

Christmas Meeting 2013 - Waste Prevention

By Rebecca Colley- Jones

The hot topic for our annual debate with the ink barely dry on it was, the new Waste Prevention Programme. We were joined by Rhiannon Phillips, Craig Mitchell, Karen Canard and Dan Cooke for an entertaining whiz through what it meant for us in Wales, whether we are households or local authorities.

Rhiannon emphasised that a strong economy is important for Wales and to achieve that we need to squeeze out every last resource and penny. This will require true engagement by everyone including individuals and business, the Waste Programme lays out what needs to be done to move from policy to practice and decouple waste generation from economic activity. There will be targeted support in priority areas based on the impact of resources and the potential to reduce. Rhiannon assured us that Welsh Government hoped to lead by example in adopting the principles of the Waste Prevention Programme. This would be done through the National Procurement Service by looking at whole life costing and innovation. This experience will feed into the Public Sector plan this year.

Craig Mitchell stated that waste prevention was “an act of faith” as it is difficult to measure. He also stressed a need for wider recognition for waste as an economic resource, and as a tool to assist work being conducted around poverty, especially in encouraging households to prepare, store and cook food more effectively. This will require a fundamental change in behaviour accompanied by support to enable this. Local Authorities will play a vital role in this in acting as exemplars and using tools such as the Waste Performance Toolkit.

In order to prepare for the event Dan Cooke and I had undertaken the “Rubbish Diet” devised by Karen Canard in order to give some **very honest** feedback on our experiences. The “Slim your bin in 8 weeks diet” is a step by step approach to achieving less residual waste, with an emphasis on waste reduction. Participants are guided with regular emails to changing their behaviour to achieve an average of 50% reduction. Dan gave us an insight into the innermost workings of his household and the difficulty of engaging your entire family on your crusade. I gave an insight into my attempts at extreme cookery (haggis making & 101 things to do with pumpkin) in order to seriously reduce my food waste. The message from both of us was that if we as supposedly informed individuals didn't find it easy, the support mentioned by Rhiannon and Craig was essential, as was continued commitment from designers, manufacturers and retailers.