

Tarbert Household Waste Management Behaviour Survey

Some facts about the project:

20 households spread across the community participated in the project which took place between June and August 2012.

The project focused on gathering information from households on the waste produced over the selected time period. The information was collected through the use of surveys, informal discussions with householders and by making observations & weighing bins.

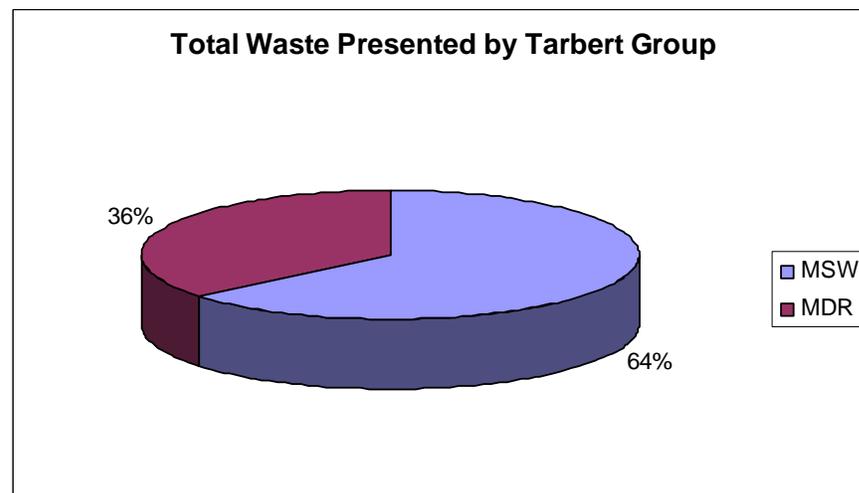
As it was summertime the “population” within households varied as visitors came and went – for the period preceding the first survey there were 48 adults and 18 children occupying the 20 participating households. (A significant number of visitors were present in a number of households during this week).

Waste Collection Service:

Tarbert is well serviced by a number of waste contractors and this is reflected by the fact that 18 households had a bin collection service and only 2 were making alternative arrangements to dispose of their waste.

1 household was bin-sharing with another family.

Waste Generated First Survey:



MSW = Landfill Waste
MDR = Mixed Dry Recyclables

Two thirds of the material presented was residual waste, and only one third recyclable materials – when we weighed the bins we spotted several opportunities to improve the recycling rate through better segregation, rinsing of soiled packaging etc.

| | Amount in kg |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Total waste presented by the group | 390 |
| Average amount of waste per week | 83 |
| Average amount of waste produced per household per week | 5 |

Because waste contractors offered different collection systems, there were different patterns of collection of bins – where bins were “tagged” the bin was presented less frequently and was therefore more full & heavier than bins that were routinely collected on a fortnightly basis.

Additional visitors in many households greatly increased the amount and weight of material in the bins and during discussions with householders food waste and nappies were cited as particularly troublesome wastes.

Recyclables (Excluding Glass)

| | Amount in kg |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Total Recyclables produced by the group | 250 |
| Average amount of recyclables generated per week | 47 |
| Average amount of recyclables generated per household per week. | 2.6 |

Comparing Tarbert to the National Average:

In 2011 the EPA’s National Waste Report which collates data from right across Ireland reported that the tonnage of household waste managed = 1.4 million tonnes and that 30% of households did not avail of a collection service. The statistical average of waste produced nationally per household per annum = 850kgs so based on that Tarbert residents appear to be producing almost a third less waste than the national average at 500kgs per household per annum.

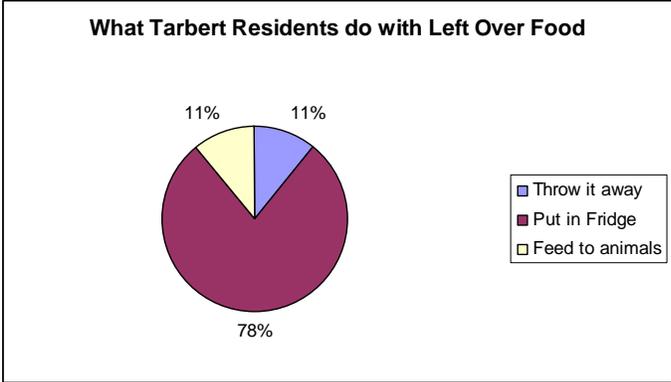
Food Waste:

Food waste was very evident in the residual or landfill waste stream – cooked food waste is a problem for all families and the survey clearly shows that additional house guests can

contribute significantly to the amount of food waste produced in a week – planning meals and gauging accurately the amount of food required when entertaining is not easy and a number of participating households raised this issue during the surveying process.

The roll out of Brown Bins by local contractors for collection of food waste commenced while this project was ongoing. Participating households should see a significant reduction in the weight of their landfill bin and subsequently in the cost of their service.

During our discussions Tarbert residents demonstrated good awareness of food waste and a genuine desire to reduce the amount of food waste produced within their home as evidenced by the results of the food waste questions in the second survey:



81% of the residents surveyed avail of special offers on perishable food but **25%** freeze these products immediately and use them at a later date. 62% use them immediately but 13% end up throwing them away.

The *Stop Food Waste Campaign* is a national campaign to assist householders to reduce the amount of food waste they produce. The campaign features tips and advice on how to save money as well as reducing waste on the website www.stopfoodwaste.ie

As brown bins for food waste were only being rolled out during the survey period it is likely that residents have now become even more attuned to food waste in the intervening period as the amount of food waste becomes more evident when separated from other residual waste. A national campaign to reduce food waste has just commenced, more information about the -5kg challenge can be obtained on the Stop Food Waste website.

Composting:

Many Tarbert residents are composting uncooked food waste along with garden waste. There was exceptional skill and interest in composting demonstrated by a small number of participants. Most encouraging was the interest in composting as a form of waste management across the majority of those surveyed and the willingness of skilled members of the community to share their knowledge within the community.

Waste Prevention:

From the results of the survey we were encouraged that Tarbert residents were exhibiting good waste prevention practices in relation to household waste generated. There was good awareness about avoiding excessive packaging, using rechargeable batteries, choosing tap water as opportunities to prevent waste.

65% of participants of the survey described their household's waste generation as "about right".

15% of participants felt it was "very little".

Whilst only 9% felt they generated above average amounts of waste.

How this information will be used?

Whilst there is a lot of information available nationally and regionally from waste contractors about the overall volume of waste generated and collected there is little data about individual household waste generation habits. Getting an opportunity to discuss waste management issues with individuals within in a community has been most worthwhile and informative.

From an environmental awareness perspective there are gaps in the information available to households and as a result of the survey we are now more aware of how we can improve on awareness within a community about waste prevention initiatives, including the mechanisms by which community members find it most useful to gather information. We will utilise this knowledge to shape future local and regional awareness campaigns.

It was evident from the discussions and surveys that food waste prevention is a priority in every household. Bulky goods such as furniture or leisure items are also problematic for householders looking to find an alternative to just taking the item to the landfill site for disposal.

It is hoped in the coming weeks to promote waste management best practice to the entire Tarbert Community by developing a temporary environmental awareness page on the Tarbert Development Association Website.

Acknowledgements

Kerry County Council and the Regional Waste Management Office for Limerick Clare Kerry wish to acknowledge and gratefully thank all of the participants for their time, interest, courtesy and patience during the surveying period.

Grateful thanks also to the Tarbert Development Association for assisting with organising the participants and facilitating further awareness in the community.