

XR PLAN FOR CAMDEN: BOOST RECYCLING, SLASH WASTE, EMISSIONS, COSTS

- **XR offers cost-saving “action plan” in response to North London Waste Authority’s call for help**
- **Action plan: how to reach 70% recycling, cut 65% of black bag waste and 73% of CO₂ by 2030**
- **New Edmonton incinerator well over 3 times larger than required if targets met in north London**

London, 4 March 2021 – Following a call from Cllr Clyde Loakes, chair of the North London Waste Authority (NLWA), for “Extinction Rebellion to work with the NLWA and the boroughs [...] to reduce waste and increase recycling”, XR Zero Waste today released an illustrated, heavily annotated waste management brief that provides ten action points designed to help Camden Council cut its black bag waste by 65% and reach at least 70% recycling by 2030. The action plan enables the council to slash CO₂ emissions from waste processing by nearly three-quarters and to save roughly £340,000 annually by the same year.

“What the data show is that Camden’s total recycling rate has been seriously lagging, reaching only 24% in 2018/19, so that in 2020 the borough missed the national recycling target of 50% by wide a margin,” said brief author Dr. Rembrandt Koppelaar, an environmental economist and co-founder of XR Zero Waste. “But as we demonstrate in the action plan for Camden Council, turning things around is doable. It just requires the council to commit to meeting more ambitious waste management goals, which would actually save Camden’s residents money,” he added.

Data for 2018/19, the most recent available, indicate that less than one-quarter of Camden’s combined household and business waste is recovered and sent for recycling, while one-third is sent to the Edmonton incinerator and the rest (42%) is sent to landfills in Buckinghamshire. Veolia, the company contracted to collect Camden’s waste, estimates that 85% of the 80,000 tonnes that the borough sends to the incinerator and landfill every year could be recycled. But Camden Council’s current plan is to increase the total recycling rate to a mere 26% by 2025, and the household recycling rate to only 40% by 2025. So far, however, Veolia has failed to achieve even the low-ambition targets set out in its 2016 contract with Camden Council.

In contrast, XR Zero Waste’s ten action points, which are meant to assist the council in enhancing its waste management strategy, would allow for massive cuts in black bag waste flows and the achievement of a 70% recycling rate by 2030, in line with Climate Change Committee recommendations to the UK government released in November 2020. By implementing the action plan, the Council would grow organic recycling more than five-fold (via composting and anaerobic digestion), nearly triple the amount of dry recycling, and eliminate all landfilling of black bag waste. As a result, Camden’s annual greenhouse gas emissions would plummet by an estimated 73% by 2030, meaning that the council would save a total of 154,000 tonnes in CO₂ equivalent emissions by that year. By the end of the decade, it would also save 33,800 tonnes of CO₂ per year by obviating the need for virgin material production.

XR’s action plan entails two keys to waste reduction: enhanced source-separated recycling streams and the introduction of a state-of-the-art material recovery facility (MRF) for post-separation of residual waste. Such facilities are proven to extract at least 40% of black bag waste for recycling (primarily organic waste and plastics), meaning that a MRF would significantly reduce Camden’s residual waste.

If all seven north London councils were to implement similar action plans, the combined tonnage of residual waste they send to incineration would drop by more than 50%, from almost 465,000 tonnes per year, based on Environment Agency figures, to 205,000 tonnes or less by 2030. The planned, 700,000-tonne incinerator in Edmonton would thus be well over three times larger than required.

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The ten action points encourage Camden Council to:

- 1) create annual waste and recycling collection heat maps to facilitate targeted action
- 2) set up a business recycling programme and roll it out across the borough
- 3) work with residents to grow a network of zero-waste “prosumers” to motivate businesses to recycle more
- 4) maintain bins and bin housing areas to high standards
- 5) significantly improve reuse and bulk waste collection options to make them widely accessible
- 6) improve recycling campaigns and communications with residents
- 7) enhance food waste prevention and collection efforts
- 8) consider implementing the unrivalled 2011 Welsh Collections Blueprint, which has permitted Wales to achieve a 65% recycling rate
- 9) work with the NLWA, the Greater London Authority, and industry on specialised recycling collections and infrastructure
- 10) with the NLWA and industry, ensure that the latest recovery and recycling technology is deployed for collected residual waste and recyclables, including a post-separation materials recovery facility that would extract at least 40% of waste from black bags for recycling.

For each of the ten action points, XR Zero Waste’s brief supplies implementation pointers and information tailored to Camden’s unique needs and context.

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