

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL: TACKLING FOOD WASTE

The University of Liverpool has historically collected food waste alongside their general waste, which was then sent for incineration with energy recovery. The University appointed a Waste and Recycling Officer, Sam Hay, in November 2022, as part of their ambitious target to halve general waste sent for incineration by 2025, compared to a 10-year average prior to 2019, as detailed in their Sustainability Strategy.



Work soon began identifying how this could be achieved, with attention quickly focussing on the food waste cycle on campus. Hay's team identified that, across the seven accommodation buildings, housing around 4000 students, one building was recycling their food waste and the remaining six were not recycling their food waste at all – 100% of their food waste was going into general waste.

When identifying the practices across the commercial kitchens and the catering operations, he found a similar process occurring – 100% of food waste was going into general waste – “I knew that by finding a way to dispose of the food waste separately, not only would we be able to work towards meeting the 50% target, we would also be making great efforts towards reducing our carbon footprint”, Hay comments. Waste audits were carried out across the accommodation buildings, which found that up to 30% of the general waste was actually food waste and therefore recyclable.

The next step was to find a waste management contractor that accounted for food waste – the current main offering did not offer this service. “If our main waste management contractor oversaw food waste management also, it would have resulted in increased costs for us as they would have had to subcontract that out. We needed an alternative solution to keep costs down – and that’s why we got in touch with TUCO”, Hay states.

The TUCO Food Waste Management framework was introduced off the back of market research amongst TUCO member institutions. The research found a requirement for various food waste stream concepts to embrace innovation in food waste that works in conjunction with a general food waste collection from food waste recycling points. TUCO member



requirements vary in both resource and on-site space/sites - some member sites are campus-based others are city-based – and this individuality is reflected in the separate Lots within this framework. The goal of the Food Waste Management framework is to provide cost effective and efficient solutions to Universities, Colleges and the wider Public Sector, in a sustainable manner and ensure diversion from landfill.

The decision at Liverpool was made to actively encourage both accommodation kitchens and catering kitchens to recycle their food waste. The main pathway to this was to provide food waste bins (caddies) with a marketing campaign to encourage the use of the bins. Alongside this, work was being undertaken with TUCO on the Food Waste framework tender agreement, and a supplier was selected to assist the University in the disposal of the waste. But Hay and his team were on a tight

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- Sam Hay,
Waste and Recycling Officer,
University of Liverpool

**OVER 24 TONNES OF FOOD
WASTE RECYCLED**

**GREENHOUSE GAS
EMISSIONS DOWN BY 58%**

**17% REDUCTION IN
GENERAL WASTE SENT TO
INCINERATION**



state that recycling through composting or anaerobic digestion will be the only approved method for food waste management, and businesses will be obligated to segregate food waste from general waste, ensuring separate collection streams. In this aspect, University of Liverpool have a head start.

It's been six months since the start of this project, and the results speak for themselves:

- Since September 2023, over 24 tonnes of food waste have been recycled, which would have otherwise been disposed of in the general waste.
- Sending this food waste to anaerobic digestion instead of incineration with energy recovery, has cut the Greenhouse Gas emissions associated with the disposal of the food waste by over 58%.
- From September 2023 – February 2024, the University has seen a reduction of 17% in the amount of general waste sent to incineration compared to 2022/2023.

Hay reiterates how smooth the process has been, and that having TUCO on board has helped greatly, most notably from a time-saving perspective: "It's useful having everything there ready to go. TUCO has already done the groundwork on the suppliers – checking their sustainability values, checking their insurance policies, etc. – it's less work for us, and that's priceless", he states, "if we hadn't completed the tender via TUCO, we would have had to start from scratch. Utilising the TUCO framework meant we had a head-start, and sticking with what we had would have ended up costing us more money – at least 20-30% more per bin."



And the future of sustainability at the University of Liverpool? "We're already looking at new food waste bins on the sites off the main campus – an extra 15-20 food caddies and two external bins.", Hay comments. Although focus has been on students and catering operations, sights are now set on staff break areas therefore ensuring a 360-degree view on waste separation – all positive steps and meaning Hay and his team are on the right trajectory towards the University's sustainable waste management target.

About TUCO

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