

Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to consult on a revision of the existing waste strategy for England.

The Vision

Objective for Waste Policy in the UK Government's sustainable development strategy 2005, Securing the Future²:

Protection of human health and the environment by producing less waste and by using it as a resource wherever possible. Through more sustainable waste management – reduction, re-use, recycling, composting and using waste as a source of energy – the Government aims to break the link between economic growth and the environmental impact of waste.

Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) requires us to achieve 'more with less' through developing measures to promote:

- better products and services, which reduce the environmental impacts from the use of energy, resources or hazardous substances throughout the life of the product (manufacture, use and when discarded);
- cleaner, more efficient production processes which strengthen competitiveness and;
- shifts in consumption towards goods and services with lower impacts.

Since publication of the *Waste Strategy 2000 (WS2000)* there has been substantial progress.

Waste has grown less than GDP since 2000. Of the main waste streams, both municipal and business waste are growing at a rate slower than GDP; municipal waste increased at about 3.5% per year up to the millennium, and this has now slowed to around 1.5% per year.

Recycling and composting of household waste has doubled in the last four years; local authorities are on course to meet the 2005 national household

² *Securing the Future*, the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, March 2005, available at <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/publications/uk-strategy/uk-strategy-2005.htm>

waste recycling target of 25% set in *WS2000* .

Less of most kinds of waste is being landfilled – down from 82% to 72% for municipal waste between 1998/9 and 2003/4 and from 50% to 44% for industrial and commercial waste between 1998/9 and 2002/03. We are on course to meet our 2005 target of reducing the amount of commercial and industrial waste landfilled to 85% of that landfilled in 1998.

A substantial range of new policy instruments has been introduced, including the landfill tax escalator, the landfill allowance trading scheme (LATS), the aggregates levy, regulations to implement a number of EU directives on waste in specific sectors, including packaging and vehicles, and a new planning policy statement (PPS10) covering waste.

New institutional arrangements have been established, aimed among other things at strengthening capacity and improving efficiency in local authorities, developing markets for waste materials and increasing public awareness of waste, notably through Defra's waste implementation programme (WIP) and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) with additional funding for local authorities (including the Private Finance Initiative).

Strengthened arrangements have been made for enforcement of waste regulations by the Environment Agency.

Significant improvements are being made to our knowledge base including new research and data strategies.

Public awareness of recycling has grown and is now greater than for any other environmental issue.

In revising our strategy we need to build on this progress to make sure that we meet our Landfill Directive targets and other European commitments. But we also need to shift the emphasis for the future:

- putting greater focus on **waste prevention** and embedding this in the wider Sustainable Consumption and Production (**SCP**) agenda alongside other environmental impacts;
- seeing waste as a resource and extending a **recycling and re-use** culture beyond the home to workplaces, shopping and leisure activities;
- highlighting sustainable waste management in the **non municipal sectors** (over ten times the size of household waste including commercial, industrial, construction, demolition, mining and quarry wastes which have varying characteristics) with greater

- integration of planning and procurement between municipal and some non-municipal waste; and
- securing technologically efficient **investment** in the treatment of **waste in** each part of the chain. Previous relatively cheap landfill 'solutions' are not an option and the step-change in investment that has already begun will need to gather pace.

Looking forward we expect that:

- there will be continuing growth in household waste but at a reduced rate;
- national household waste recycling and composting rates of more than 40% in 2010 and 45% in 2015 could be reached (comfortably exceeding the current targets of 30% and 33%);
- meeting the landfill directive diversion targets for municipal waste in 2010, 2013 and 2020 remains challenging but achievable; but depends on necessary investment soon in new facilities, including those to increase materials recovery and recover energy from waste where there is no reasonable prospect that it can be recycled or composted;
- without further action there will be some growth in commercial waste overall, with significant growth in some sectors;
- the *WS2000* target for use of landfill for industrial and commercial waste in 2005 is likely to be met and recycling is set to increase, but a continuing decline in the use of landfill will be difficult to achieve across all sectors;
- target levels of recycling of packaging waste, waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and end-of-life vehicles (ELV) are expected to be met by the stated deadlines but will need to be maintained at least at these levels thereafter.

Meeting the new challenges

The revised waste strategy will consolidate the Government's current policies but also set out our proposals to tackle the new challenges. These are set out in this consultation document and summarised below.

In chapter 2 we set out the outcomes we wish to achieve and invite views on:

- increased **national targets for recycling and composting** of household waste (40% by 2010 and 50% by 2020) making a much bigger contribution to our overall recovery targets for municipal waste (page 23).
- setting future **national targets for landfill of commercial and industrial** waste (page 24).

Our **policy framework** needs the right framework of compatible policy instruments to achieve changes in behaviour of all concerned. In chapter 3 we invite views on the following proposals:

- **simplifying the regulatory system** and making it more proportionate through reforms of the permitting and exemption systems, better guidance and communication, and risk-based enforcement (page 27).
- **extending producer responsibility** in a range of sectors to prevent waste and increase recycling and recovery – looking for **voluntary agreements** with regulation only if the voluntary approach does not deliver (pages 29 & 49). Key sectors include food, waste and construction.
- keeping the **pricing framework** under review (page 30).
- continuing **support from public expenditure** through local authorities, Private Finance Initiative (PFI) credits, the Business Resource Efficiency & Waste Programme (BREW), WRAP and the WIP programmes (page 32).
- helping behaviour changes by business and the public through **information, advice and awareness raising** (page 35).
- **Government** to lead by example in dealing with its own waste and the waste impacts of its procurement operations (page 38).
- strategies and programmes to **improve the evidence base** (page 39).

Waste prevention already stands at the top of the waste hierarchy but only limited progress has been made in decoupling waste generation from economic growth. This needs to be tackled as part of the Government's Sustainable Consumption and Production agenda, and in chapter 4 further action is proposed on:

- **prioritising products** where waste impacts need to be tackled.
- extending product stewardship by producers and retailers and reducing waste impacts through **eco-design** (page 45).
- promoting **re-use and re-manufacture** with support from the BREW programme (page 46).
- further **engaging businesses** (including SMEs) to stimulate resource efficiency through advice services (page 47).
- **advising the public** on environmental impacts of products (page 50).

For waste that is produced there is a need to **recover more resources**. With a more integrated approach, this will mean making decisions that achieve the right balance between the levels of the waste hierarchy and securing the necessary

infrastructure investment. To close the resources loop and drive investment, in chapter 5 we make proposals for:

- future **standards for local authorities** on reducing and recycling household waste (page 56).
- piloting more **recycling services** for small businesses (page 74).
- encouraging **energy recovery**, as part of our energy policy and an alternative to landfill, but not at the expense of practicable waste prevention, recycling and composting (page 60).
- **placing further restrictions** on use of landfill in the longer term (page 64).
- strengthening central and regional coordination and advice **on procurement** to help local authorities make the investment needed (page 66).
- continuing to develop **markets for recycled materials** including further **standards** for such materials which will allow lighter regulation (page 67).
- a new management plan for waste **imports and exports** (page 68).
- arrangements for better collection and management of **household hazardous waste** (page 78).

It will be a more complex task to deliver the changes we want and achieve better integration of the different strands of waste policy. This will require development of the institutional framework of **roles and responsibilities** to ensure the right links and partnerships are formed. In Chapter 6 we invite views on proposals:

- to establish a **Sustainable Waste Programme Board** (with cross government membership and external advice) to drive delivery of the strategy and ensure coherence of waste policies (page 83).
- to **strengthen regional working** including better partnership between local authorities at the regional and sub-regional level in procuring waste management facilities to complement regional spatial planning orchestrated by regional planning bodies and their Regional Technical Advisory Bodies; and funding the Regional Development Agencies to co-ordinate business waste and resource management at regional level in partnership with local authorities and private and voluntary sector (page 85).
- for a **wider strategic role for local authorities** (in partnerships) to facilitate more integrated management of different waste streams (page 87).
- **to improve the interaction of producers** and compliance organisations **with local authorities** to deliver EU and national targets (page 90).
- to help the **voluntary and community sector** make a fuller contribution to the delivery of waste objectives (page 94).

Finally, as legitimate waste management becomes more complex and expensive the potential is greater for a significant increase in **waste crime**. To address this we invite proposals in chapter 7 (page 97) on what more targeted **prevention and enforcement** is needed.

This consultation document is supported by a **partial Regulatory Impact Assessment** and **Environmental Report** under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, on which views are invited.

The consultation period commenced on 14 February, and will remain open until 9 May 2006.

Details on how to participate in this consultation as well as the full list of questions can be found on pages 105-112. Stakeholders have the opportunity to submit their responses to any or all of the questions by taking part in our **online consultation**. For more information and to register please go to: www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/strategy/review/.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this consultation, please contact the Waste Strategy Review Team at Defra:

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