



Ware 4 Bins & Recycling

Bins, Trolleys, Recycling and Waste Containers

Treasure from Trash

Global Landfill Mining Conference 9th October

The first Global Landfill Mining Conference entitled 'Treasure from Trash' was held this month in London. 100 delegates from over 20 different countries met to look the prospects of landfill mining and assess past case studies.

The idea of mining landfills to extract valuable resources is not new and is something that has been discussed for many years. With current rising costs of resources, in particular oil, there is now a pressing need to examine the viability of this concept.



Landfill sites are already recognised for their potential energy source through the extraction of methane gas. Methane is a by-product of the decomposition of biodegradable waste in an airtight, low oxygen landfill site. For safety reasons this highly flammable gas must be extracted and flared and in many landfill sites it is further used to produce energy.

The aim of the Global Landfill Mining Conference was to highlight other resources that could also be utilised from landfill sites, in particular the extraction of high value materials such as plastic. It is estimated that around 200 million tonnes of plastic have been dumped in the UK landfill sites alone, worth around £60 million (Reuters, 2008). Since plastic may take hundreds of years to decompose the idea of extracting it from a landfill

for reprocessing is not unreasonable. The main issue to overcome will most likely be contamination from hazardous waste, which until 2004, was buried alongside general household and commercial waste. The Conference showed that it is in fact economically feasible to extract these valuable resources from landfill sites, although market rates for plastics, metals and land can have an impact on profitability (Global Landfill Mining, 2008).

Reduce Re-use Recycle

Despite improving recycling rates the OECD estimates that the amount of waste going to landfill is likely to double in the next 20 years from 1.6 billion tonnes in 2005 to 3 billion tonnes in 2030.

What this conference has highlighted is the value and potential lost energy that is being discarded when waste is buried in landfill. Studies have shown that even in the average household bin there is enough unrealised energy for 500 baths, 3500 showers or 5000 hours of television every year (Recycle Now, 2008). Recycling waste streams such as plastic, metal and glass will not only reduce the need for virgin materials but will also result in dramatic energy savings.

The amount of energy saved from recycling one glass bottle will power a computer for 25 minutes.
Recycling one plastic bottle saves enough energy to power a 60W light bulb for 6 hours.
(Recycle Now, 2008)

Potential cost savings – A study conducted by Envirowise estimates that on average a company can save around 4% of their annual turnover through improved waste management such as minimising, re-using and recycling waste.

Answer our 5 Quick Questions to see how well your recycling scheme is working...