



Where does all our recycling go?

If you ever wondered what happens to all the contents of your blue recycling bin once they get collected by the council operators once a week, you are not alone. To find out, The Archer was recently given access to the Biffa Materials Recovery Facility, the second largest such plant in the UK. Matteo Lanzini reports.

Inside a vast and rather noisy warehouse in Edmonton, north London, up to 50 collection trucks every day dump their mixed recycled items on to a massive pile. Three separate processing lines, two storeys tall, continuously sort the incoming material using mechanical and technological methods like magnetic fields, air pressure and optic sensors... but also manual checkers.



Man-made mountain: Huge piles of recyclables collected from all over north London are piled up at the Edmonton Centre before being sorted and compacted into cubes for processing. Photos Matteo Lanzini

Around 40 operatives are active on site around the clock, mostly performing quality checks during demanding 12-hours shifts. The plant is operational every day of the year, except Christmas Day.

Once fully separated, aluminium, glass, plastics, cardboard and paper get compacted primarily in very large cubes ready for resale and shipping to Biffa's manufacturing and packaging customers, so that they can be reprocessed into new consumers' products. This happens mostly in the UK, but also in Europe and Asia if there are capacity or demand constraints at home, most commonly for cardboard and glass. During our visit I saw first-hand that unfortunately residents too often dump unsuitable materials in their recycling bins, causing

issues and delays to the processing cycle and resulting in a large quantity of residual waste that needs to be transported to other facilities for disposal, all at extra cost and causing extra pollution.

The facility manager that led our tour mentioned nappies, hygiene products and textiles as the most common offending items. Composite materials containers – think milk alternatives, certain soups and fruit juices – also pose a challenge. They are made of a combination of recycling materials but packed together in a way that makes it currently not possible to separate them, often despite opposite claims from manufacturers. Also, stuffing different materials together, for instance in a delivery cardboard box, in an attempt to save space, turns out to be problematic.

The collection trucks press and compact these items all together, making the sorting process at the plant much more difficult as a result.

Food contamination is another issue that often means items cannot be recycled. The easiest tip to remember is to only put waste that is "dry, clean and separate" in your blue bin.

A Biffa spokesperson told The Archer: "Small actions at home help improve recycling quality, reduce waste and ensure more materials can be given a second life."

Guidelines available at www.nlwa.gov.uk/whatcan-werecycle will help you check what can be recycled at home and what items instead can be taken to a Reuse and Recycling Centre like the one on Summers Lane, N12.



**DAVID HILLEL
OPTOMETRIST**

**50% off
ADDITIONAL PAIRS**

Minimum spend £200
Discount applies to
the cheapest pair

**10% DISCOUNT
FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**

Aged 65 and over. Terms & conditions apply



Offering an enhanced eye examination
and a comprehensive hearing care service

Contact us today to book an appointment

Tel: 020 8444 2233 | Email: office@davidhillel.co.uk

Ally Pally celebrates 90 years of BBC TV

Alexandra Park and Palace is running an autumn season of events marking 90 years since BBC television began broadcasting in the new medium from a studio there.

Alongside its studios, the Palace housed BBC offices, dressing rooms, scenery stores, and props and technical facilities, while the East Court housed a

fleet of BBC broadcast vehicles. Running from September to November, the programme will feature talks, screenings, performances and special

events, drawing from the Alexandra Palace Television Society archive. Full details are at alexandrapalace.com/BBCTV90



**PICKLEBALL
FOR ADULTS
& JUNIORS**

TRY ONE OF THE WORLD'S
FASTEST-GROWING SPORTS,
RIGHT ON YOUR DOORSTEP!

FIND A LOCAL SESSION FOR YOU

- ✓ New beginner courses & tasters sessions
- ✓ Junior after-school clubs & holiday camps
- ✓ All equipment provided
- ✓ Wide range of sessions in N London

Scan Here for more info!

