

## Our overall vision: Zero Waste

Zero waste is a concept that is spreading throughout the globe. Our vision is to reduce consumption of goods by ensuring that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled. What we now call waste should instead be regarded as a mixture of resources to be used again to their full potential, not as something to be thrown away. We have adopted a long term vision of zero waste in our waste strategy. This concept is challenging and needs us to be innovative. It will require measures from many others – government, business and communities, and may take a long time to achieve.

We want to take the lead by raising awareness in the local community, developing new re-use, refurbishment and recycling schemes, and encouraging community, business and householder participation.

Zero waste programs are now unfolding in many countries, and are being pioneered in America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Zero waste is a 'whole system approach' to the flow of resources through society, based on the vision that waste can be eliminated by the efficient use of resources. Further information can be found at [www.zerowaste.co.nz](http://www.zerowaste.co.nz)

The concept of zero waste transforms waste management away from 'managing' to 'minimising' waste, as waste becomes fundamentally unacceptable. Being a relatively new concept, the breadth and depth of thinking and practice is undergoing significant development.

'Zero waste' is a similar concept to 'zero accidents' or 'zero defects' in manufacturing. An extreme target encourages new levels of innovation and efficiency. The term 'zero' should not be viewed as an absolute figure, but is seen as a target to strive for. Zero waste is an approach which not only encourages waste diversion through recycling and resource recovery, but provides a guiding design philosophy for eliminating waste at source and at all points down the supply chain. This concept goes beyond recycling in that it reclassifies waste as a mixture of resources to be used to their full potential. The concept aims to reduce consumption at the outset and ensure that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled, discarding the idea of "waste".

Changing the way resources flow through society in order to eliminate waste will lead to substantial environmental, economic, and social benefits, and will be sustainable.

### Challenges to Establishing a Zero Waste Strategy

- 'Zero' is a target to encourage innovation - not an 'absolute'.
- Currently there is no legislative requirement to reduce waste
- Waste generation processes involve all sectors of society and are not easily addressed at a local level
- Unknown future - future waste minimisation processes and technology will change.
- Reaching beyond - it is relatively easy to plan to achieve 50% recycling & recovery. Innovation is needed to get beyond these levels.
- Sustaining and building momentum. We need to continue moving beyond our initial enthusiasm and success.
- Sustainable solutions - we will need a new way of thinking at a national level to achieve reduced consumerism and increased environmental stewardship at a local level.

- Resources – investment in new technology and process will be required to achieve progress.

Achieving zero waste (or even getting close to it!) is not going to be easy. The concept is exciting and challenging, and will require action from government, business and communities.

Zero waste cannot be achieved by local government alone as it involves all sectors of the supply chain from design, production, manufacturing, packaging etc. through to retail and final consumption. However Bath & North East Somerset Council can take the lead with a zero waste vision, by raising awareness in the local community, and encouraging community, business and householder participation.

Developing a clear vision such as zero waste will create a climate for continual improvement within Bath and North East Somerset. We can take a lead in facilitating the zero waste concept by developing further contracts and measures which prioritise material and resource recovery over disposal, for instance we could create a key driver by commissioning new local resource recovery facilities.

By adopting a vision of zero waste within our waste strategy, our future policies and services will be shaped towards achieving this vision. New initiatives and developments will need to be innovative in order to achieve change.