

Workplace Recycling case study: university

Aberystwyth University

Background

Aberystwyth University on the west coast of Wales is home to over 2,000 staff and 6,000 students from across the globe. The main Penglais Campus comprises of a wide range of facilities, including academic buildings, hospitality outlets, sports facilities and student accommodation. Aberystwyth was one of the first UK universities to declare a climate emergency and has set an ambition to become a carbon neutral campus by 2030.



Image: Aberystwyth University campus

Responding to the workplace recycling law

The university works hard as part of its commitment to the waste hierarchy to Prevent, Reduce and Reuse materials before items become classified as waste.

The university faces a range of complex waste-related challenges. The nature of waste produced on the estate can vary in type and volume throughout the year, depending on the varied activities taking place across its campuses, including the arrival and departure of several thousand students.

Educating the student, staff and wider visitor community on waste and recycling arrangements requires the provision of clear messaging and infrastructure being consistently applied across the university estate.

The University has implemented the required separate recycling collections in all areas of the campus.

This includes student accommodation blocks, which are not legally required to follow the separation requirements.

This decision to go 'above and beyond' minimum legal compliance was due to a desire to provide a consistent recycling experience across the whole campus.



Putting workplace recycling into practice

The university works with a number of waste partners to support the collection of waste from site, with waste streams including the four streams required by law:

- Paper & card
- Plastic, metals & cartons
- Food
- Glass

As well as:

- General waste
- Domestic batteries
- Confidential waste
- Offensive wastes
- WEEE
- Textiles

During the implementation stages of the workplace recycling regulations, the university sought to reduce costs by repurposing bins wherever possible, e.g. through replacing and aligning lid colours and signage. However, the overall level of investment in new bins and upgrades to existing to deliver separate recycling for all material streams, has been considerable.



Catering services: food waste separation

A number of catering venues are operated by an in-house team across the campus. This includes food halls and cafes, through to a catered hall of residence. Different approaches are being assessed to capture food waste, including the location of food waste bins in areas where food is consumed and through 'back of house' arrangements where plate waste left on trays is separated by staff. This plate waste is combined with food preparation waste and presented for separate collection in 240l bins.

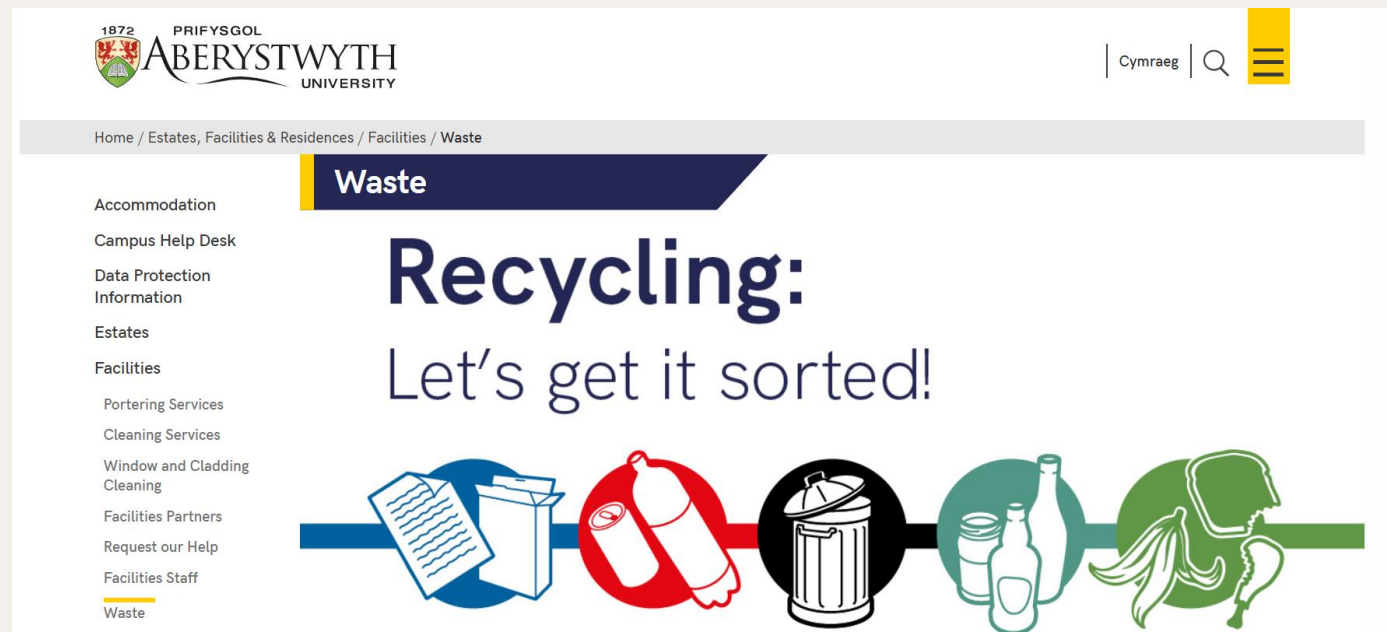


Delivering a consistent recycling experience

Consistent bins and colour schemes are deployed across the campus. 85-100l bins are located within internal foyers and communal areas. These used to target general waste (black lids) and mixed recycling (green lids) but have now been repurposed to include red and blue lids targeting plastic metal & cartons, paper & card respectively.

QR codes are included on bins taking users to recycling information pages - [Waste : Estates, Facilities & Residences , Aberystwyth University](#)






A similar approach is adopted outside, with dual 100l bins adopting consistent coloured apertures and labels. In many locations, separate collection points for batteries and vapes are provided. Legacy bins without the adopted 'design standard' will be removed over time.



Recycling in student accommodation blocks

- Approximately 50% of all full-time students in Aberystwyth live in university managed accommodation. Penglais campus boasts over 3,200 study bedrooms across a wide range of accommodation blocks.
- There are 550 individual flats across the estate, typically comprising 6-8 rooms per flat.
- Whilst the age and layout of different student blocks varies, the university has implemented consistent recycling arrangements in all of them.
- Five containers are provided within the kitchen / communal area of each flat, targeting paper & card, plastic metals & cartons, glass, food waste and general waste.
- Students are responsible for taking waste bags to external waste compounds which are available 24/7.
- Clear signage has been provided within these compounds which are checked on a daily basis.

Man Ailgylchu / Recycling Point

papur/carbord paper/cardboard	plastig/metel/cartonau plastic/metal/cartons	gwastraff cyffredinol general waste	gwydr glass	gwastraff bwyd food waste
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Papur Cardbord Card Papur sawydda Amlieni Papurau newydd Llyfrynuau Catalogau Cylchgronau Papur Cardboard Card Office paper Envelopes Newspapers Brochures Catalogues Magazines 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tinlau bwyd Canlau diodydd ac eroseolau gwag Ffoli glân Poteli plastig Potiau Tybïau a hambyrddau Tetra pak a rhwybau creision Cupanau coffi Cartonau bwyd a diod Food tins Drinks cans & empty aerosols Clean foil Plastic bottles Pots Tubs & trays Tetra pak & crisp tubes Coffee cups Food & drink cartons 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gwastraff na ellir ei ailgylchu Non-recyclable waste 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gwydr Glass Gwydrau yfed Pyrex Gwydr gwastad Gwydr wedi torri Poteli neu jariau plastig Corcioau Canlau Bagiau Drinking glasses Pyrex Flat glass Broken glass Plastic bottles or jars Corks Cans Bags 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holl wastraff bwyd heb ei becynu, gan gynnwys bwyd wedi'i goginio, heb ei goginio ac wedi rhewi All unpackaged food waste, including cooked, uncooked and frozen food Esgynnau mawr Hyllifau Pecynnau Bagiau plastig neu lapio Cupanau coffi Papur cegin neu dywelion papur Large bones Liquids Packaging Plastic bags or wrapping Coffee cups Kitchen roll or paper towels

1872 PRIFYSGOL ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY

Rhaid i'r holl eitemau y gellir eu hailgylchu fod yn **LAN ac yn SYCH**. Sganiwch y cod am ragor o wybodaeth.

All recyclable items must be **CLEAN and DRY**. Scan the code for further information.

Monitoring

- Waste and recycling collections take place across the campus many times a day throughout the week, keeping on top of challenges or issues is critical
- The Facilities team undertake daily checks on waste compounds, ensuring that any issues around waste separation and correct usage of containers are addressed quickly.
- Staff are provided with practical information on what should go in each stream through information printed on the reverse of identity badges, meaning this information is always at hand.
- As well as on the ground monitoring, individual weights of bins lifted from different parts of the estate are reviewed. This has helped identify areas, e.g. student blocks, where food waste separation needs targeting for improvement. It also helps inform ongoing initiatives to optimise bin numbers and their placement around the campus.



Ongoing initiatives

- The university is embedding sustainability criteria as part of purchasing decisions. This is seeking to reduce waste, including plastic and to encourage supplier returns, e.g. for large packaging such as 5l drums.
- The university is also supporting student-focused initiatives to help minimise the significant quantities of waste generated at the end of term and academic year. This includes the provision of donation facilities for usable items to be left, which are then re-used by the next intake of students or given to local charities.
- The university regularly works with waste partners to audit waste collected from its estate, including attending 'duty of care' visits to the waste plants which receive university waste. This has allowed the university to view first-hand how waste from its estate is sorted for recycling, and how any materials that cannot be recycled, are used to create energy. In addition, the university has started to complete regular analysis of its general waste to monitor the levels of waste that could be recycled but are being placed into general waste bins. This will help inform their approach to waste infrastructure and communicating with students when disposing of their waste.

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Recycling Law, email us on Walesrecycles@wrap.org.uk

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