

***“That Cork County Council would initiate a paint reuse scheme in each of its 11 Civic Amenity Sites. The aim of the scheme would be to offer good quality reusable paint to community groups, charities and others while reducing the volume and cost of waste for disposal.”***

We don't know precisely how much paint goes to waste in Ireland each year.

What we do know is that research in the UK has found that the average household has 17 part used paint tins stored in cupboards, garden sheds and garages.

We know that one litre of improperly disposed paint has the ability to pollute up to 250,000 litres of water.

And we also know that although many paints are now water-based, all paints are regarded as hazardous and sent for treatment by the same process. This is the case even though most paints collected at civic amenity sites are not hazardous at all.

The most recent published statistics from the EPA tell us that in 2014, 9.5 million litres of paints, varnish, ink and adhesive were treated as hazardous waste. (They don't tell us how much of this is paint only.) Half of this 9.5 million litres was treated at home, half was exported.

In 2016, 43,000 litres of paint was presented at civic amenity sites around the country. Only engine oils and pesticides were presented in greater volumes. Management of paint is a burden to local authorities. Management of any waste defined as hazardous is costly and there are specific guidelines for its storage and handling.

In general, 50% of waste paint that is stored or thrown away is still usable. To minimise the environmental burden, the financial burden and to prevent waste, many countries have initiated paint reuse schemes or community paint recycling programmes. These include Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Rediscover Paint project in Ballymun. One of the most extensive paint reuse schemes is closest to us in the UK, where a nationwide paint reuse network called Community RePaint collects leftover paint at civic amenity sites and other participating hardware stores and redistributes it to benefit individuals, families, communities and charities in need at an affordable cost. Community Repaint began with two schemes in 1993. 15 years later, Dulux came on board as a sponsor. And in 2014, 22 years after the initiative started, the scheme's first remanufacturing centre opened, blending and rebranding paint that was once regarded as waste to be sent for incineration. Community RePaint has a network made up of over 74 schemes. It redistributes over 300,000 litres of paint each year with the help of 154 employees, 14 trainees and 146 volunteers.

We in County Cork collect waste paint at all of our civic amenity sites. At present, even though most of it is not hazardous, it is all regarded as hazardous and most is sent for incineration. We cannot aspire to a scheme as extensive as Community RePaint in the immediate future but what we can do is to formalise a paint reuse scheme at each of our civic amenity sites. I can think of nothing that stands in the way of our initiating this. Segregate hazardous from non-hazardous paint. Ensure each tin to be redistributed is clean with a reasonably well sealed lid. Repackage if it is not. Make it available to schools, charities and community groups. Even to the public if they would like it. Whether there is a small fee or not, all paint that is reused minimises that which is wasted. This in itself saves money. Reuse schemes like this are supported by the Southern Waste Management Region Office and are a stated aim of the National Waste Prevention

Committee. This is a very small, very simple initiative but is a huge statement of intent that could in time grow into a sustainable industry.