

Do you recycle?



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It's the ultimate recyclable material: nearly 75 per cent of the aluminium that's ever been produced is still in use today. Aluminium is always in demand, and commands a better price than steel and yet nearly 200 tonnes of it is still being lost to landfill through the island's domestic waste every year, mostly through discarded drinks cans.

'Aluminium is one of the few materials that you can just keep on recycling,' explained Douglas Borough Councillor Ritchie McNicholl. 'It's known as a closed loop system: the manufacturing process is highly sustainable because the materials keep going round and round.'

Douglas Borough Council's recycling processing centre, based at the Isle of Man Business Park in Braddan, is currently the hub of municipal recycling in the island. Every month it receives around 120 tonnes of recyclable material including paper, card, cans and plastics from the island's amenity sites, bring banks and the kerbside collection schemes in Douglas, Braddan and Port St Mary. The materials are sorted, processed and sold in the UK.

'Food cans are made from steel while soft drinks cans tend to be made from aluminium, but for householders looking to recycle it doesn't matter at all - we'll take all types of cans, kitchen foil and metal food trays,' Councillor Ritchie McNicholl said. 'Our only request is that people avoid putting empty drinks cans inside empty food cans as it's almost impossible to mechanically separate them.'

The contents of the green boxes from kerbside collections containing glass, mixed cans and plastic bottles - the plastic bottle and can content is separated at the kerbside from the glass, once tipped at Douglas Borough Council's processing facility, they pass along a conveyor belt where an overhead magnet captures the steel and a rare earth magnet called an eddy current separator repels the aluminium, firing it into a separate stream. All that's left at the end of the line is plastic, and all three are separately compressed into bales for shipping and sale in the UK.

'This system is how we're able to collect all cans and plastic bottles together in the green kerbside collection boxes,' Councillor Ritchie McNicholl said. 'Our process gives us three clean products which attract better prices.'

Recycled aluminium has exactly the same properties as when it was brand new, but takes only five per cent of the energy to produce.

But recycling in the Isle of Man isn't just about protecting the environment: Manx households generate around 32,000 tonnes of waste every year, three per cent

of which - or 960 tonnes - is aluminium and steel cans. Not only are the raw materials in demand, but any materials that could be recycled and can be diverted from the Energy from Waste plant can save the ratepayers money. Unless householders drop their used cans into a recycling bring bank (located around the Island) or if they have access to the Kerbside Recycling Scheme and use the green recycling box the cans will be destined for landfill, but not before making an expensive diversion through the Energy from Waste plant.

'If metal goes into the Energy from Waste plant, it will come out as metal,' Councillor Ritchie McNicholl said. 'There's no calorific value to aluminium or steel so all you've done is create costs: firstly ratepayers must pay the gate fees and then taxpayers pay for the disposal of the ash. 'You're actually losing three times over as you've missed the chance to sell it,' he added. 'You've paid to put it in, paid to get it out again and then discarded a valuable material.'

The sales value of recyclable materials can be variable: the recent dumping of excess stocks by Chinese manufacturers has caused a reduction in the value of recycled steel and aluminium. 'Whilst the council is conscious of the market variability, the benefits of pursuing the recycling of these materials outweighs any short term fluctuations in the market. In addition we produce a high quality recycled material which obtains good market value for resale.' stated Councillor Ritchie McNicholl.

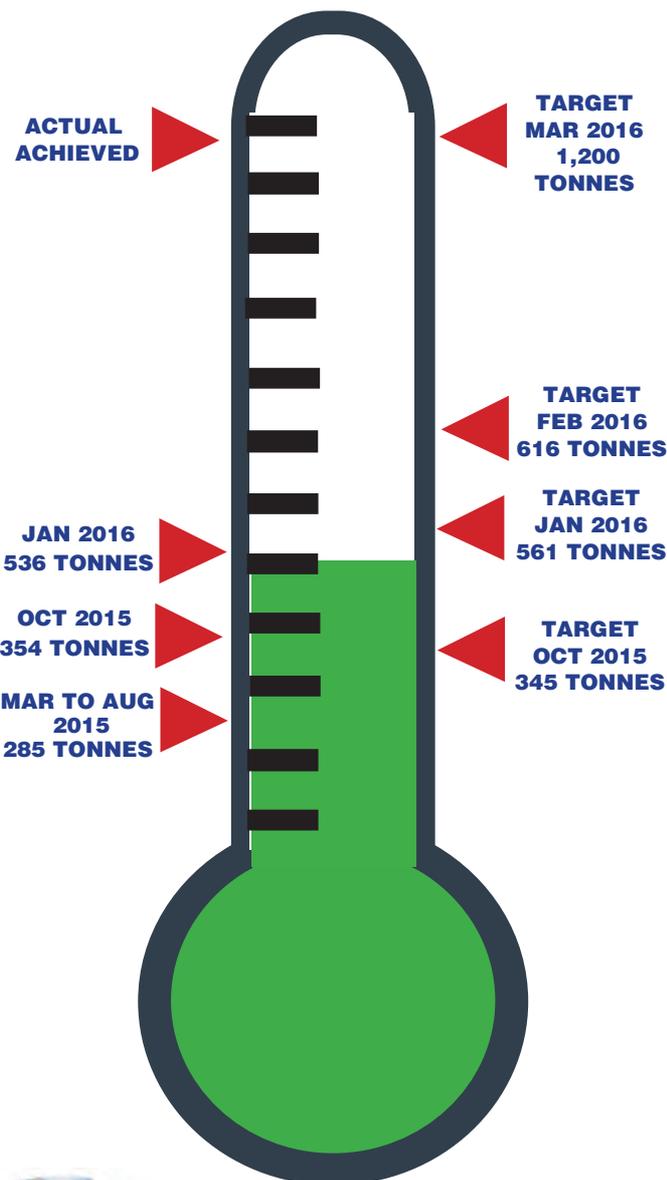
Aluminium's potential to be reused indefinitely means it will always command a better price than steel. Enough is recycled every year in the Isle of Man to build the fuselage of an Airbus A320, but it's only a fraction of the total that is still being lost to landfill. Aluminium is thought to make up about 20 percent of household metal waste suggesting that there's approximately 200 tonnes that could be recycled every year in the Isle of Man which is currently destined for the Energy from Waste Plant.

'We could build an awful lot of A320s with that,' added Councillor Ritchie McNicholl, 'The amount of money it could be sold for is eye watering, and that's before you take into account the costs of gate fees at the Energy from Waste plant and the costs of disposal afterwards. This is why it's essential to get these products out of the waste stream.'

Steel and aluminium cans can be recycled at any amenity site or bring bank. Residents of Douglas, Braddan and Port St Mary can still join the kerbside collection schemes for free!

Hourly tours of the processing centre will take place on Saturday, 5th March 2016 between 10am and 3pm. Advance booking is essential, email jedwards@douglas.gov.im to book a place. Accompanied children are welcome but must be aged six or over due to the machinery in operation.

For more information contact Douglas Borough Councils Waste Services Team on 696445 or check www.douglas.gov.im



reuse



reduce



recycle