



Pakman Awards 2018

WEEE Champion Award Submission



Who is Joe Bonner?

“ This community effort shows exceptional commitment by many local groups and individuals who have brought this scheme to fruition in making their area a better place to live, by providing convenient waste collection and recycling services. The service is extremely well attended and highly valued by the local community.”

Joe Bonner



Joe Bonner is a Donegal native now living in Ashbourne, County Meath. Since moving to Meath in 1982, Joe has been involved in all aspects of community life including the GAA, local soccer clubs, and even ran several adult learning programmes as a qualified engineer.

In 1999 Joe noticed the population in Ashbourne was increasing, but the infrastructure and the facilities were not developing alongside the growing community. Joe was instrumental in the campaign to develop a community centre, playground, library and community house for local groups, including the Scout Troop, Meals on Wheels and St. Vincent de Paul.

Joe had noticed that illegal dumping and fly-tipping was at epidemic levels in the county. Not only was it an eyesore, but it was damaging to the environment. Following further investigation, Joe realised the nearest recycling facility was more than 20 miles away, and the price to hire a skip was very expensive and unaffordable for most. There was a desperate need for a recycling facility in Ashbourne. The relationships Joe developed over eight years of campaigning for new facilities in his area were crucial for his next crusade.



What Initiatives did Joe put in place to increase take back of electrical items for recycling working with other stakeholders?

Community Recycling Days

With the help of PJ Spillane, Joe hosted the first ever ‘Community Recycling Day’ in the area. Neither of them was sure if they were capable of organising such an event or even if the public would be interested. Joe knew he had to do something and decided to organise an event where the community could **recycle all their general and WEEE waste in the one central location at a reasonable price.**

The European Recycling Platform (ERP) and Thornton’s Recycling were the first two companies Joe approached to participate in the community recycling day. Joe wanted to ensure from day one that reputable companies who provided a top-quality service were involved. 13 years later ERP - who provide their services for free - and Thornton’s, are still a key feature of this fantastic initiative.

The first event was held on a Saturday and the doors opened at 8 am and were scheduled to close at 10 am but due to the high demand, they remained open all day. Joe had underestimated the sheer volume of cars, vans and lorries and the quantities of material they were bringing with them. More trucks from Thornton’s had to be drafted in to help with the amount of material. There was a major traffic disruption in the town with the number of cars queuing to gain access to the recycling area. The event surpassed everyone’s expectations with over **100.88 tonnes** of waste material collected.

The one-stop ‘Community Recycling Days’ have been growing from strength to strength for the past **13 years**. Each year the amount of materials recycled is increasing and in total **1516.90 tonnes** of materials have been collected that otherwise could have ended up by the roadside or in our rivers and lakes. The reason the events are so successful is they remain affordable, safe and convenient for the community.

The ‘Community Recycling Days’ are now run three times a year with a special Christmas Tree recycling facility in December and January. The Community Recycling Days run for a full 8 -hours (with an additional two hours post-event for cleaning and tidying). **Over 40 people** work on each event, 20 volunteers and 20 representatives from the various providers. A full track and trace system has always been in place and at the end of every year, the documents from each event are sent to the County Council for their records.

Education - The events provide ERP staff with the opportunity to speak to the public and inform them about the importance of recycling their WEEE goods and used batteries in a safe and responsible way. ERP staff also promote up and coming WEEE Recycling Drop Events which offer households an accessible central point to bring their electrical goods to be recycled.

New recycling services - A confidential shredding machine is available on site; 25 tonnes of compost is available to the public free of charge.

Over 150 hours goes into the planning and execution of each event. This includes everything from promotion, insurance, permits, site recces, health and safety, cleaning and much more.

JOE’S FIRST EVENT -

**100
TONNES
COLLECTED**



**ONE
STOP
RECYCLING
DAYS**



**COLLECTED
1516
TONNES FOR
RECYCLING TO DATE**



What Service is Joe providing to the Community?

The local authorities have seen a significant reduction in the amount of illegal dumping in the area.

Joe and his team have made a very positive and important impact on the local community in Ashbourne.

The events have become renowned with the community; people are travelling from as far as Navan, Fingal, Balbriggan and Dunboyne with their WEEE and general waste. The **'Community Recycling Days'** are considered the largest event of its kind in the Country. This is a brilliant achievement in itself.

Joe saw there was a need for a waste recycling facility in his local area. He knew if people were given the opportunity to dispose of their waste in one place in a safe and responsible way they would avail of it and this would reduce the amount of dumping in the locality. Joe has put an extraordinary amount of his own time and resources into this voluntary project to ensure that every event is run professionally and to the highest standards. The goal for the future is to start tackling the plastic issue and expanding the events to other areas of Meath. Joe eventually would like to see a facility in his local area where people would be able to bring their waste material. Funding for this has been promised for years, but it has never materialised. If there is a need for people to recycle their WEEE goods and other household waste Joe will continue to host his 'Community Recycling Days' and his wife will ensure everyone working at the events are fed and watered!

150
HOURS
PLANNING



FUTURE GOAL
TO REDUCE
PLASTIC WASTE



What volume of recycling is Joe responsible for?

Event Start Date:
2005
(13 years)



Total WEEE collected to date:
323.67 tonnes



Total collected to date:
1516.90
tonnes

Letter of recommendation