



# Waste Strategy for England 2007

Defra has published a new strategy for cutting waste in England. Following calls from local authorities, the Government is also launching a parallel public consultation on removing the ban on local authorities introducing financial incentives for recycling. The strategy applies to England only.

TO: All Chief Executives, main and email contacts (England)

CC: All Chief Executives, main and email contacts (Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)

## Key issues

1. A greater focus on waste prevention through a new target to reduce the amount of household waste not re-used, recycled or composted from over 22.2 million tonnes in 2000 to 15.8 million tonnes in 2010.
2. Consultation on removing the ban on local authorities on introducing household financial incentives for waste reduction and recycling, through early legislative change.
3. Local authorities would be free to introduce schemes where householders who recycle their waste receive payments funded by householders who do not recycle. All schemes would have to be revenue neutral and not result in any overall increase in costs
4. The consultation accepts that local government has a vital role to play not only in delivering services but also in providing advice to businesses and householders and developing partnership working.

## 1. Introduction

This briefing gives an initial summary and APSE view of the main points from the newly published Waste Strategy for England. Further more detailed briefings will follow on specific issues raised by the strategy. The report and accompanying papers can be downloaded from <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/strategy/>. The consultation closes on 16 August.

## 2. Background

The aim of the strategy is to reduce waste by making products with fewer natural resources whilst at the same time breaking the link between economic growth and waste growth. The traditional waste hierarchy of **waste prevention – reuse – recycle/compost – energy recovery – disposal** remains in place. Since the waste strategy 2000 was published significant progress in all sectors has been achieved (for example household recycling has quadrupled and packaging recycling has doubled to 56%). However, England's performance still lags behind many of our European partners. The new strategy sets out a vision where all parts of society (producers, retailers, consumers, local authorities and the waste management industry) will share responsibility. The annex at the end of this briefing gives a tabular appreciation of the overall strategy.

## 3. Objectives and Targets

The overall impact of the strategy is expected to be an annual net reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions from waste management of at least 9.3 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year compared to 2006 (equivalent to annual use of around 3 million cars). A greater focus on waste prevention will be recognised through a new target to reduce the amount of household waste not re-used, recycled or composted from over 22.2 million tonnes in 2000 to 15.8 million tonnes in 2010 with an aspiration to reduce it to 12.2 million tonnes in 2020. This is equivalent to a fall of 50% per person from 450 kg per person in 2000 to 225 kg in 2020. However, to put this into a European context, the average for Flanders in Belgium is 150kg.

Higher national targets than in 2000 have been set for:

- ✓ recycling and composting of household waste – at least 40% by 2010, 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020; and
- ✓ Recovery of municipal waste – 53% by 2010, 67% by 2015 and 75% by 2020.

Because lower levels of waste growth are expected than when the consultation document was published, meeting these targets implies lower levels of residual waste than were previously assumed. The Government will review the targets for 2015 and 2020 in the light of progress to 2010 and future forecasts, to see if they can be even more ambitious.

## 4. Proposals

### 4.1 Incentives

The aim is to create incentives that reflect the waste hierarchy and create opportunities for the reduction, re-use, and recycling of waste, and recovery of energy from waste. The Government has already announced (2007 Budget) that the landfill

tax escalator will increase by £8 pa from 2008 to reach £48 by 2010. It will also consult regarding removing the ban on local authorities introducing household financial incentives for waste reduction and recycling, through early legislative change. Local authorities would be free to introduce schemes where householders who recycle their waste receive payments funded by householders who do not recycle. All schemes would have to be revenue neutral and not result in any overall increase in costs. Defra estimate that removing the ban would bring England in line with most other European countries and could reduce the amount of annual residual waste landfilled by up to 15% – equivalent to 1.5 million tonnes or 130kg per household.

The Government is also to take action on paper, food, glass, aluminium, wood, plastic and textiles. Examples include:

- ✓ *Paper* - establishing with the paper industry an agreement with challenging targets to reduce paper waste and increase paper recycling incorporating and developing existing agreements for newspapers, magazines and direct mail but extended to office papers, free newspapers, catalogues and directories;
- ✓ *Food and green wastes* - support for anaerobic digestion through the new technologies programme, Renewable Obligations system, Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and a digestate standard that will establish the use of this technology in this country as in some other European countries;
- ✓ *Plastics and aluminium* - proposals (subject to further analysis) for higher packaging recycling requirements beyond the 2008 European targets to increase recycling (each tonne of aluminium recycled saves 11 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>).

## **5. Local authority role**

The consultation accepts that local government has a vital role to play not only in delivering services but also in providing advice to businesses and householders and developing partnership working. This includes

- ✓ Strengthening the ability of local authorities in two-tier areas to work together and encouraging partnership working between local authorities through: new powers in the current Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill; use of Local Area Agreements; and the new local government performance framework;
- ✓ Establishing a new local performance package for local authorities to support delivery of the Government's waste outcomes;
- ✓ Encouraging local authorities to take on a wider role (in partnerships) to help local (particularly smaller) businesses reduce and recycle their waste with cost savings through more integrated management of different waste streams;

Additionally, local authorities will have a key role in changing culture and behaviours on waste through

- ✓ Extending the campaigns for recycling to awareness and action on reducing waste;
- ✓ Incentivising excellence in sustainable waste management through a zero waste places initiative to develop innovative and exemplary practice;

- ✓ Reducing single use shopping bags through a retailer commitment to a programme of action to reduce the environmental impact of carrier bags by 25% by the end of 2008;
- ✓ Providing more recycling bins in public places through cooperation with the owners and managers of relevant land and premises used by the public to make it easier to recycle away from home, and the development of guidance and a voluntary code of practice for such owners and managers;
- ✓ Placing greater emphasis on promoting the reduction of waste and increase of recycling in schools by working with DfES and other partners to help schools overcome barriers, issuing new guidance and the use of award schemes (such as Eco-Schools).

## **6. APSE Comment**

After many delays, it is welcome that the Waste strategy has finally been published although much of its content was already anticipated. Many local authorities will be interested in the proposals to introduce variable charging and "pay as you throw" schemes. APSE do not believe that councils should be looking to use these as a 'blunt instrument' on waste charges as they are likely to face a backlash from the public. Mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that larger households are not penalised and that also ensure help is at hand for elderly residents who may struggle with multiple collections.

APSE in its recent publication (The future of waste management) proposed a joint approach to waste charging schemes based on giving every individual an "Annual Household Residual Waste Allowance" together with a major education campaign that informed both businesses and the public how to go about waste reduction, re-use, recycling and composting. The experience from Europe shows that this may take a number of years to establish the infrastructure and change behaviour. An individual allowance is suggested to overcome the common argument that large families would be penalised as they would be allowed a greater allowance. The incentive would be to dispose of less waste than your allowance rather than penalise. There are still a number of unresolved questions with the introduction of a charging policy – not least how and at what level should an allowance be set.

Any adopted scheme must also avoid increased pressure on council tax, whilst better reflecting the costs of waste in what citizens pay locally. If charges are administered fairly, householders who are prepared to help tackle climate change by recycling and other measures to cut landfill should benefit, while those who disregard the damage caused to the environment are forced to rethink their behaviour or pay more. Surveys show that two out of three people would back a "pay as you throw" scheme (source LGA). However before implementing councils would need to ensure that the introduction would not be linked to increases in council tax and have in place complimentary education and enforcement measures to tackle any increase in fly-tipping.

Additionally, APSE believes that the Government needs to be realistic in demanding councils deliver the changes on a 'cost neutral' basis. Whilst cost neutral waste

collection may be a viable option in the longer term, many councils may need a short term boost in funding to ensure they can transform the way in which they collect household waste and achieve both the cost and environmental benefits that can accrue.

This can be demonstrated by cost figures from APSE's Performance Networks benchmarking model for waste management show that the cost of waste collection per household for weekly collections is on average £59.80 pa with fortnightly collections reducing costs to £44.63 on average per annum. When landfill costs are excluded the costs are £50.41 per household for weekly collections and £42.34 per household for fortnightly collections showing that the increasing recycling through fortnightly collections will save councils real money in landfill tax costs. This saving will increase as the £8 per tonne escalator is implemented over the next three years.

It is welcome that the Waste Strategy acknowledged that all sectors of the economy need to share responsibility. Introducing incentives to reduce waste for individuals will not work unless more responsibility is put on producers. APSE believes that Government needs to be bolder in tackling the business, manufacturing and the retail community in addressing waste minimisation issues. APSE particularly welcome the comments regarding greater integrated management of differing waste streams which are difficult for both householders and businesses to understand.

The embedding of cradle-to-cradle thinking across government and in business practice would allow the UK to join up the waste and product agendas, which is something where there has been a distinct reluctance to take place. Through giving more responsibility to producers, not just for dealing with waste, but also for designing out waste will make individual producers substantially rethink their products. Further producer responsibility measures are needed that will inspire new approaches to design.

APSE will be producing further more detailed briefings on aspects of the full consultation in the coming weeks. If you want to join the debate and feed in to APSE's response to the consultation, please forward any comments to John Marsh ([jmarsh@apse.org.uk](mailto:jmarsh@apse.org.uk))

The APSE publication on the Future for Waste Management can be downloaded from the APSE website.

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# Annex

**Figure E1**

