

## **Where there's muck, there's brass...**

### ***How EC businesses and residents can turn their trash into cash, and more***

“Lad, where there's muck [waste] there's brass [money]!”. My father, who was a Yorkshireman, used to quote this old Yorkshire saying,” says Dr Alan Carter, Executive at EOH Coastal & Environmental Services and Chairman of the East London Waste Disposal Site Monitoring Committee.

“His words hold true today, except that now it is far easier than ever to turn trash into cash, and also to enjoy a range of other benefits that come from managing waste better.”

For most citizens and businesses, waste is a case of out of sight, out of mind. However, there is growing awareness of what happens to our waste - and the opportunities it brings to make money, as well as a positive difference in our communities.

In the Buffalo City Metro (BCM) region, a group of proactive local businesses and associations have joined forces through the Call-2-Action initiative to create a Clean and Green city. The initiative is being implemented through two projects: increased recycling, and better management of landfill sites.

#### **Recycling earns cash, reduces waste and creates jobs**

“I have visited numerous landfill dump sites throughout the Eastern Cape, and I am always struck by how much of the waste comprises recyclable materials such as glass bottles, metal cans and cardboard,” comments Carter, who has extensive experience in landfill and waste management both in SA and USA.

Carter explains that recycling waste delivers three important benefits to communities.

1. Recycling unlocks the economic value of waste by allowing businesses and residents to turn their trash into cash, creating new jobs, and conserving and re-using resources.
2. Recycling reduces the costs of waste disposal by reducing the volume of expensive landfill space required.
3. Recycling helps to curb human and environmental health risks created by pollution generated by landfills.

“To make it easy for businesses and residents to recycle – and to turn their trash into cash, Call-2-Action has established a recycling buy-back centre at the Oriental Plaza, in North End. This facility buys back waste from the community, and also receives waste collected from the Call-2-Action clean-up project,” says Invest Buffalo City Coordinator, Drayton Brown. “This creates an opportunity for members of the public to generate value [cash] from their waste, which will reduce the overall waste going into our landfills.”

This initiative also supports one of the goals of the National Waste Management Strategy (2011): to divert 25% of recyclables from landfills through waste minimisation, re-use, recycling and recovery.

In addition, it will also support separation-at-source programmes, which all metropolitan municipalities should initiate to grow the contribution of the waste sector to the green economy, where an estimated 100,000 new jobs could be created.

#### **Better landfill management reduces costs and curbs pollution**

There are numerous “dump” sites throughout the Eastern Cape which are no more than big holes dug on open land, where dumped waste lies uncovered until burned. These are often located close

to or even within water courses, posing a significant human and environmental health risks, particularly to downstream water users.

Not only are these sites unsightly, dangerous and a breeding ground for pests, the contaminated water run-off pollutes streams, rivers and groundwater. The run-off often contains both toxic substances and a high nutrient content resulting from the decomposition of organic material. "Leachate", the dark residual liquid that drains from a landfill site, contains a mixture of organic and inorganic contaminants and its level of toxicity depends on the type of waste, ranging from domestic to hazardous and medical waste.

To keep our communities clean, green and safe, the Call-2-Action initiative is also driving better landfill management in the city. The initiative involves bringing local waste disposal and the construction of landfill sites in line with the strict standards established in environmental and waste legislation, based on international best practice.

These standards seek to ensure landfill sites are appropriately located on suitable geology, away from water courses. They are often sophisticated engineering facilities comprising impermeable clay, plastic liner systems and drainage systems to prevent seepage of leachate and rainwater run-off from the landfill. A landfill site is also only licensed to receive a fixed volume of waste over its lifespan, called "air space". Once a landfill is full, the waste is encapsulated with clay and plastic liners to reduce rainwater runoff and leachate pollution. The East London Waste Disposal Site near Berlin, constructed and operated by the Metro, is an example of such a well-designed sophisticated landfill.

Due to the high costs of constructing and operating a landfill site according to the legal standards, each cubic metre of landfill volume has a significant Rand value ranging from R200 to over R1000 per cubic metre, depending on the type of waste and cost of adhering to the applicable standards.

In reducing the amount of waste that reaches our landfills and in better managing these landfills, the cost of waste disposal can be reduced significantly, while unlocking numerous human and environmental health benefits.

The four waste drop-off areas in the city that Call-2-Action has identified as crucial for refinement in the Buffalo City Metro region are Settlers Way, which serves as the main entrance into the City from the East London airport; Southernwood; Oxford Street and Western Avenue; and the Quigney area.

### **Join the movement to a Clean and Green Buffalo City**

"We invite businesses and residents to join Call-2-Action and help create a Clean and Green Buffalo City," concludes Carter. "We are a diverse group of proactive local businesses and associations that have joined forces as a collective business response to the challenges faced within the City and to establish a common vision between the City and its businesses. Together we can create a Clean and Green city that is well governed, innovative and productive."

For more information, contact the Border Kei Chamber of Business or visit <https://call2actionweb.wordpress.com/> or pop in at the recycling buy-back centre at the Oriental Plaza, in North End.



Waste site in the Eastern Cape poorly located adjacent to a wetland and burning waste



Maybe don't use this one. But meant to show the potential recyclables such as tin cans



Example of an excellent recycling initiative at Tsomo in the Eastern Cape