



- This briefing considers the newly announced Resources and Waste Strategy for England
- It contains details about the focus within the strategy and how it is proposed to finance and resource the changes.
- Finally the APSE commentary provided at the end of this briefing provides some initial analysis of what APSE welcomes and what APSE would like to see emerge from

1. Introduction

The Government has now published the Resources and Waste Strategy Paper for England which was initially anticipated in September 2018. This paper brings together a thorough direction of travel on public policy as it relates to resources and waste. With the advent of Brexit many had feared a lessening of environmental standards and therefore the strategy paper sets out a welcome 'line in the sand' on environmental policy. Whilst the Brexit protocols had already clarified that much of the EU environmental regulations would remain in force, and in any event the EU already insists that to dis-incentivise the lowering of environmental standards non-regression clauses are included in any trading agreement with EU and non EU partners, there is nevertheless a recognition that resources must be effectively protected.

The paper states a commitment to protect the environment for future generations and **also states that the UK is ambitious to become a 'world leader in using resources efficiently and reducing the amount of waste we create as a society'. There is specific emphasis throughout on moving away from a linear economy where we 'take, make, use, throw' to that circular economy which includes keeping resources in use for as long as possible and recovering and regenerating products or materials, providing them with a new lease of life, wherever this is possible.** The policy paper also reflects and re-states a commitment to eliminating plastic waste within the next 25 years and elimination of all avoidable waste by 2050.

The following provides a summary of the contents of each chapter within the strategy.

Chapter 1: Sustainable production

This chapter concentrates predominantly on the resources lifecycle. It particularly emphasises that the most damaging impact of waste could be avoided through better production methods; avoiding waste at the start of production processes and considering how they can be reused and recycled at the end of life. The chapter suggests that there is now a serious direction towards:-

- Invoking a **'polluter pays' principle** which could extend to 100% of the costs of disposal for packaging they place on the market. This is something that has been consistently mooted but often resisted by the packaging industry.
- Creating a demand for recycled plastic by introducing a tax on plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled plastic (**this was a matter covered in APSE's budget briefing when a 'plastics' tax was cited by the Chancellor**)
- The paper also suggest that there could be further regulation on producers to deal with other harmful product types
- Create minimum requirements through ecodesign to encourage resource efficient product design
- The sustainable management of chemicals to address barriers to reuse and recycling through a Chemicals Strategy
- Development of a model for realising resource efficiency savings, working with **businesses through 'resource efficiency clusters'**

Chapter 2: Helping consumers take more considered actions

With a chapter dedicated to consumer behaviour the paper focuses on the throwaway society; many years ago products were regularly repaired before replacement was considered but cheaper manufacturing has created a much shorter lifecycle for products before they are replaced, at a cost to the environment. The paper suggest that policy will now focus on product repair, reuse and remanufacture. The paper suggest that Government chapter sets out how it intends to:

- Incentivise consumers to purchase sustainably
- Provide consumers with better information on the sustainability of their purchases
- Ban plastic products where there is a clear case for it and alternatives exist
- Address barriers to reuse
- Support the market for remanufactured goods
- Encourage appropriate disposal of used products
- Lead by example though procurement and the Greening Government Commitments

Chapter 3: Resource recovery and waste management

Perhaps of most interest to APSE member councils providing waste and refuse collection services is chapter 3 which concentrates on recycling, landfill, energy from waste and hazardous waste. Whilst the paper acknowledges improvements in recycling in England (11% in 2000/2001 to an average of 45% in now) it acknowledges that recycling is plateauing since 2013. This is something that is reflected in APSE Performance Networks data and also reflects stronger performance in Wales and in Scotland where waste and recycling policies have arguably been more robust in recent years. The chapter also acknowledges strongly the issues that APSE has campaigned on which is that too much waste is sent for processing abroad and that there is a real opportunity for waste processing, to allow the UK to become a world leader in waste and recycling technologies. **The paper states that 'This government supports comprehensive and frequent waste collections'** but APSE would also suggest that reduced frequencies have actually been part of the necessary behavior change to encourage waste reduction and recycling. The chapter specifically sets out an approach to:-

- Improve recycling rates by ensuring a consistent set of dry recyclable materials is collected from all households and businesses

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfill by ensuring that every householder and appropriate businesses have a weekly separate food waste collection, subject to consultation
- Improve urban recycling rates, working with business and local authorities
- Improve working arrangements and performance between local authorities
- Drive greater efficiency of Energy from Waste (EfW) plants
- Address information barriers to the use of secondary materials
- Encourage waste producers and managers to implement the waste hierarchy in respect to hazardous waste

Chapter 4: Tackling waste crime

Again many APSE member councils are left counting the cost of waste crime and the paper sets out a range of measures to tackle this costly activity. Specifically the chapter looks at rogue operators who illegally dump or export waste as well as depriving the economy of tax income and harming the local environment. The paper commits to

- Improving the transport, management and description of waste by reforming existing regulations
- Strengthen intelligence sharing and engagement to tackle illegal activity
- Preventing illegal activity being hidden through waste exemptions by reforming the existing regime
- Mandating the digital recording of waste movements, subject to consultation
- Creating a Joint Unit for Waste Crime
- Toughening penalties for waste criminals
- Increasing awareness of waste regulations and publicising positive work of enforcement bodies as they tackle waste crime

Chapter 5: Enough is enough: cutting down on food waste

The chapter cites that there is an estimated 10 million tonnes of food and drink wasted post-farm gate annually in the UK. This is food worth around £20 billion. Excess food waste is cited as both costly economically and environmentally damaging when disposed of. A fifth of UK greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are associated with food and drink, mostly created during production (agriculture and manufacturing). The paper states that the Government is committed to reducing food waste, reducing the UK carbon footprint, and meeting UN Sustainable Development Goals which is to halve global food waste at consumer and retail levels by 2030.

The chapter therefore suggests that we will work towards:-

- **More effectively redistribute food to those who need it most before it can go to waste**
- **A consultation on annual reporting of food surplus and waste by food businesses**
- **A consultation on legal powers to introduce food waste targets and surplus food redistribution obligations**
- **Publishing a new food surplus and waste hierarchy**
- **Promoting awareness of the food waste issue by appointing a new food waste champion**
- **Supporting cross sector collaboration through the Courtauld 2025 agreement**

Chapter 6: Global Britain: international leadership

This chapter recites the international and global impact of waste and resource management and the impact of pollution and environmental damage which requires a broad coalition of action. It specifically acknowledges the impact of plastic pollution

This chapter sets out the UK intentions to:-

- Promote the goals of **the Government's** Resources and Waste Strategy internationally
- Drive international political commitments through the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance
- Support developing nations to tackle pollution and reduce plastic waste, including through UK aid
- Improve the quality of plastics exported for recycling through the Basel and Stockholm Conventions
- Establish cross-**government oversight of the UK's natural resource security**

Chapter 7: Research and innovation

Chapter 7 acknowledges the need for innovation in transformative change, knowledge, data and technologies which match the ambitions of the resources and waste strategy. The Government, has committed to supporting industry and academia to stimulate innovation through:-

- Supporting further investment and innovation in resource efficiency, working with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) on our Areas of Research Interest
- Launching a call for evidence on the development of standards for bio-based and biodegradable plastics
- Supporting further investment in resource efficient technologies, including through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund
- Supporting the Waste and Resources Action Programme
- Encouraging innovative waste treatment technologies that create transport fuels through the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation (RTFO)

Chapter 8: Measuring progress: data, monitoring and evaluation

APSE supports the measures in the paper which seeks to support the use of high quality data, information and insights for effective policy making and in our view, evaluation of successes. Specifically this chapter sets out to:-

- Work with partners and stakeholders to develop a shared vision and bold new approach to data on resources and waste
- Move away from weight-based towards impact-based targets and reporting, focusing initially on carbon and natural capital accounting
- Maintain the coverage and quality of local authority-collected waste and improve data collection to meet future needs
- Work with tech firms to develop innovative digital solutions for tracking waste, and consult on options to mandate the digital recording and sharing of waste movement data

APSE Comment

The long-awaited Resources and Waste Strategy Paper for England is welcome in setting a clear direction of travel, however there are a number of issues that are of concern to APSE and our member councils.

It is **APSE's** view that the objectives of the strategy will not be delivered unless there is significant new investment through local authorities in both collection and disposal infrastructure. The increasing gap in performance across the UK, with Scotland and Wales in particular out-performing England, demonstrates that the more dedicated support to a zero-waste approach is paying dividends in those Government Administrations, who have previously set out their own Waste Strategies. APSE also welcomes the tacit recognition within the strategy that the UK could be a world-leader in new technologies to deal more holistic with waste issues. In a post-Brexit era, the opportunities presented to the UK through investment in new technologies, and development of a new clean and green approach to material re-use and recycling, could provide not just 'green' outcomes but be of great economic value to the UK economy.

In a similar way, whilst there is recognition of the value of more consistent collection methods to improve recycling rates, this will be a wasted effort if local councils and disposal authorities are still hidebound by existing waste infrastructure; in particular those limited by expensive and inflexible PFI schemes. As APSE pointed out in our recent [Budget Briefing \(18-37\)](#) whilst we welcome the Chancellors **commitment to 'no more PFI schemes'** this of itself does not resolve the existing problems that such schemes bring to changing how we deal more effectively with waste disposal infrastructure. Arguably the strategy could go much further and radically change the way in which waste is collected. For example [APSE Solutions](#) is working with a number of partners exploring the viability of new under-ground refuse collection processes which could radical change the cost and structure of refuse collection.

APSE would also like to see the improvements in waste and resources integral to all council services. For example in the area of housing, greater powers to local councils would enable them to address issues such as construction waste, how estates are designed to maximise recycling and minimise costs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of developments, such as lifetime and eco-home designs, to reflect the changing nature of housing needs. Other services can also be utilised to make best use of valuable natural resources, such as parks and open spaces, which can be used as flood alleviation points, localised procurement plans in areas like school meals and applying greener policies across all services to minimise waste and recalibrate all services to maximise resources. In terms of environmental impact further investment in greening council fleet would send a powerful signal that at a municipal level environmental protection measures are not only possible but provide a standard setter to other organisations. Finally, the area of municipal energy is an area of opportunity for local councils to better utilise resources and in doing so many councils are already shaping social justice outcomes in areas like fuel poverty and green energy. [APSE Energy](#) is now working with over 80 local councils to take forward such strategies.

In conclusion therefore whilst there is much to be welcomed with the Resources and Waste Strategy the realisation of the objectives will require a fundamental shift in how we value and treat local services, such as waste and recycling. Local councils need to be at the heart of the changes but to effect such changes they too need to be properly resourced both financially, and in capacity terms, to deliver lasting change to the way in which we treat and use our natural resources and in reducing waste that cannot be reused or recycled.

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