

SOUTH EAST WALES REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Managing Waste Sustainably

A new waste strategy for Wales

Introduction

1. The National Assembly Wales has decided to take up both the challenge and the opportunity to develop its own waste strategy. This paper gives a brief outline of the main issues raised in the consultation paper for the Wales waste strategy and should be read in conjunction with the summary of the strategy that has been made available. The consultation on the strategy was launched on 4 July and will close on 5 October. The Assembly will debate a final strategy in the autumn before a final strategy is issued early next year.

Why have a Wales waste strategy?

2. Wales currently shares the waste strategy outlined in *Waste Strategy 2000*, published in May 2000, with England. That paper was always recognised as an interim step before the National Assembly produced its own waste strategy. The need for a separate waste strategy arises from:

- the different circumstances of Wales, including its current poor performance regarding waste management (Wales currently landfills some 95% of its municipal waste, compared with 88% in England),
- Wales has one of the lowest proportions for recycling in Europe, and
- the opportunities arising from Wales' smaller size and relatively greater cohesion,
- the Assembly's own desire to improve Wales waste management performance in line with the statutory responsibility placed upon it to promote sustainable development. The Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee sees improving the management of waste in Wales as being of major importance.

3 *"Putting Wales First"*, the Cabinet Partnership agreement included this statement on waste:

"We will seek to implement a waste strategy to promote minimisation of packaging, re-use and recycling, and using incineration and land fill methods only to a minimum extent."

The proposals in the consultation paper reflect this approach.

Statutory drivers for the Wales waste strategy

4. Apart from the aspiration of improving Wales' performance in the management of waste, there are also statutory requirements leading to a new waste strategy.

- The National Assembly has a statutory duty, unique within the EU, to promote sustainable development. A new waste strategy will be a major contributor to this duty.
- The Wales waste strategy must also comply with relevant EU legislation: notably the Waste Framework Directive and the Landfill Directive. A list of the main relevant EC Directives is attached at Annex 1.
- The Strategy must also comply with relevant UK legislation, notably the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Environment Act 1995

Coverage of the Wales waste strategy

5. In order to comply with the Waste Framework Directive the strategy must be comprehensive and to cover all the major waste streams including municipal waste, industrial and commercial waste, hospital waste and agricultural waste. The consultation paper therefore also seeks views on targets for waste minimisation and recycling across the public sector and in the private sector. For businesses there is the added advantage that controlling waste saves money and increases profits.

6. The consultation paper also proposes that the Assembly will seek to reduce the growth in municipal waste by involving householders and local businesses in waste minimisation. The Assembly will also work with the UK Government, the other devolved administrations in the UK and with EU bodies to reduce and promote the reuse of e.g. packaging. Reducing or minimising the growth in waste will make the Landfill Directive obligations easier to achieve.

7. The consultation paper contains clear action points for the National Assembly and our partners, and notes areas where the Assembly will have to encourage action at the UK and European levels.

Consultation on the Wales Waste Strategy:

8. The Assembly has published a consultation paper, with a three month consultation ending in

early October. Following consultation the Strategy will be considered by a Plenary session of the Assembly later in the year before the final strategy is issued early in 2002. The Strategy will be reviewed after three years to reflect changes in technology and other developments.

9. The consultation paper on the strategy, "*Managing Waste Sustainably*" is in two parts: a detailed 200 page document is aimed at the specialist audience and will go *inter alia* to all local authorities, the voluntary sector, business and industry. The 30-page summary will go to community councils. Both versions will be available in local libraries and will be published on the website.

10. **Local consultation:** Local authorities will be responsible for the local implementation of much of the all-Wales strategy. Legislation requires them to make provision for waste management in their development plans. In order to plan properly, local authorities will need to determine the need for facilities and then ensure that adequate provision is made in the development plan. The consultation paper encourages local authorities to discuss a full range of options for their local waste management solutions with their local communities. Local communities should have a therefore central role in achieving sustainable waste management to ensure that local communities:

- understand the need to manage the wastes they produce;
- have a say in deciding the best solution for managing it;
- should gain economic advantage from recovering valuable materials from their own wastes.

Aims of the strategy

11. In keeping with the aims of sustainable development the consultation paper *Managing Waste Sustainably* proposes targets and policies which will move the treatment of waste in Wales up the waste hierarchy. The waste hierarchy is:

1. Reduce

- i. develop clean technologies more sparing in their use of natural resources
- ii. the technical development and marketing of products designed to make no or little contribution from their manufacture, use, disposal or to increasing the amount of waste or its harmfulness

1. Re-use

- i. containers

ii. bulk items e.g. furniture, electrical items

1. Re-cycle/Recover

- i. treat to regenerate the original product (e.g. paper)
- ii. treat to convert to a new product or raw material (e.g. compost)
- iii. use as a fertiliser/soil conditioner (e.g. sewage sludge spreading to land)
- iv. use as a fuel (incineration with energy recovery)

1. Dispose

- i. by burning (incineration without energy recovery)
- ii. by landfill
- iii. by dumping at sea

Recycling targets for local authorities

12. Currently the most commonly used means of waste disposal in Wales is to landfill which is at the bottom of the waste hierarchy. Encouraging the reuse of packaging and by promoting recycling and composting the waste strategy will reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and help Wales to meet its obligations under the Landfill Directive. This Directive requires the amount of biodegradable municipal waste being sent to landfill to be reduced by comparison with 1995 levels to:

- 75% by 2010,
- 50% by 2013 and
- 35% by 2020.

13. The consultation paper proposes to meet most of the 2010 requirement by greatly increasing the amount of municipal waste being composted or recycled. To do this it proposes targets for local authorities to increase the amount they recycle or compost to:

- 15% by 2003-04,
- 25% by 2006-07 and
- 40% by 2009-10.

14. The targets proposed for local authorities in Wales are challenging, and are also higher than those proposed for English local authorities in *Waste Strategy 2000* (25% by 2005, 30% by 2010 and 33% by 2015). They have however been attained (or even exceeded) elsewhere, within the UK and in Europe and are therefore attainable.

15. Unlike in England there are no statutory targets upon local authorities in Wales to achieve

levels of recycling. The Assembly will seek to agree these targets on a voluntary basis with local authorities in their Best Value Policy Agreements on a three yearly cycle. However, these targets are crucial to Wales as a whole meeting its obligations under the Landfill directive and the assembly has retained the right to consider the introduction of statutory targets for local authorities if necessary.

16. Separate collection of materials for recycling: In order to maximise the effectiveness of recycling the consultation paper proposes that waste materials including biodegradable wastes should be segregated at source as far as practically possible in order to:

- reduce contamination;
- extract maximum value;
- highlight to the producer (especially householders) the value of the waste being discarded;
- facilitate their handling;
- reduce their impact on the environment.

Creating wealth from waste

17. Improving the management of waste in Wales will clearly have major environmental benefits, however increasing the amounts of materials recycled for further beneficial use will also offer opportunities for social and economic benefits. The consultation paper seeks to further the move away from seeing waste as a problem to be disposed of and forgotten. This will require a considerable culture change. As a developed country the UK produces large amounts of waste because it can afford to be wasteful. Less developed countries cannot afford such wastage. If we can afford to be wasteful, we can equally afford to do something about it. In doing so we will turn the situation on its head and actually recover value from waste, creating wealth, generating jobs in new enterprises and making UK businesses more competitive. Those producing and managing waste in the UK need a complete change of mindset. We should invest in waste minimisation, re-use and recycling, and only use energy from waste and landfill for residual, low value wastes. Expenditure today will reap benefits in years to come - 'investing in our future' should ring true in waste management as it does in other walks of life.

Energy from waste

18. In keeping with the Partnership Agreement the strategy will see only a minimal place for either incineration or landfill. However even with very successful policies for waste

minimisation and the maximum promotion of recycling and composting there will still be a substantial residue of waste which will need to be disposed of. The consultation paper acknowledges that there is no wholly risk free solution for the treatment of waste but recognises that within the waste hierarchy energy from waste solutions are a better solution than disposal in landfill. The consultation paper proposes that Wales will seek to meet the 2010 target for the Landfill Directive largely by waste minimisation recycling and composting, however some energy from waste options may become necessary after that and may be desirable before 2010 as an alternative to landfill.

Litter

19. The Strategy proposes action to reduce the amount of litter.

Resources

20. Local authorities already spend some £80 million per year on waste collection and disposal. The Assembly has announced additional expenditure of £3 million in 2001-02 of which £1.5 million will be available to local authorities. Indicative figures for 2002-03 and 2003-04 are £13 million and £24 million, of which £11 million and £22 million respectively has been allocated (subject to final decision by the Assembly) to local authorities.

- Allocations to local authorities via a specific grant on the basis of the existing waste collection and disposal elements in the Standard Spending Assessment formula, which take into account population and sparsity. Allocations will assist local authorities to develop new or additional work to increase the rates of recycling and composting and to encourage local authorities to work collectively and with voluntary and community bodies. This funding will not be available for energy from waste projects.
- Other resource allocations in 2001-02 are:

- Waste Resource Action Programme (a joint programme with England and Scotland to generate and stabilise markets for recycled materials and including a specific Welsh element): £650,000

- Waste stream analysis: 500,000

- Environment Agency Wales, to counter flytipping and illegal waste disposal: £200,000

- Support for regional waste working groups: 100,000

- Other waste related spending: £50,000

Partnership:

21. The Assembly has worked closely with local authorities, business and industry, the voluntary sector and with specialist, professional and academic bodies through the **Wales Waste Forum** to produce the consultation document. We will need their continued co-operation, especially that of local authorities to make the strategy work. More importantly, if the strategy is to be a success we will need the support and co-operation of the public, and especially householders. The Assembly will seek to promote this partnership with the public by raising awareness and understanding of waste issues in order to ensure that people make informed decisions and take responsibility at a local level on how their waste should be managed.

ANNEX A

EC DIRECTIVES RELATING TO WASTE

Framework Directive on Waste (75/442/EEC of 15 July 1975, as last amended by Directive 91/692/EEC):

Waste management plans have to be drawn up in order to attain the objectives referred to in Articles 3, 4 and 5

Hazardous Waste Directive (91/689/EEC of 12 December 1991 as last amended by Directive 94/31/EC)

Article 6 requires the drawing up of a waste management plan for hazardous waste.

Packaging and Packaging Waste (94/62/EC of 20 December 1994)

Article 14 of the Directive requires that waste management plans required by Article 7 of Directive 75/442/EEC include a specific chapter on the management of packaging and packaging waste.

Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC)

Article 5 requires Member States to set up by 2003 a national strategy for the implementation of the reduction of biodegradable waste going to landfills.