

## CUTTING THE CONFUSION - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Why do I need to put the tops back on the bottles before recycling?**

The tops go with the bottles to the reprocessor where they are cut up into flakes and the bottle and tops (which are different plastics) are separated before they are turned into pellets. The pellets made from the bottle themselves are then sent to either make new bottles. The pellets made from the tops are sent to go into garden furniture or items for construction such as piping or traffic cones.

- **How clean does my recycling need to be?**

At the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) all the mixed dry recycling is sorted by type (paper, cardboard, steel cans, aluminium cans, and plastics). This process involves a lot of complex machinery which gets covered in the residue and dirt that householders place in their recycling bins. This residue can cause machinery to breakdown. Many UK MRF's also have a section where material is hand sorted, so not a pleasant job if the material is covered in food remains. Remember also that the cleaner the recycling is the greater the quality and higher value the material will be to the recycler. It also keeps your bin clean if you empty, rinse and dry before recycling.

- **Can I recycle my bleach bottles?**

Yes, make sure they are empty and put the top back on.

- **What do I do with the film lid on food, fruit, and vegetable punnets?**

Remove the film lid and the absorbent layer and put these into general waste as these are not recyclable at the moment. Make sure the tray or punnet is empty, clean, and dry and recycle.

- **Where can I recycle my carrier bags, and bread bags?**

Many UK Supermarkets are now taking carrier bags and bread bags etc. in their front of store collections. Please look for the OPRL label on your soft plastics and wrappings.

### **Should I stop using plastic packaging?**

Plastic packaging provides many benefits to products and compared to alternative materials it uses less energy to produce, reduces transport costs and CO2 emissions because it is lightweight, and significantly reduces the amount of fresh food waste by protecting it in a hygienic environment and extending its shelf life.

### **Did you know?**

- ❖ Bananas in a flexible bag extend their shelf life by 3 days
- ❖ Plastic bags reduce waste of potatoes by two thirds
- ❖ Cucumbers extend their life when wrapped in film by 14 days
- ❖ Advanced plastic packaging extends the life of steak up to 10 days

- **Why do some brands still use plastic for food products – surely, we can use other materials such as glass?**

Because it is lightweight, plastic packaging can save energy in the transport of packed goods. Less fuel is used, there are lower emissions and there are cost savings for distributors, retailers and consumers. For example, a yogurt pot made from glass weights about 85 grams, while

one made from plastic weighs 5.5 grams. In a lorry filled with a product packed in glass jars, 36% of the load would be accounted for the packaging. If packed in plastic pots, the packaging would amount to just 3%. To transport the same amount of yogurt, three trucks are needed for glass jars but only two for plastic pots.

- **What can plastic packaging be recycled into?**

Plastic packaging can be recycled into a wide variety of products including clothing, t-shirts; toys, chairs and tables; headphones; kitchen utensils; paint pots; car parts; cuddly toys; filling for duvets and sleeping bags; pens and pencils; building materials such as fencing, flooring, piping, etc; garden furniture; buckets and - of course - more plastic packaging! Drinks bottles can be made back into drinks bottles, milk bottles can also be made back into more milk bottles.

- **Why don't all Councils collect the same types of plastic?**

Local authorities use different facilities and waste management providers to collect recycling materials from households and recycling points. Some of these can only accept specific plastic types and therefore residents are given different messages about what they can and cannot recycle in different areas. Local authorities also have contracts with waste management providers and changing or terminating these can be a long and costly process. However, the plastic industry would like to see all councils collecting the same types of plastic and will continue to promote this as best practice and the UK government is discussing the possibilities of consistent collections across the UK.

If you live in Kent and one of the 13 Kent Councils you are, able to recycle the same plastics packaging wherever you live in Kent.

- **Why does the Council keep asking us to recycle when I think I recycle everything I can?**

Although most of us do recycle what we can when we can unfortunately the data tells us that nationally we only recycle 59% of all the bottles we could recycle and 34% of the pots, tubs and trays. This maybe because we are not sure if they are recyclable, or because they are dirty and we don't want to rinse/empty them, or because we take them out of the home for eating and drinking on the go and dispose of them in general waste wherever we happen to be, office, school, travelling etc. If we can it is always best to take our empties home to recycle and make sure that we are not forgetting to recycle stuff from the kitchen or the bathroom, or forgetting about the ketchup and mayonnaise bottles. It all adds up.