Our panellists answer some of the questions we didn't get around to asking in the webinar….

Claire Chu:

How will success be measured? How will behaviour campaigns be effectively assessed?

On the producers contributing to comms, this comes back to metrics and what producers will find acceptable as 'proof' of effectiveness and value - any thoughts from the panel on these?

As in Annette's presentation there are multiple potential measures of success for behaviour change campaigns. Tonnage is the usual starting point and an important metric, but it is also important to factor in engagement (e.g. number of residents reached) and the social benefits (e.g. volunteer hours). In my view, providing proof to producers in the future should cover the social value as well as proof that campaigns are helping toward reaching targets.

Do you believe that behaviour change must come first to drive a better infrastructure?

I believe policy must come first to support infrastructure change, which in turn will allow the desired behaviour change. Behaviour change will not happen, or at least not on any scale, if infrastructure is not in place.

How important is ensuring adequate and genuine recycling processes provide the foundation for any behaviour change initiative?

Extremely important. We know with recycling collections, if the system is poorly designed or implemented, participation is low and will not improve until the service does with a lot of hard communication work. It is also vital that items collected for recycling are actually recycled and the systems are in place to allow that. The future consistency plan on which items must be collected will help this.

How did the crews keep track of the tags they were distributing? Thinking of their time constraints on rounds etc.

Crews had in-cab devices so they could enter next to the property that the container had been tagged and what the issue was from a dropdown menu. As the collections in Calderdale are kerbside sort, crews actually saved time the following weeks as residents presented their recycling correctly and crews no longer had to sort the contamination from the recycling. In terms of tracking how many times a property had been tagged, this was automated and monitored in the office, so did not affect crew timing and had very low impact on admin time.

Does task and finish impact on the crews motivation to communicate about contamination?

Although I answered this in the webinar, I wanted to add that through training the crews to tag and report contaminated containers we also talked about the wider issues of contamination - how this can affect the quality of material and costs involved to give crews an understanding why this is so

important. This training was also provided to supervisors and yard staff so everyone had the same information. Supervisors were also vital in ensuring that tagging was seen as part of the job, not an additional add-on if there was time.

Steve Bates:

Many of the questions focused upon two key themes so I'll first address the themes rather than the specific questions.

1. PHONES

The United Kingdom is one of a small handful of countries around the world where people rarely 'buy' their mobile phones but instead have one included within the contract package they opt for. In other nations, it's common practice to buy a phone and then look for a contract and it's to these countries that the phones that the likes of Music Magpie and others sell the phones they buy here. Although we should return our old phones when we upgrade, this doesn't always happen which explains why many people have drawers full of them at home.

The mobile phone industry is of course massive. Any change to the structure of how the market works to better support a circular economy will be robustly fought against by phone companies and network operators. Even if change was forced, it would likely disadvantage those on low incomes who'd be unable to afford even a second-hand smart phone.

But, what could be done is the government incentivises and stimulates the buy-back market which at the moment is dominated by just three companies (Music Magpie, Mazumamobile and CEX). The price they pay for the stuff they buy is a lot less than is suggested in their ads and I believe that many, when this is made apparent, simply don't bother. Competition pushes prices down for the consumer but when the consumer becomes the seller, competition forces the prices they can sell at, up. This would undoubtedly increase the number of phones (and other stuff) that gets sold on to these companies, contributing to the transition to a circular economy.

These are commercial operations. There is scope for charities to benefit from this as well; setting up similar operations but where people donate stuff rather than sell it. Again, more can be done to support charities to enter into this market.

2. CONSUMERISM AND DEMATERIALISATION

Here lays the big circular economy dilemma.

The health of an economy is determined not by the *amount* of money in it, but by how much money flows through it – in other words, people spending on stuff. It's only when money flows and is spent that tax can be raised to fund all the things that are needed at a societal level. As we continue to slowly crawl out of the Covid hole, this will become even more critical to our economic recovery. Even a small shift away from this will negatively impact the economy and it's the lowest income families that will suffer the most.

It's easier and cheaper than ever to buy nice stuff. Whilst this creates excessive waste, it also creates economic growth. It's a paradigm that no government can change. No government will win power on the basis of pledging to change the paradigm because nobody is going to vote for a government that would knowingly drive the economy downwards.

The stark and hard reality is that jobs, incomes and nice stuff will always win out over circular economy. My view is that this doesn't have to be a choice.

The amount of stuff we buy isn't the problem. The problem is the stuff it's made from. Recyclable, single material packaging would be a good start. Built in end-of-life reverse engineering made easier at the point of product development would be another.

At the moment, the level of incentive to manufacturers to adopt this thinking is way too weak. It needs to be enforced and it needs to be global. EPR is of course a good step in the right direction but it will only succeed if 'choice' is removed from the consumer to a point where all consumerism is, by default, sustainable.

This also addresses the other problem that is often ignored amongst many that support a move to a circular economy in that reuse is simply delaying the inevitable.

If you sell or donate a mobile phone or a pair of jeans then you prevent them being disposed of now, but they will eventually reach the end of their useful life at which point, they'll be binned. A lot of these materials end up in third world countries. When they reach the end of their lives there, disposal is largely unregulated meaning those materials impact the environment to far more significant levels than if they were disposed of here. So there exists a weird paradox in that that looking at things from a pure environmental protection perspective, it is sometimes better to dispose of stuff here and now, rather than reuse it if that reuse will be done where waste disposal is poorly regulated or unregulated.

Changing what things are made of and how they are made addresses this issue. Plus, the growth in the reverse engineering sector that would naturally occur can be focused on these low-income countries which has the consequential effect of improvement the economies of those countries, bringing more and more people out of absolute poverty.

3. Responses to questions:

The other point is that waste services make up a significant part of your Council Tax Bill. -Is it 30% on average? However this is usually a "sunk"/invisible cost, paid by direct debit or from benefits in other cases. So how about a discussion on what you would do with that money that you could save by reducing waste collection services?

I don't this this is the case. If I recall correctly, the average amount a household contributes to waste services each year is around £60 - £80. There was a TV programme a while back that challenged a street to do without the council for a month. Each home was given £1 a week to deal with their waste and they found it impossible!

I think the argument should be the other way around – it's too cheap. Plus, as I mentioned in my presentation, perhaps the trick is to only apply costs to non-recyclable waste.

Should producers be able to decide how their money is spent. Stephen says communications works less well than other methods so why would producers want to waste their money

Think you've misunderstood! Communications can and does work very well. What the Behavioural Change Hierarchy shows is that the further down the list of strategic and operational interventions you go, the more communication is needed to compensate for the corresponding drop in operationally-driven effectiveness.

So producers have a choice – make operational changes or increase the spend on comms.

People tend to consume news and information on a more national basis and national campaigns could create a movement with greater impact than a local one

National is great for creating awareness but it is local that stimulates action. Ideally, there needs to be both.

I have seen quite a lot of Hubbubs campaigns and they are fun and interesting....however we often find that Members can be barriers to innovation in campaigns how do you get over that?

And….

members really have to be engaged though as how often have others been made to go back or overturn a decision as it is not popular?

I could write a book on the negative impact of 'Members' on local waste services. More than a few times, I've worked with local authorities on recycling comms projects where the portfolio holder held the view that "recycling was a waste of time and money!!". (To balance this, I've also worked with some brilliant and highly supportive ones).

I think this is an important but wider reaching topic rooted in my observation that a surprisingly large number of people do not really understand the structure of local governance; the relationship between county and district, the roles of councils and the processes that dictate what they do and how they do it. I always find it surprising just how few people actually know what council district they live in.

This ambivalence and ignorance to local authority limits the pool from which Councillors emerge. Increasing awareness of what the council does would, I think, widen and deepen that pool which will improve the quality of those that seek public service.

Blue Planet ??

This one programme has done the job no awareness campaign could have achieved. Everywhere I work in the world, it's mentioned. It's become common parlance in the context of sustainability and environmental protection. It has generated a desire amongst millions, if not billions to do something positive. Personal behaviours are one thing but to fully capitalise on this desire people need to be supported in doing more.

Annette Dentith:

High enough incentives

I think Steve mentioned that waste management services are very cheap – this is the problem – PAYT might potentially work but given that the cost of the whole collection and "disposal" service (WDA +WCA for 2 tier authorities) is roughly £150 per household per year (less than a pint of beer a week we say) would that be enough incentive – to some yes and others no.

Total cost to manage reuse and repair and is it sustainable

This is difficult to estimate as it is just part of our behavioural change work, on which we spend less than 1% of the (£36 million) budget. Possible 10% of the 1%? Also, Suez manage the reuse shops at the HWRCs so this is another cost. We think it is sustainable because we believe that without it, reducing, reusing and recycling would decrease.

Measuring success

As I mentioned in my presentation, we use a variety of metrics in addition to tonnage, and have also used the waste prevention toolkits offered by Eunomia and others whereby details of campaigns are inputted into their models to show a cost benefit analysis.

Local versus national

I do think we need both, the Blue Planet effect needs to be supported by services and support at a local level along with local behavioural change advice. The better local services are the more success local authorities will achieve in their attempts to get householders on board.

Absence of cost-effective network of repair and restoration workshops

The network of repair cafes is expanding so there is hope!

Should behavioural change drive improved infrastructure?

Infrastructure has to be planned several years in advance so I'm not sure that would work

How did we manage to keep our team?

We just keep on taking every opportunity to explain the importance of communications on reducing, reusing and recycling to senior management and Members – We have had numerous workshops with Members over the years and I think with our performance indicators all going in the right direction the results support our continued investment and their support.

School curriculum

There has rarely been "sustainability" or "environment" actually listed in the curriculum so we work hard to show how the 3Rs can be used to help the children develop their maths, science, art, english and even music skills.

What have we learnt from recycling over the years that is transferable to the CE?

That without considerable investment progress will be slow, and residents need to have comprehensive information, to have things made easy for them, and to feel part of the norm.

Selfridges example

I accept that this might not help those on low incomes, but John Lewis is doing the same and maybe this will cascade down the High Street?

What could we do with the money saved from reducing waste collection services?

Savings usually just offset other costs across an authority, for example if we saved a £1million off our waste budget this would go to support Children's services.

I love the celebrity MRF idea!

I think that high profile people can help the cause.

Waste services as a % of council tax

My rough estimate is that waste services as a whole (WDA and WCA) are 7.5% of your total council tax and possibly 25% of local (WCA) council tax (after material income and recycling credits are taken off)