**WHAT HAPPENS TO KINGSTON’S WASTE?**

*Landfill tax means we can’t just bury our rubbish any more, incineration is controversial, and plastic waste, deservedly, gets a very bad press... So what to do? Ideally we’d produce much less waste but that doesn’t seem to be happening (in fact there’s probably been even more during the pandemic), so what happens to our many tonnes of recycling and rubbish after it’s been collected?  Read below what Kingston Council and the South London Waste Partnership tell us about how and what to recycle, what happens to our plastic waste, how the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) works to produce heat and energy, how the emissions from ERFs compare with, for example, emissions from bonfires and fireworks, wood-burning stoves, cars and other sources of pollution – and much more about rubbish, with links for you to delve further. And of course there are always* [*Freegle*](https://www.ilovefreegle.org/explore/freegle-kingston) *and* [*The Circulatory*](http://savetheworldclub.org/circulatory/) *doing a brilliant job of keeping useful stuff out of the waste stream.*

*Kingston Council and the South London Waste Partnership tell us:*

**The South London Waste Partnership (SLWP)** handles the waste and recycling of four S W London boroughs, including Kingston – and these boroughs have some of the highest recycling rates in London - [48% of the waste produced](http://www.slwp.org.uk/recycling-continue-partnership/).  But that still leaves around 200,000 tonnes of waste each year that hasn’t been sorted for recycling and this goes to the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility. If that didn’t exist, the Council would have to find an alternative solution to dealing with all that waste –most likely transporting it to another similar facility many miles away, leading to higher carbon emissions.

**Recycling**

86% of the recycling and rubbish generated by households across Croydon, Kingston, Merton and Sutton is treated or reprocessed in the UK.  The plastics, tins, glass, paper, card and food waste that residents separate for doorstep collection are sent to different facilities, the vast majority within the UK, to be recycled - see the [Destination Recycling](http://www.slwp.org.uk/what-we-do/recycling-composting/destination-recycling/)web-page and videos for details. The remaining 14% is sent abroad (figures based on 2018/2019 [Waste Data Flow](https://www.wastedataflow.org/)). All the materials sent abroad are recycled – the council only works with reputable companies who go to great lengths to ensure that the materials are handled carefully and in an environmentally-friendly way.

We need to do more to keep food waste and plastics out of our grey bins. Food waste, if put into the brown caddies can be processed into fertilizer, for use in the production of food, and gas, which is used to generate electricity. Burning plastics is about the biggest emitter of carbon out of all the waste that ends up in the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility, and as most of the plastic that ends up in residual waste could be recycled it’s a soluble problem if we all do our bit.  See the [A – Z of waste](https://www.kingston.gov.uk/info/200273/waste_and_recycling/713/a_to_z_of_rubbish_and_recycling) on Kingston Council’s website for how to dispose of a range of rubbish.

**About the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility (ERF)**

Only the [residual waste in our grey bins](http://www.slwp.org.uk/what-we-do/recycling-composting/destination-recycling/#rubbish) ends up in the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) plant at Beddington; there’s information about how the Beddington ERF produces heat and power [here](https://www.beddingtonerf.info/), and some information putting ERF emissions into perspective below.

The electricity produced by the generator is exported to the National Grid to supply homes, schools, shops, businesses and industry across the country. The Beddington ERF produces around 26MW of electricity every year - enough to power the facility itself plus around 57,000 homes. Excess steam produced during the process is used to provide low-carbon heating and hot water to local homes and businesses via highly insulated pipes. For more information visit the [Sutton Decentralised Energy Website](http://sden.org.uk/). The use of the ‘waste heat’ in this way means that the Beddington ERF can call itself a ‘Combined Heat and Power’ (CHP) plant.

**Putting Energy Recovery Facility emissions into perspective**

* The Beddington ERF reduces the amount of carbon emissions by around 130,000 tonnes per year compared with the Beddington landfill site it replaced.
* Bonfire Night celebrations (on and around 5th November) release 10 times more dioxins into the atmosphere than all the UK’s 40+ energy from waste (EfW) plants do during an entire year.  EfW plants contribute 0.40% of the UK’s total dioxin emissions compared with 3.8% from bonfire night celebrations alone\*
* Almost a third (32%) of the UK’s Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) emissions are produced by us driving our cars, vans and lorries.  In comparison, all the UK’s 40+ energy from waste (EfW) facilities combined only produce 1.2% of the NOx emissions dealing with all our non-recyclable rubbish.\*
* Domestic wood burning stoves and open fires produce 570 times more particulate emissions each year than all the UK’s 40+ energy from waste (EfW) plants combined.  EfW plants produce 0.04% of UK particulates (PM10 and PM2.5), compared with 23% from domestic wood burners.\*

\* Data based on 2017 estimates from the UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory