

## **Appendix 7 - Report from Tendring District Council on pilot of seagull proof sacks**

### **Reusable Seagull Bag Report**

#### **Objective**

To reduce the amount of litter strewn in Clacton Town Centre as a direct consequence of household refuse bags being split open by seagulls and cats and vermin to a lesser extent.

By reducing the litter the visual amenity of the town centre would be enhanced for residents, tourists and businesses.

Householders would have a secure storage capability for their waste, enhancing their attitudes towards where they live.

Reduction in loose household waste will also reduce rodent activity in the areas using the bags.

#### **Overview**

Clacton Town Centre and surrounding residential areas refuse collection takes place weekly on Mondays. Due to the built up environment with residential properties in close proximity, high proportion of flats with no food waste and/or dry recycling available to them combined with inadequate refuse and recycling storage facilities all results in a higher proportion of black refuse sacks presented for collection containing food waste.

The town centre and surrounding areas contain a larger population of seagulls due firstly to the number of high buildings which the gulls use for nesting in the summer months. This in turn gives rise to a large number of chicks in the early summer months which increases the scavaging nature of the gulls resulting in householders refuse sacks being ripped open in the search for food. Tourists and residents also feed the gulls during the summer which maintains the high gull population in the area.

#### **Alternatives**

Currently the only commercial alternative is for residents to place bagged refuse into dustbins which the contractor would then empty; Wheelie bins are not emptied by the contractor. Plastic dustbins cost from £9 each and are available from hardware/DIY stores. The drawback of using dustbins is that they only hold 1 black bag with a reduced capacity of approx. 80 litres, also a suction effect occurs as the sack is taken out of the dustbin which can result in ripping of the sack.

#### **History**

Veolia, the refuse and recycling collection contractor had been reporting the issue of split refuse sacks in and around Clacton town centre and the impact it had on both the collection of the refuse and also the resulting cleaning of the roads which utilises a large number of operatives and equipment in relation to the area covered.

Tendring District Council initiated the project to reduce the strewn waste from the actions of seagulls.

As Tending District Council do not provide a wheeled bin service, the alternative was found to be “seagull proof bags”. Already used by many councils including Dorset, Torbay, Cornwall and Carlisle to combat the problem.

### **Bag specification**

The bags are Tough, UV resistant, Woven Polypropylene bags with high abrasion resistance.

- 45x45x90cm high, 180 litres holds approximately 3 bin bags
- 2 Lifting handles & adjustable Velcro fastened lid keeps out Gulls, Foxes & vermin.
- Seagull Sacks are tried & tested and used by a number of local Authorities across the UK.
- Printed with your details and user instructions.
- Rubber anchor pads in the base to prevent them from blowing away once emptied.

### **Project commencement**

Working with the Clacton Town Partnership, grant funding was awarded which was matchfunded by Tending District Council and allowed the purchase of **600** bags with both rubber anchor pad and bespoke artwork printed on the bags with each bag costing the equivalent of **£5.41**.

Two forms of leaflets were produced to accompany the delivery of the seagull bags to the residents detailing the reason for the bags and how to use the bags (see attached)

Clacton Town Partnership provided a list of roads to be targeted within the Pier Ward of the town centre:

Beach Road	Orwell Road	Colne Road
Agate Road	Penfold Road	Edith Road
Pallister Road	The Grove.	

### **Delivery roll out.**

Based upon resources a soft option roll out was undertaken commencing with The Grove and inline with the following process:

- Inspect target street Monday mornings prior to Veolia presence with photos taken to highlight particular issues.
- Revisit the street within the same week to hand deliver bags to residents of the street talking through the process and discussing recycling, garden waste and refuse services.

- Reinspect the same street the following Monday before and during Veolia presence to ensure households utilising the bags correctly plus highlighting residents requiring further visits and/or extra bags.
- Inspect new target street and repeat above procedure plus revisits to previous target streets to ensure continued use and to “mop up” non participating households.
- During the commencement of the project and speaking with the Veolia crews it became abundant that additional roads not originally on the project needed to be included in the scheme and as a result to date the following roads have been targeted; with delivery dates, total bags delivered and participation rate:

### Roll out timetable

Street	Delivery Date	No bags delivered	Participation %
The Grove	10.06.14	48	76%
Agate Road	16.06.14	29	53%
Beach Road	16.06.14	50	83%
Pallister Road	23.06.14	27	41%
Orwell Road	23.06.14	17	69%
Rosemary Road West	02.07.14	38	74%
Ellis Road	02.07.14	64	58%
Hayes Road	08.07.14	70	64%
Alexandra Road	17.07.14	13	50%
Wellesley Road	23.07.14	65	82%
Station Road	29.07.14	17	52%
High Street	29.07.14	0	0
Alton Road	05.08.14	24	71%
Edith Road	Not delivered to date		
Penfold Road	Not delivered to date		

Total bags delivered 466 +/- 5%

Town Hall Stock 25

Weeley Stock 100

**Total 591**

### Results

Below are a selection of photos of the targeted roads with “before” and “after” photos.

The Grove

**BEFORE**

**AFTER**



Station Road

BEFORE



AFTER







**Wellesley Road**      **BEFORE**

**AFTER**



**Beach Road**      **BEFORE**

**AFTER**





**Orwell Road**

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**Ellis Road**

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**Agate Road**

**BEFORE**

**AFTER**





**Rosemary Road West BEFORE**

**AFTER**



**Pallister Road BEFORE**

**AFTER**



## Findings

### Strengths

- Roads where houses were owner occupied resulted in a higher participation of the scheme with residents generally taking a higher degree of pride in where they lived “buying in” to the product and the scheme.
- Positive feedback received from all who participated (helped that the product was free of charge) with many comments that this scheme was long over due.
- System works best for properties with forecourt or front garden area where bags could be left before and after collection with no impact on the public footpath.
- Households which used the bags had a 100% effect in reduction of their bags being ripped open.
- Bags are lightweight, foldable and easily portable making storage and use easy.
- Large capacity and non rigid structure makes storage of multiple refuse bags easy without tearing or catching.
- Some households leave bags permanently at the front of their property and use as a receptical unit reducing bags being ripped open between collection dates.

### Weakness

- Bags are portable making them easy to steal; (less than 10 have been reported stolen to date)
- Lower participation in areas with a transient household population such as some flats and multi-occupancy properties.
- Some households leave bags permanently on forecourt/pavement and act as a waste storage receptical, which could be perceived as having a detrimental effect on the street scene.
- Following the commencement of the seagull proof bags the gulls started to concentrate on refuse bags in the streets where residents were not participating in the scheme or prior to the scheme had not been targeted by the gulls.
- Seagull proof bags prevent or limit the participation in the food recycling scheme as the refuse bags are now protected from gulls, vermin and cats, which is one of the main “selling” points of the food scheme.
- One household started to place loose rubbish in the bags even though this was clearly stated not to do on the leaflets.

### Opportunities



- Have had many enquires from residents outside of the pilot area wishing to purchase a bag.
- Work well in areas where street cleaning is to a lesser frequency than the Town Centre such as weekly or monthly, provision of gull proof bags would reduce the street litter and could result in a reduction of the street cleaning frequency and hence a reduction in the street cleaning contract.
- Would recommend the purchase of a small quantity of bags (100+) to sell to the general public at £10 each.
- Refuse crews happy with the system with not much extra time spent on removing the refuse bags from the seagull bags as the bags were intact and not falling to pieces.
- Crew in this area work exceptionally well and remove refuse from split bags which technically could be left.
- Town Centre is helped that it is cleaned on a daily basis which results in a certain amount of apathy from residents who place their refuse out and basically leave the resultant mess for the street cleaners to clear.
- Sell from Weeley and Town Hall with delivery an option could combine with the introduction of selling compostable caddy liners at these two points along with promotion of black bag sales.
- Selling bags at £10 each would provide revenue which in turn could be used to purchase compostable caddy liners.

### **Threats**

- In “normal” residential areas Veolia stock pile before collection, this leaves the bags vulnerable to attack before collection and even though would be the responsibility of Veolia could lead to complaints from the public questioning the whole procedure.
- Wide spread use would have an affect on the time taken by Veolia to carry out refuse collection, if bags not used properly (handles tied together, making it time consuming to untie when wearing gloves): majority of bags in the scheme were hand delivered where I spoke directly with the householder, but this is time consuming, but also gave me an opportunity to talk about recycling and garden waste scheme; successfully signing up new customers and delivery recycling containers to new and existing householders.
- Door knocking and speaking to residents highlighted the low recycling rate in this area with a general apathy to recycling as “don’t have time” and “too busy” “easy to just put it all in black bags”

### **Conclusion**

Put simply, the bags work. All the households which used them resulted in a vast improvement of the visual amenity of the street with householders happy with the product and the Veolia operatives getting used to the product and generally happy.

Unfortunately not one street had a 100% participation rate; in a scheme where the product was for free, with doorstep delivery as an option. This reflects the issues with recycling participation rates for not just this area but as a whole.

## **Proposals**

Purchase a small quantity of bags for general sale to the public, this will require new artwork and leaflets but selling at a recommended price of £10 each would cover all these costs and provide a surplus to re-invest in the purchase of food caddy liners

Food caddy liners could then be sold to the public for £1 a roll, compared to equivalent in supermarkets of around £2.50 for a roll constitutes a considerable cost saving for the public and a revenue stream for the council which is already undertaken by other local authorities.