

What to do with WEEE

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) is anything that needs a battery or electrical supply to work.

This type of waste shouldn't be put in the general waste bin – it contaminates the waste stream and means that valuable resources aren't recovered for reuse. Also, batteries can cause fires which is why they are collected separately.

The question is – what do you do with broken items or ones that still work but you don't use?

Some areas of West Sussex have kerbside collections of WEEE, and you can check this on your local council website. Otherwise your local Household Waste and Recycling Site has facilities to take large or small WEEE along with bulbs and batteries. Remember metals, which all WEEE contains, are finite resources so recycling is important. The world is moving to non-fossil fuels but using electrical energy requires batteries and the often scarce and expensive metals used in their manufacture shouldn't be discarded as waste.

If the items are still working find a charity shop. Broken items can also often be fixed cheaply at a Repair Café; we have many of these spread across the county.

Good News.... From January this year, large electrical and electronic retailers selling items such as fridges, freezers and washing machines amongst other larger WEEE will have to take back WEEE in store as already happens with batteries – shops that sell them must also take them back for recycling. The hundreds of current retailer collection points for WEEE will increase to more than 10,000 across the UK and they will be open longer hours. This maybe more accessible even than Household Waste Recycling Sites.

The basic take back scheme which will have to be put in place will be on a like for like basis – if you buy a new iron the retailer takes back the old one. Online retailers don't have to accept WEEE though until 2022 unless they have actual showrooms. Some retailers will go beyond the minimum requirements so it's always worth checking out what they offer – it could make a difference to where you shop! It's estimated that over half of homes have got old electrical items they want to get rid of so any opportunity offered by a retailer could support your Spring Clean!

The Covid Effect.... Currently with many people working from home in the UK there has been a spike in home office equipment sales and there is a concern over the amount of e-waste being produced. About half of people moving to home working invested in new IT equipment but most didn't recycle the redundant items; either throwing them in the residual waste or keeping them in storage somewhere. The 45% increase in fitness trackers also raises concerns as they often contain precious metals, and some are unrecyclable.

And finally, a Christmas story..... the amount of broken Christmas lights discarded could light every stretch of road across the country. Research by the Recycle your Electricals campaign suggests almost 2 million households throw out lights each year. Remember – if they're unusable recycle them, if they're still working you can save money next year and reuse them!

So please remember even with electricals- reuse, restore and recycle!

Visit @WSRecycles on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to find out more, or email Waste.Prevention@westsussex.gov.uk with questions.

