

First School Plastic Recycling Trial Launched

(7.7.03) The first school based, plastic bottle-recycling scheme was launched at Kilcoman National School, Tinahealy, Co Wicklow by Repak, the industry funded packaging waste compliance scheme. The trial scheme, which could eventually be extended to over 1,000 schools, will initially run through 14 schools in county Wicklow and aims to recycle 70,000 plastic bottles over the next school year.

The scheme is an extension of the successful Repak Cash for Cans, which operates in over 1000 schools nationwide and last year collected nearly 7 million cans. Reusable plastic bags will be provided to schools for gathering the bottles, which will be collected monthly by Recycle Net. The material is then predominantly sent for recycling into other plastic products such as fleeces material and Plaswood (used for fence posts and outdoor furniture).

It is estimated that there are approximately 800 million plastic bottles used per annum in Ireland, mostly split between PET (beverage bottles) and HDPE (predominately milk bottles). Poor collection infrastructure and the low perceived material value of recycled plastic relative to other materials such as aluminium have been amongst the factors hindering the development of plastic recycling in Ireland to date. This initiative along with Repak's Bring Bank funding programme will increase the volume of plastic collected and recycled. In addition Repak has also announced that it has increased its subsidy rate for plastic collection threefold to €200 per tonne. These initiatives will help Ireland meet its future EU Recycling Targets, which outlines a minimum recycling rate per material type.

According to Darrell Crowe, Repak "This initiative is all about instilling an ethos of recycling amongst the young, and we are delighted to be able to commence this scheme in Wicklow who have been doing great work on educating children on recycling. We look forward to potentially extending this to the remaining Repak Cash for Cans schools. This could lead to the recycling of 5 million plastic bottles nationally and could divert circa 200 tonnes of plastic bottles from landfill."

Full details on the locations of centres and material accepted are available on www.repak.ie.

About Repak

Repak is a not-for-profit members based compliance scheme established under a voluntary agreement between industry and the Department of the Environment and Local Government. It was established as industry's response to the obligations placed on Ireland by the EU directive on Packaging Waste (94/62/EC) and is the only government approved compliance scheme under the Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations 1997. Repak succeeded in reaching and exceeding Ireland's National Recycling Target of 25% of packaging waste in 2001.

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For further information please contact: Eoin Kennedy @ Slattery Communications

Tel: +353 1 661 4055; Mob +353 86 8339540;

ekennedy@slatterycommunications.ie