

# **Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee**

## **EPC(2) 04-06(p1)**

### **Progress on implementing recommendations from the Committee's Inquiry into meeting landfill and recycling targets.**

#### **Targets, landfill, composting, waste minimisation**

Recommendation 1: That the Welsh Assembly Government identifies local authorities that may struggle to meet the 40 per cent recycling /composting target for 2009–10 and works with them to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to achieve the target.

EPC Committee will be aware that local authorities across Wales collectively achieved 19.4% recycling and composting in 2004-05 and that four authorities achieved the 25% target for 2006-07 two years early. These are welcome indications of continued progress, but the Assembly Government has worked closely with all individual local authorities to review their ability to achieve the 2006-07. These discussions have identified only two local authorities that consider that they will not meet the 25% target: Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil.

Assembly Government officials have already met representatives from Cardiff. The Authority does not consider that it will be able to meet the 25% target in 2006-07, due to the limited capacity of its existing materials recovery facility and the time that it will take to introduce a new one. Nevertheless work is well in hand to introduce a new and much larger facility which will enable Cardiff to meet and perhaps exceed the 40% target for 2009-10.

A similar meeting will take place with representatives of Merthyr Tydfil, probably in March this year.

The assembly Government is well aware that the 25% target is stepping stone on the way to the 40% target in 2009-10 and is not complacent about the amount of work that remains to be done, particularly in respect of composting. However, achievement of the 25% target will put local authorities and Wales as a whole in a good position to achieve the higher target in 2009-10.

Recommendation 2: That the Welsh Assembly Government ensures that municipal waste management strategies are used as the main tool for individual local authorities to plan for their waste management needs and the delivery of Welsh Assembly Government and European targets.

The intention remains to take powers, at the appropriate time, under Section 29 of the Waste and Emissions Trading Act 2003 which will allow us to require individual local authorities to produce municipal waste management strategies where necessary. However, while the Assembly Government accepts that these powers may be necessary at some point, the current emphasis is to work with local authorities to assist them to meet the targets in the Wales waste strategy, as indicated in respect of Recommendation 1.

We are also about to undertake a survey of local authorities' intentions to recycle and compost specific tonnages of the biodegradable components of the municipal waste stream (e.g. paper, card, green waste, kitchen waste etc). This will demonstrate whether local authorities are planning to divert from landfill sufficient biodegradable municipal waste to meet the EC Landfill Directive targets set for them in the Landfill Allowances (Wales) Scheme 2004. As well as asking for information on specific tonnages for each biodegradable material for each year until 2010, we will also ask what actions are specifically being put in place to achieve additional diversion (e.g. the installation of a new kitchen waste collection scheme).

Recommendation 3: That local authorities fully utilise source segregation of recyclable materials and make this as user-friendly as possible. (In making this recommendation, the Committee agrees with the Welsh Assembly Government's view that while householders should segregate recyclable material at source, local authorities should be allowed the flexibility to choose how segregated materials are collected, e.g. kerbside sorting, clean MRF or bring sites).

The Assembly Government continues to encourage source segregation new local authority kerbside collection services are being introduced on a regular basis. The Assembly Government considers that source segregation will provide better quality recyclable materials and will help householders identify the value of the materials that they discard.

Recommendation 4: That the Welsh Assembly Government removes the perverse incentive for local authorities not to encourage home composting, and develops a mechanism that allows home composting to count towards local authority landfill diversion targets. Local authorities should encourage householders to compost at home.

The Assembly Government is working with Pembrokeshire County Council and the waste and Resources Action Programme to develop a home composting scheme that will enable the validation of a robust protocol that will demonstrate the impact of home composting. Home composting offers a significant waste minimisation opportunity as well as offering householders a way of taking responsibility for their own waste. We will be seeking to introduce home composting into the Landfill Allowance Scheme (LAS) reporting system in a way which will allow local authorities to claim the benefit of home composting against their LAS targets thus removing the current incentive to promote central composting. A need for central composting will of course remain but local authorities will be able to take a balanced judgement on the two approaches.

Recommendation 5: That the Welsh Assembly Government introduces material-specific targets for recycling of bulky but low weight materials such as plastics.

The Assembly Government has already undertaken to research the possible effect of introducing materials specific targets in time for the outcome of this research to influence the revision of the Wales waste strategy. This research will be taken forward in 2006-07.

Recommendation 6: That local authorities continue to work in partnership with the community, voluntary and private sectors in developing minimisation, re-use and recycling schemes in their areas, recognising the particular skills and expertise that these organisations can contribute to the delivery of targets.

The Assembly government continues to support partnership working between local authorities and the community, voluntary and private sectors and has allocated considerable resources via the Strategic Recycling Scheme (£6.8 million over three years) supported by European Structural Funds, to support partnership arrangements between local authorities and the community sector, which can also involve private sector partners.

Recommendation 7: That the Welsh Assembly Government makes representations to the UK Government to introduce measures to promote waste minimisation / penalise unnecessary waste creation. The Committee believes that the UK Government should consider producer-responsibility levies and tax reductions on more environmentally-friendly products. The UK Government's response should be made available to the Committee.

The Assembly Government contributes to the Waste and Resources Action Programme's (WRAP) Waste Minimisation Innovation Fund which was launched in November 2004. So far, the initiative has approved 28 projects with combined funding of £4.2m, and the potential to deliver a reduction of over 500,000 tonnes of household waste.

The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) will shortly publish a report on its work with the major supermarket chains to reduce packaging and in particular the use of single use plastic bags. The Assembly Government consider the outcome of this work will seek to work with the UK Government to promote waste minimisation.

The European Commission has recently published the Thematic Strategy on the Prevention and Recycling of Waste and this proposes that Member States develop waste prevention programmes. Defra have also just issued a consultation document for the review of England's Waste Strategy. This will allow an opportunity for the Assembly Government to press UK Government to introduce measures to promote waste minimisation that will impact on businesses operating in Wales.

## **Planning / regional working**

Recommendation 8: That Regional Waste Plans should be made statutory.

The Assembly Government has given reasons why it does not consider that statutory regional waste plans will help deliver the outcomes needed from the Wales waste strategy. However it is seeking greater clarity and rigour in the revised regional waste plans that will be produced in 2007. The current plans already have the status of material considerations in the planning process and the revised plans will be expected to identify with more certainty the types of sites that will be considered suitable for waste management facilities. . In the last five years nine waste management facilities including waste transfer stations (including one for hazardous waste) and materials recovery facilities have successfully passed through the waste planning process and others are coming forward. In addition some eleven composting facilities are now operating.

Recommendation 9: That, in the meantime, Regional Waste Plans should be revised to ensure they identify suitable geographical locations for regional facilities and that the Welsh Assembly Government provides local authorities with clearer guidance to deliver this objective.

As indicated in the comment on Recommendation 8, this is already happening. It will be assisted by the additional information available from the GIS work which was published in October 2005 with a revision being published in February 2006.

Recommendation 10: That private sector engagement with local authorities should be promoted more vigorously via the Wales Waste Forum, Welsh Local Government Association and regional waste groups.

Private sector involvement in the implementation of the Wales waste strategy is actively sought and WESA and other industry representatives are represented on e.g. the Wales Waste Forum, the Forum's hazardous waste working group, the regional waste plan working groups etc. This active engagement with the private sector will continue.

Recommendation 11: That the Welsh Assembly Government provides clear advice and guidance on the sustainability of different waste management options.

This guidance is provided via the Environment Agency's Waste Technologies Data Centre and in the Assembly Government's Waste Strategy, Wise About Waste, and in the Regional Waste Plans.. The latter includes a "sustainable waste management option" (SWMO) appraisal of different options for managing all wastes within each region.

Recommendation 12: That the Welsh Assembly Government provides clearer guidelines to local authorities on:

i. which technologies it would like to see operating in Wales and which it wishes to discourage;

ii. which technologies should be used to deal with residual waste until it is possible to eliminate it.

Please see the separate paper for the Committee.

**Recommendation 13:** That the Welsh Assembly Government provides assistance and guidance to local authorities on how best practice from elsewhere in the UK, Europe and worldwide can be applied in Wales.

This work is ongoing both via the means identified in the comment on Recommendation 11 and via specific means e.g. specialist seminars where this contributes to objectives under the Wales waste strategy: the Assembly Government sponsored a well attended seminar on the collection and treatment of foodwaste in July 2005. Extensive guidance on best practice is also available in the published literature and on various institutions' web sites. However it would not represent a good use of public funds to duplicate the ample guidance already in existence.

## **Funding**

**Recommendation 14:** That the Welsh Assembly Government provides an indication to local authorities of the level of capital and operational funding that will be available to them until at least 2013, in order to enable long-term planning and business security.

The Assembly Government has explained why it cannot accept this recommendation. However we will shortly issue the Sustainable Waste Management Grant letter for 2006-07. In accordance with practice in previous years the letter will give an indication of resources for a three year period, including new capital resources to encourage joint working between local authorities in 2007-08 and 2008-09.

**Recommendation 15:** That the Welsh Assembly Government provides regional hypothecation of some waste management funding to encourage local authorities to work together on developing regional facilities, especially for more specialised facilities such as composting of kitchen waste.

Please see the comment in respect of Recommendation 14. The Assembly Government is also considering proposals from the Welsh Local Government Association for support for local authorities to assist them to work co-operatively and to provide central expertise for procurement issues.

**Recommendation 16:** That the Welsh Assembly Government provides sufficient funding to ensure that local authorities are able to roll out kerbside collection systems to a level consistent with securing the delivery of recycling, composting and landfill diversion targets.

The Assembly Government has provided local authorities with a total of £93 million in Sustainable Waste Management Grant between 2005-06 and 2007-08 specifically to support diversion from landfill disposal by increasing recycling and composting. Additional resources will be announced shortly in the grant letter for 2006-07. The Assembly Government has allocated over £160 million to support

sustainable waste management by local authorities for the period 2002-03 to 2007-08.

Recommendation 17: That the Welsh Assembly Government provides a central source of advice to local authorities on legal, contractual and funding issues to enable them to access expertise, reduce expenditure and improve success in securing external sources of funding, including European funds.

Please see the comment in respect of Recommendation 15.

Recommendation 18: That sustained, local, targeted education should be introduced to reduce, re-use and recycle. Liaison officers should be appointed in each local authority to visit residents and schools, to run road shows, etc., to increase householders' knowledge of what they can do, what can be done with recycled materials and how individuals' actions impact on the local environment and community. Initiatives should include the use of incentive schemes and positive feedback on how well schemes are doing and how they benefit the local community.

The Assembly Government continues to fund the Waste Awareness Wales organisation (£800,000 per year, including the media campaign) to carry out local awareness campaigns in support of local authorities' own campaigns.

Recommendation 19: That the Welsh Assembly Government encourages more schools to be part of the 'eco-schools' programme run by Keep Wales Tidy. The benefits of the programme should be more widely promoted in terms of education, compatibility with curricula and the potential for cost savings for the school.

The Assembly Government and partner organisations are funding the Eco-Schools project (£200,000 per year between 2005-06 and 2007-08) to extend the number of Eco-Schools, which promote the importance of waste management and recycling, to 1500 of the 1971 schools in Wales by 2008. The Assembly Government is also ensuring co-ordination between the Eco-Schools project and other related educational initiatives.

Recommendation 20: That the Welsh Assembly Government works with Environment Agency Wales and local authorities to build public confidence in the monitoring and pollution prevention processes in place for waste treatment facilities. This could include education initiatives in schools and communities near such facilities, tours of facilities, community liaison officers and working with schools / eco-schools.

The Assembly Government is working with the Environment Agency and other partners to deliver this. Increasing the acceptability of waste management facilities by the public is already scheduled to be part of the Waste Awareness Wales campaign.

Recommendation 21: That the Welsh Assembly Government maintains funding of organisations that contribute to promoting recycling and composting.

The Assembly Government continues to provide funding support for Cylch, Keep Wales Tidy, Waste Awareness Wales, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), Envirowise, the Wales Environment Trust (WET), and Arena Network. All funding is kept under review but there are no plans to change these support arrangements at present.

## **Markets / business support**

Recommendation 22: That the Welsh Assembly Government encourages and supports business to create recycled products and markets by:

- i. providing greater financial and business support, including research and development funding, for new and existing businesses in Wales to use recyclate from the municipal waste stream, create recycled products and develop markets for recycled goods and services;
- ii. encouraging business to apply for European funding to help develop their businesses;
- ii. supporting the development of a recycling facility for farm plastics and a market for the products. (While not directly within the remit of the inquiry, the Committee recognises that agricultural waste and farm plastics are important issues).

The Assembly Government continues to support for businesses seeking to use recyclate via WRAP and the Wales Environment Trust and via the other business support mechanisms. The Assembly Government has also established a Materials Action Programme with £9 million funding for the period 2005-06 to 2007-08 to assist businesses become more resource efficient. Part of that will be to encourage businesses to develop industrial symbiosis where wastes from one process can be used as raw materials for another.

The Assembly Government is working with the other Devolved Administrations to introduce a producer responsibility scheme for farm plastics and will be working to ensure that it meets the needs of Welsh farmers.

Recommendation 23: That the Welsh Assembly Government provides help and advice to public sector organisations, including local authorities, to procure more recycled products and that this should be built into the normal procurement process. The Welsh Assembly Government should be an exemplar in procuring recycled products.

Work with WRAP and with Value Wales through its Sustainable Procurement Pathfinder initiative is ongoing.

Recommendation 24: That the Welsh Assembly Government encourages and supports businesses to reduce, re-use and recycle waste by:

- i. working with Wales-based businesses, particularly large retailers, to encourage waste minimisation, consumer education and provision of recycling facilities;
- ii. providing advice and support for Wales-based companies to reduce waste and make the best use of waste, in particular by providing a central source of advice for businesses / organisations on how to audit waste streams, reduce and recycle waste and make cost savings.

Most retail activity is delivered via UK wide retail companies. Please see the comment on Recommendation 7. The Assembly Government will seek to work with Defra in this area following the publication of the WRAP report.

## **Research and development**

Recommendation 25: That the Welsh Assembly Government

- i. encourages the setting up of exemplar / demonstration projects to illustrate to local authorities and the general public how different technologies operate;
- ii. funds research and development and commercial-scale field trials / demonstration projects for potential treatment options for residual waste, until it is possible to eliminate it, in order to inform local authority choices;
- iii. funds research and development into the innovative use of recycled materials to make new products.

The Assembly Government has already given reasons why it cannot accept this recommendation. We are in discussion with the WLGA about providing local authority representatives in Wales with access to examples of waste management technology.