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YOUR RECYCLING IS SECRETLY DUMPED

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Jason Groves

HUNDREDS of thousands of tons of material dutifully put out for recycling is being secretly dumped in landfill sites by councils in Britain.

Shocking new figures reveal that while some householders face stiff fines for breaching recycling laws, many councils are simply dumping huge quantities of the paper, glass and plastic they collect.

In some areas one item in every eight put out for recycling ends up being sent for landfill or incinerated.

Local authorities last night blamed residents for putting the wrong rubbish in the wrong bin or failing to clean the material they try to recycle.

If recycling is "contaminated", the bags are simply dumped anyway.

Critics said the revelations made a mockery of Gordon Brown's attempts to be seen as a green crusader with the recycling drive and his plans to phase out free plastic bags.

Shadow Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles said: "I think families across the country will be shocked to learn that the cans and bottles they dutifully put out for recycling are being secretly dumped.

"Most people want to do their bit but this sort of thing undermines confidence. It also raises real questions about the Government's Big Brother approach over fines and bin taxes."

The figures showed that 240,000 tons of material put out for recycling last year ended up being dumped or burned.

This is likely to be the tip of the iceberg as almost half of all councils did not release figures, including major authorities such as Birmingham, Bradford, Hull and Warwickshire.

In Worcestershire, 14,509 tons were dumped – equivalent to more than one eighth of the 110,459 tons put out for recycling.

Similar amounts were dumped by Tynedale and Wansbeck councils in the North-east and Kings Lynn council in Norfolk.

Derek Prodger, member for the environment at Worcestershire County Council, said large loads of recycling could be written off by a small element of "contamination".

He said it was not cost effective for the council's waste contractor Severn Trent to clean up contaminated loads. "If any part of the load has contamination in it, then you lose the whole load. That is a worry for us," he said.

"We have to have a better system but it has to start with the householder. If people are not careful how they recycle, then this is the result."

Mr Prodger said the county's recycling record remained one of the best in the country, with more than 30 per cent of waste recycled.

Residents were angered by the revelations. Pensioner Carole Oliver, of Worcester, said: "I always recycle. I have to wash out cans and milk bottles and everything. It takes time but you have to separate things.

"I don't mind doing it but if such efforts are going to waste, what's the point?"

Ellen Hall, of Kidderminster, Worcester, said: "I am very aware of recycling and try to keep up with what you can and cannot do.

"To learn that this appears to make no difference makes me very cross. You hear cases of people being fined huge amounts for not putting things in the correct rubbish. It is just another money raising tactic, isn't it?"

Other blackspots include Havant in Hampshire, Torbay in Devon, and Mid-Bedfordshire, where one in 10 recycled items was dumped.

In Test Valley, in Hampshire, where the local council has hired eight "bin police" to fine householders who put out the wrong rubbish, it still secretly dumped 917 of the 11,961 tons of recycling collected, almost one item in every 12.

The Local Government Association said the amount rejected was dwarfed by the 13 million tons recycled last year. Paul Bettison, chairman of its environment board, said: "Councils strive to recycle as much as possible."

As this controversy flared, a separate set of Government figures showed that Britain has imported 1,000 tons of waste from other EU countries in the past two years to use in power stations, mostly from Germany and Holland.

Shadow Environment Secretary Peter Ainsworth said: "It is crazy that the UK is importing hundreds of tons of waste when we have more of our own than we know what to do with."