

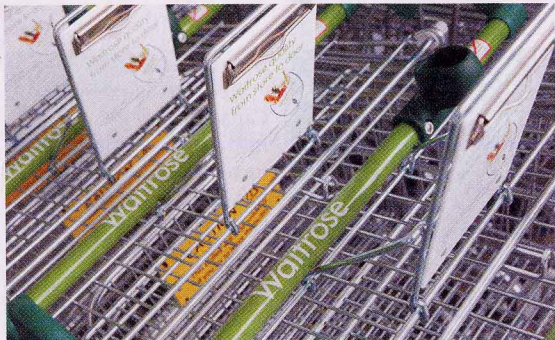
Waitrose turns waste into green electricity

Chloe Smith

Waitrose is planning to use waste food to generate electricity, instead of sending it to landfill, after a three-month trial at five stores.

A total of 71 tonnes of food waste produced at the five stores in the Midlands was sent to Cawley's in Bedford, one of the country's few bio-digestors, where it was turned into electricity, said Bill Wright, energy and environment manager at Waitrose. Now the retailer was "looking at rolling it out to another 50 in the midlands," he said.

Anaerobic digestion, a process by which micro-organisms break down biodegradable material, is an eco-friendly alternative to landfill where food rots, emitting greenhouse gases. The residue left at the end of the procedure can be used



The retailer is planning to extend the scheme to another 50 stores

as an odourless organic fertiliser for growing crops.

Wright said Waitrose was also trialling a scheme where polystyrene packaging was recycled and turned into new plastic.

Waitrose is also taking back worn out bags-for-life and sending them to a company that turns the plastic into garden furniture.

Single-use plastic bags was also an area for debate,

he added, as the government plans to impose a mandatory charge for bags unless retailers cut usage 70% by next spring. So far Waitrose has said it does not plan to introduce charges.

Wright said it would be a decision taken at board level. "I don't know what strategy the board will decide upon for plastic bags. It is an emotive issue for the customers," he said.