

The Local Authority Prevention Programme

The Local Authority Prevention Network (LAPN) is a key component in continuing to build capacity in local authorities for the promotion of resource efficiency and waste prevention at a local and grassroots level for the benefit of their localities. Over the last 4 years, the programme has demonstrated that implementing waste prevention and resource efficiencies in an organisation can lead to significant savings, in addition to the obvious environmental benefits. Developed under the National Waste Prevention Programme, through LAPN the EPA provides assistance and support to local authorities in Ireland. Research identified that the two principal barriers to implementing waste prevention in the local authority sector have been a lack of resources and a lack of expertise and expert support. By removing these barriers the programme enables local authorities to actively pursue resource efficiency programmes in partnership with businesses, public organisations and communities in their functional areas. Building on their past experience of working with these organisations to introduce recycling, they are now working to encourage them to reduce their consumption of materials, water and energy and to make sure they are getting the best value from the resources they do use.

The programme began as a demonstration programme in 2006 and aimed to show that local authorities could design and implement effective local integrated waste prevention programmes and projects, with support provided by way of direct technical expertise (from the Clean Technology Centre at the Cork Institute of Technology) and grant monies. The grant aid is primarily intended to allow local authorities to appoint staff to work on dedicated prevention projects or programmes. Fourteen local authorities participated in the Local Authority Prevention Demonstration (LAPD) Programme from July 2006 to September 2009.

In many instances, local authority staff have been seconded to work specifically on prevention projects. This has developed capacity in local authorities so that their staff can in turn enable local organisations (including their own) to prevent waste. Projects have included prevention in a wide range of sectors including community, commercial and business organisations such as shopping centres, a regional airport, hospitals, construction, farms, university, public organisations, pubs and schools. Other projects include prevention initiatives in a town centre, at three public swimming pool facilities, public buildings, an offshore island, a major retail outlet and a university campus. Best practice case studies and prevention data/know-how are now emerging from each project for dissemination and implementation throughout the country. The programme has had a number of significant achievements:

1. Successful demonstration of savings opportunities, techniques and best practice:

Some key outputs and achievements from the demonstration projects:

- 2,300 tonnes waste prevented or diverted;
- 37,500 m³ water consumption reduced;
- 1,530,000 kWh energy savings;
- €873,000 direct cost savings;
- 1,100 people trained (26 have completed the HETAC Accredited Waste Prevention Course);
- 85 different premises involved in prevention, 295 audits conducted;
- *Farming the Environment* prevention guide published;
- *e-Guide on 7 steps to waste prevention* launched at www.managewaste.ie and 5 sector specific guides:
 - e-Guide to Effective Construction Waste Management
 - e-Guide to reducing office paper consumption
 - e-Guide to Effective management of shopping centre waste
 - e-Guide to developing an environmental action plan for a regional airport
 - e-Guide to waste prevention in apartment complexes
- *Calling Time on Waste - a prevention guide for publicans* published;
- *A guide to improving environmental performance in business* published;
- Best practice waste prevention guide in development for swimming pools/leisure centres;
- Five minute environmental review checklist for businesses in preparation.

2. Development of resource efficiency & waste prevention expertise in local authorities:

Another important outcome from the programme is the emergence of a group of people with knowledge and experience in relation to running successful prevention programmes. There are currently 5 full-time and 10 part-time people working on prevention regionally. In addition these people are drawing on other staff within their local authority to implement their programmes and at some point 27 different local authority staff have been involved with projects. During the progression of the programme, it has been observed that prevention officers working in the participating local authorities have developed significantly in their personal and professional capacity. A significant finding of the LAPD Phase 1 & Phase 2 is that prevention programmes require a long lead-in time to allow for suitable projects to be identified locally and contacts to be fostered at grassroots level. Successful programmes need strongly motivated individuals to drive the project forward and achieve results. Experience has also shown that full time project staff are more likely to maintain the momentum that is required for such projects to be successful.

3. Continued promotion of waste prevention & resource efficiency locally:

Currently, 12 local authorities from across the country are receiving financial and technical support from the EPA and are using the experience and case studies generated by the LAPD Programme to implement further waste prevention initiatives. The existing prevention officers are maintaining their contacts made with local businesses and some of the organisations involved in the demonstration projects are exploring new initiatives to improve resource efficiency

4. Fostering collaboration between local authorities:

In addition to developing new projects, the prevention officers are also using the best practice guidance previously developed to roll out these initiatives in similar organisations. Prevention officers are providing assistance and advice to each other through network meetings and mentoring. In order to facilitate formal and informal collaboration, regular network meetings are held and a number of working groups on common areas of interest have been set up. A website (www.localprevention.ie) is also being developed and includes discussion forums and message boards for prevention officers and any other interested local authority staff to share information and seek advice.

5. Green public authorities:

In addition to greening local authorities, the programme also gives prevention officers credibility within their own organisations and serves to answer calls from business for efficiencies in the public sector. Local authority prevention officers are turning their expertise inward and looking at how they can improve resource efficiency within their own buildings and facilities, where appropriate using best practice guidance developed during the demonstration programme. Significant potential savings were shown by the demonstration projects and suggests that if rolled out over a wider area, there are considerable savings to be made through resource efficiency initiatives.

6. Cost savings:

At the initial stages of the projects, significant cost savings for the organisations involved were identified by introducing common-sense measures such as changes in waste management practices, leak detection, changes to work practices, shopping around for better rates from energy suppliers and waste operators. While this is not in the strictest sense waste prevention it is viewed as the key first step to the successful implementation of any initiative. These simple measures serve to develop an awareness within the organisation of the costs associated with waste management and resource use, establish enthusiasm for the concept of waste prevention and resource efficiency and show how preventing waste of resources can contribute to reducing costs. This in turn has been shown to lead on to actual waste prevention and resource efficiency measures in search of further savings. Experience has shown that this is an important stage as it gets the initiative off to a good start and garners support at management level, which is crucial in the success of any programme.