

National Assembly for Wales
Environment and Sustainability Committee
RW 6

Inquiry into recycling in Wales
Response from: Simon Lait

I am a resident of the Vale of Glamorgan where the council moved from a user separated waste system to a co-mingled system. I also have a house in Pembrokeshire where there is a different user separated system. I guess like many I feel perfectly happy to do some recycling separation. The trouble with different rules in different places or, as in the Vale a change of rules, is that it gives the impression that the sort of kerbside separation one does is not really important. You may be wasting your time. This is particularly true in the Vale where a long period of exhortation to observe separation rule was followed by the message it does not matter any longer. No doubt the most effective recycling regime will depend on the technology available for converting the loads collected into something useful. That technology might for all I know completely obviate the need to separate recycling before collection. But if better results are achievable with pre collection separation, let's do that. By now, with all the differing systems in use, there must be enough evidence to settle this.

If the answer is some form of householder separation of recycling then the key success factor will be participation rates. I am quite sure participation could be greatly enhanced if there was a national standard which was widely and consistently promoted in schools and in the media, as well as by local authorities directly to householders. If you do this, and I hope you will, please don't make the pitch too babyish... Recycling good. Landfill bad. Everyone knows that. Rather, tell us how useful things are made with the waste we separate. Re-assure us it's not shipped to China and burnt. If some is burnt tell us. Give us a rational explanation so we feel we are part of something useful. At the moment I wonder if we are.

Simon Lait.