if useful, accessible infrastructure and compelling messages exist.



**Recycling on the go:** a youth perspective, is a student report commissioned on behalf of the Can Makers. May 2011. ©The Can Makers 2011

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