

Community Action Groups Devon (CAG Devon) Report

Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the committee notes the excellent progress of the Community Engagement Project.

1. Summary

This report provides a summary of the Community Engagement project known as Community Action Group Devon or the CAG Devon project.

2. Introduction

With a need to achieve more with fewer resources and find new ways of working, Devon County Council awarded a contract to Resource Futures in May 2016, with a value of £50,000 per annum, to develop a new community engagement project: Community Action Groups Devon (CAG Devon). This new way of working supports communities to take action locally to reduce waste, increase reuse, recycling and composting and, in the longer term, reduce demand for waste management services. Crucially, this work is also seeking to develop ways of monitoring and measuring the impact of Community Engagement work in Devon.

The CAG Devon Project provides support to community groups, schools and individuals to organise community events and projects in Tiverton and the surrounding area. They provide groups support with fundraising, insurance, media & publicity, training & skill sharing, seed funding for new groups, monitoring tools, networking, case studies and inspiration.

To measure the impact of the work it was important to work in a defined geographical area. Tiverton was chosen because Mid Devon District Council has a relatively stable waste collection system with no significant planned changes to the householders' collection scheme during the project period. It was also necessary to choose an area that was representative of a wide range of socio-economic groups.

3. Progress

Due to the geographical focus of the project, the CAG Devon project is working closely with Tiverton Area Communities Transition (TACT). TACT started out as Sustainable Villages in 2008 and is part of the Transition Network Initiative. With the support of the CAG Devon project, this local initiative has now developed a number of sub groups and broadened the number of activities that it takes action on including; Give or Take events, Repair Cafés, Sewing Sessions, the Refill Devon initiative, Composting workshops, food surplus café and clothes swaps. Its name changed to TACT to represent links with Tiverton and the surrounding towns and villages. The CAG Devon project has also provided some support to the Sustainable Crediton group and the Exeter Repair Café to encouraging networking and skill sharing across all the groups.

The CAG Devon project has shown great success helping groups to develop new skills, increase networking and develop new initiatives and groups. For this reason, Devon County Council has extended the contract until the end of March 2019 to enable work to continue to gather data and evidence of the benefits of the work. The CAG Devon team will develop the project over the next year by expanding its focus from Tiverton to include the rest of the Mid Devon area, stimulating new actions and providing more support to areas such as Cridton and Cullompton and their surrounding areas. This will enable the CAG Devon project to follow the natural leads that have developed from the initial project and continue to strengthen the community network. The CAG Devon project will also start to scope the other District areas to identify which area would be most suitable to extend the project too.

It is important to recognise that this form of community engagement work seeks to engage with the community and stimulate action by the groups rather than by the local authorities. This approach takes longer to develop but has many wider benefits to the local community by improving community cohesion and resilience. It is hoped that at some point in the future it will become self-sustaining.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

A key part of the CAG Devon Project is to find ways to monitor and measure the impact of the community work the County Council supports. Resource Futures, through their work in Oxford County Council, have developed Resource CIT, an online tool which enables community groups and funders (e.g. Local Authorities) to: -

- Calculate and visualise the environmental and economic impacts of projects
- Indicate social value of activities through measuring volunteer time and consumer cost savings
- Provide monitoring data and 'return on investment' calculations for reports and funding applications
- Help establish a regular and consistent monitoring and evaluation process for funded projects and activities.

The information gathered via Resource CIT for the Devon project has been used to create an Infographic (Appendix I) showing that the project is already making good progress working with the local communities of Mid Devon. In addition to this a pre and post survey carried out via Facebook has recorded a positive shift in people's attitudes towards waste. A selection of results from the recent online survey is shown in Appendix II.

5. Financial Considerations

Working with communities to act locally to reduce waste, increase reuse, recycling and composting is essential to reduce demand for waste management services.

6. Sustainability Considerations

The benefits of this work will support a longer-term shift in attitudes towards waste but also has wider benefits to the community, creating a network of engaged volunteers, strengthening communities and creating a shift in behaviour that benefits the council's wider strategic aims.

7. Carbon Impact Considerations

The CAG Devon project is actively engaging with communities and stimulating action to reduce their carbon impact.

8. Equality Considerations

The project actively embraces equality in its day to day actions to engage with the residents and communities of Mid Devon.

9. Legal Considerations

There are no legal considerations relating to the recommendations.

10. Risk Management Considerations

There are no risks identified with the recommendations.

11. Public Health Impact

The CAG Devon project has the potential to make a positive impact on public health through encouraging healthy eating, active lifestyles and improving community cohesion.

Meg Booth
Chief Officer of Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
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Nil

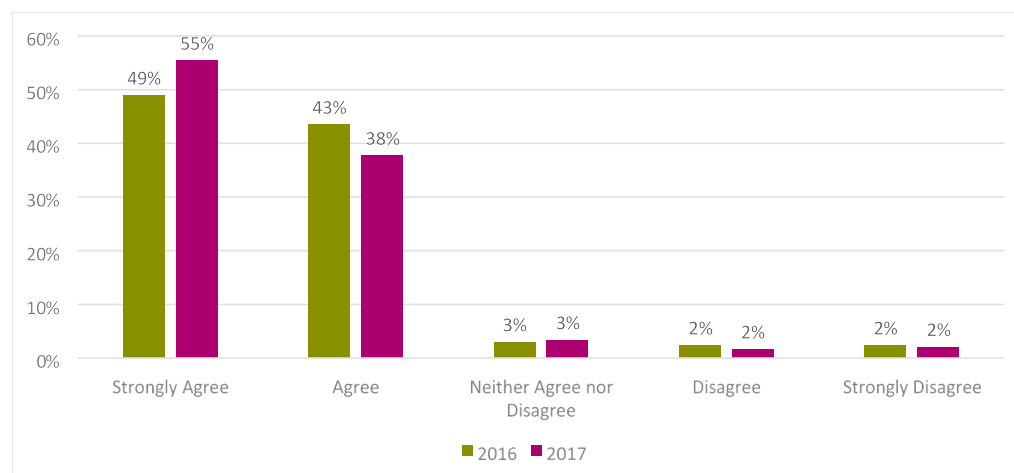


Below is a selection of results to the pre and post attitudinal survey carried on via Facebook, which has recorded a positive shift in people's attitudes towards waste.

How much people try to recycle

Responses to this question indicated that 6% more people now strongly agree that they try to recycle everything they can.

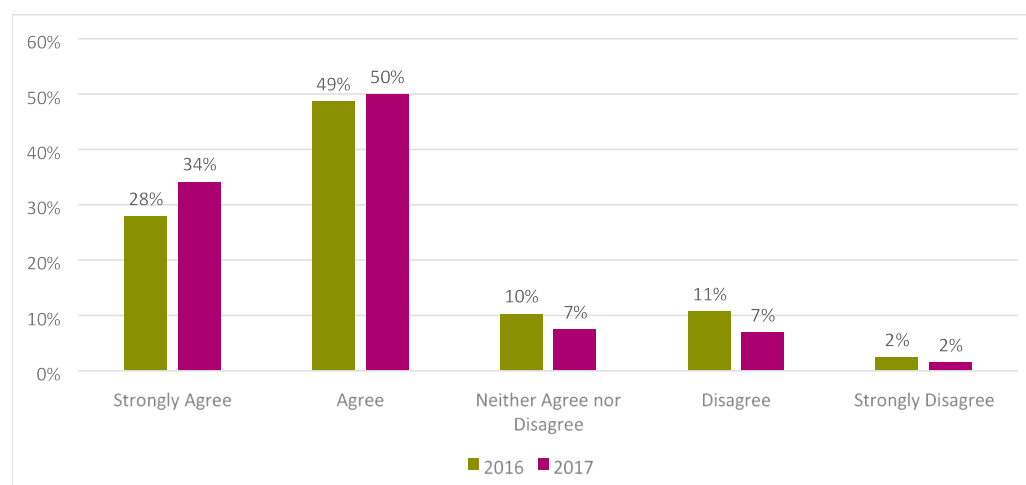
Figure 1: I try to recycle everything I can (2016 and 2017)



Local area recycling knowledge

People's confidence in their understanding of what can be recycled locally has increased. In 2016, 77% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident they knew what to recycle. In 2017, this figure increased by 7 pp with 84% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing they know what can be recycled locally. This highlights that people are generally more aware now of how to utilise recycling services effectively.

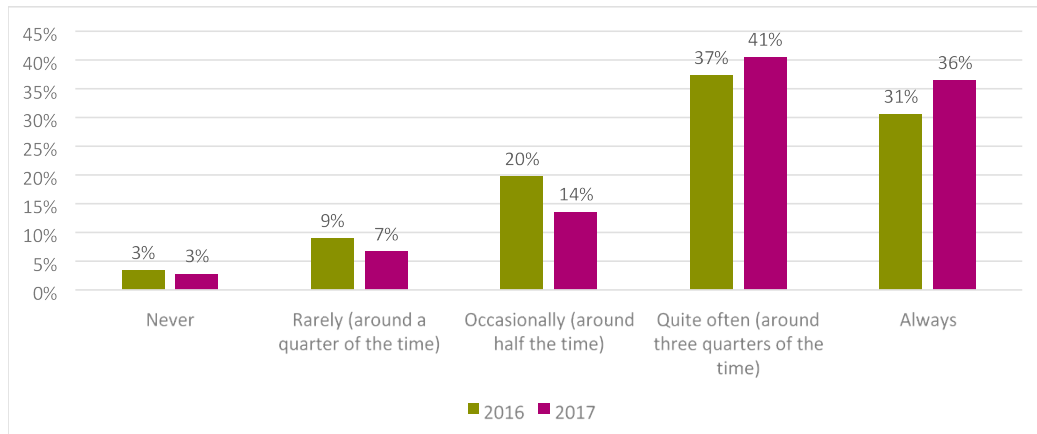
Figure 2: I am confident that I know what can be recycled in my local area (2016 and 2017)



Using up or freezing leftover food

In 2016, 68% of respondents said they quite often or always used up their food. By 2017, this figure rose to 77%, which demonstrates that there has been a 9 pp positive shift towards people using up leftover food.

Figure 3: I try to use up any leftover food or freeze it for a later date (2016 and 2017)



Donation frequency to charity shops or Freecycle

Figure 4 illustrates that respondents from the 2017 survey regularly donate unwanted items more often to a charity shop or similar than the 2016 respondents (11%, in 2016 rising to 15%, in 2017). An increase was also seen in those who quite often donate items, with a rise from 31% in 2016 to 35% in 2017.

Figure 4: How often do you: donate items to a charity shop or to Freecycle or similar (2016 and 2017)

