



Briefing 21-15

February 2021

## **A summary of WRAP's report '*Our Plan for a Sustainable Planet*' a blueprint for a waste-free world by 2025.**

This briefing provides a summary of the latest report from WRAP – '***Our Plan for a Sustainable Planet***' which is their blueprint for a waste-free world by 2025.

The report sets out WRAP's vision and plan as to how it proposes to achieve the aim of a waste free world. The plan covers food waste, plastics and textiles, as well as carbon emissions and general circular economy goals.

The briefing will be of particular interest to those officers responsible for waste management and in particular recycling services, for although there is no mention of local authorities within the plan, it is clear there will be a significant role for councils to help WRAP achieve its aims.

### **Key Issues:**

- WRAP has developed a blue print to deliver a waste free world by 2025. Its key aims are to: help the UK move towards halving food waste by 2030. transform the UK plastics economy so that plastic pollution will be eliminated, help the UK tackle its throwaway clothing culture and transform recycling into a system that emphasizes material quality and markets.
- The plan also emphasise the importance of moving towards a circular economy where businesses see their bottom line measured in nature and society rather than purely financial profit at all costs.
- The briefing note highlights both past achievements and future proposals which are deemed necessary to meet the waste-free target of 2025.
- APSE has some concern as to the responsibility which local authorities will need to accept if these goals are to be achieved and whether there is the necessary funding to provide the infrastructure and also whether some of the timescales are achievable.

## Introduction

WRAP is one of the globe's leading sustainability charities. Based in the UK and with projects around the world it works with businesses, governments, citizens and charities to make the planet a healthier, safer place.

WRAP's aim is to work towards delivering a world where resources can be used sustainably.

WRAP works with national and increasingly global partners to cut waste, promote sustainability and share knowledge in order to make the planet a cleaner, safer place.

Key objectives include:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and cutting global warming.
- Cutting the amount of water use and protecting key rivers.
- Reducing waste, and cleaning up the planet - its land, its oceans, and its air.

Governments and nations use WRAP's research and insights to develop new ideas, and to formulate policies. Cities and regions use their data and networks to design and deliver critical infrastructure projects. WRAP's voluntary agreement model provides a 'safe space' for global brands to come together and tackle waste, reduce water use and work towards Net Zero carbon emissions.

Millions of citizens know and trust WRAP's behaviour change campaign brands. Choosing to 'Love Food Hate Waste', 'Recycle Now', and 'Love Your Clothes'.

WRAP is an international NGO that takes the learning from what works in one place, adapts it with local partners in another place, and moves on to '**scale and repeat**'.

## Detail

With regards to the issue of waste, WRAP delivers systemic change across supply chains, by looking at the entire life cycle of products and services. Their aim is to help organisations use resources more sustainably and remove waste where it exists.

The plan highlighted in this briefing note, focuses on food, plastics and textile wastes.

## Food Waste

Around a third of all food is wasted, which amounts to a staggering 1.3 billion tonnes. Food production and consumption are responsible for around 30% of global carbon

emissions. By creating space for agriculture, they also contribute to between 60%-80% biodiversity loss through the destruction of natural habitats. These facts are unsustainable. WRAP states that if we are to maintain the resilience of global food systems, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions towards Net Zero, then governments must fundamentally change the way food is produced and consumed.

During 2015-2020 WRAP through the Courtauld Commitment has helped:

- The UK reduce food waste and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with food and drink by 7% per person from 2015-2018.
- Doubled the amount of food in the UK that is redistributed to those in need from retailers and manufacturers. In 2018 the equivalent of 166 million meals per year went to those in need from these sources
- Since 2007, food waste has reduced by 27% across the supply chain, a 1.7 million tonnes per year reduction. WRAP's Love Food Hate Waste campaign played a key part of this success.

WRAP states, that through the Courtauld Commitment, it has helped the UK reduce food waste and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with food and drink by 7% per person from 2015-2018.

The Courtauld Commitment is a voluntary agreement between organisations across the food system to make food & drink production and consumption more sustainable. At its heart is a ten-year commitment to identify priorities, develop solutions and implement changes to cut the carbon and waste associated with food & drink by at least one-fifth in 10 years, and to reduce water stress.

Within WRAP's new plan, it states that by 2025, it intends to assist the food sector to increase its contributions to net zero, as well as ensuring that by 2030 the UK is on a path to cut food waste by 50%. WRAP will also help large food businesses and their suppliers to report their food waste by 2023 in order that they too can take actions to understand the levels of food waste and thereby take actions to reduce it.

Other pledges include working with the European Union, G20 and Commonwealth countries to develop and implement food waste reduction policies and support partners to deliver effective citizen behaviour change campaigns that reduce food waste.

## Plastics

The world produces 141 million tonnes of plastic packaging a year, contributing about 1.8 billion tonnes of carbon emissions annually. About a third of all plastic packaging put on the global market leaks from collection systems, polluting the environment. It is further estimated that at least 8 million tonnes of plastics leak into the ocean each year.

WRAP works with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to develop and support Plastics Pacts around the world and build a network of Plastics Pacts which together can tackle plastic pollution rapidly.

By 2025, WRAP says the Plastics Pact will ensure 100% of plastic packaging is recyclable or compostable, and achieve a 70% recycling or composting rate. Already the equivalent of 1.5 billion black plastic trays have been removed from the packaging system, furthermore, problematic and unnecessary plastic packaging sold has been reduced by 40% and there has been an investment of over £100 million in new factories delivering 240,000 tonnes per year of recycled plastic to meet the demand for recycled content.

By 2025, WRAP working with governments and other partners aims to see that 100% of “unnecessary single use packaging” will be removed, and an average recycled content of 30% will be in plastic packaging.

Other plastics targets highlighted in the plan include:

- Provide balanced messaging about the impact of plastics to people.
- Help extend the network of Plastic Pacts success across the world, working with partners.
- Work with the European Union, G20 and Commonwealth countries to develop plastic reduction policies.
- Support those countries to implement the policies by working with in-country partners.
- Help put the world on a trajectory to eliminating plastic pollution.

## Textiles

Consumption of clothing globally has increased by 60-100% in the last 15 years. This increase has been matched by a significant reduction in the number of times an item of clothing is worn before it is thrown away.

The global fashion industry produced around 2.1 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018, equating to 4% of the global total. Cotton production alone accounts for around 20% of the world's insecticides and 10% of all pesticide use, heavily impacting on biodiversity. Finally, an estimated 17-20% of industrial water pollution comes from textile dyeing.

During 2015 – 2020, WRAP's Sustainable Clothing Action Plan signatories were on track to achieve or exceed a 15.9% reduction in their carbon footprint, a 19% reduction in their water footprint and a 2.3% reduction in waste to landfill.

By 2025 WRAP aims to deliver / create a new voluntary agreement which champion circularity and has a renewed focus on the climate change impact of clothing and textiles. It will do this by:

- Delivering on the carbon, water and circular economy targets of the new commitment Textiles 2030.
- Reporting the successful results of Sustainable Clothing Action Plan 2020.
- Investing in highly sought-after innovation and new business models.
- Developing new policies to tackle unwanted textiles.

WRAP will further aim to influence circular fashion globally, through a high-achieving voluntary agreement model for clothing and textiles which delivers against challenging goals. They will ensure that this model is taken up in at least seven countries worldwide and it will be supported in those countries benefiting from WRAP's Love Your Clothes campaign messaging which encourages people to keep wearing clothes for longer.

### **The Importance of delivering a circular economy**

In order to deliver on the aims of the report, WRAP wants to see an increase in the speed at which producers and consumers move towards a sustainable, resource-efficient circular economy as there is a clear need to increase the number of materials re-used and recycled back into the economy, and end the reliance on virgin materials. WRAP recognises that the resource sector has a key role to play in making this happen.

WRAP intends to promote and develop the circular economy by helping businesses re-invent how they design, produce and sell products across the entire supply chain through Voluntary Agreements. They will also help citizens rethink how they use and consume products, reducing wastes and increasing re-use and recycling, through ongoing WRAP consumer campaigns.

WRAP feel it is critical to focus on a circular economy by looking at what is possible with products and materials after first use, through market and infrastructure development and improved collections.

Therefore, in order to achieve this circular economy by 2025, WRAP will provide support for increased levels of recycling and a more circular economy in the UK and internationally through:

- Promoting the need for more consistent household collections, more separate food waste collections and more business recycling.
- Designing products to be 100% recyclable, particularly clothing and plastics.
- Encouraging more products being sold for re-use and ensuring many more re-use models are brought to market.
- Driving demand for more circular material to be used in products and support the infrastructure to make this happen.
- WRAP will work with partners around the world to embed policies and practices that drive a more circular economy, focusing on the European Union, the G20 and the Commonwealth Countries.

WRAP feel these aims regarding the development of a more circular economy are realistic, as during 2015 – 2020, they along with government and partners helped deliver a more Circular Economy in the UK by:

- Encouraging more repurposing of surplus food for animal feed. Currently 650,000 tonnes per year is used in this way, reducing the need for soya-based feeds.
- Encouraging the donation of clothes. Charity retailers increased the amount of pre-owned clothing sold by 8% to 192,000 tonnes per year between 2016 and 2018.

Speaking about the plan and its aims, Marcus Gover, CEO of WRAP said, "I'm really proud of *'Our plan for a sustainable planet'*, which is one of the most important publications in our 20-year history and very timely, with COP26 approaching.

"Our aim is to go beyond Net Zero and become Net Positive. To turn back the Earth Overshoot clock and encourage green growth and circularity in all we do, and all our partners do."

Perhaps one of the final comments in the report identifies WRAP's true aims regards their wider objectives:

'Working together to create a net climate positive planet – because zero is not enough'.

## APSE Comment

Despite the specific lack of mention in the WRAP plan, it is clear local authorities will be major players in delivering its aims.

Local authorities will need to consider their future strategic planning for waste services in order to deliver greater recycling consistency, as well as the possibility of focussing on specific material such as collection of food waste, which is likely to be a compulsory requirement by 2023.

Perhaps most importantly, local authorities will be the major player in bringing about the behavioural change which will need to be achieved if they are to get better up take of recycling, reduced contamination levels and be able to promote, adopt and support re-use schemes and ultimately avoid unnecessary waste production. This work will not only need to be aimed at domestic properties, but also businesses and other organisations within a local authority area.

As well as recognising the aims of the WRAP waste –free plan, there are also clear links and responsibilities within **The Waste Management Plan for England (2021)**, where the goal of government is to maximise the value of the resources used, minimise the waste created and in doing so avoid emissions from the waste sector, driving the wider UK towards the target of net zero emissions by 2050. Furthermore, this Plan is a supporting document to **The Resource and Waste Strategy (2018)** and the overarching **25 Year Environment Plan** all of which have key elements aimed at reducing waste and gaining greater resource value from the materials we use and most importantly, moving towards a circular economy.

At a local authority level Councils are increasingly focused on progressing their action plans to meet net zero targets they have set as part of their climate change emergency declarations and in response to the overarching approach identified by the UK Climate Change Committee in their sixth carbon budget report recently published, [see APSE briefing 20-96](#).

APSE therefore welcomes WRAP's plan for a waste-free and sustainable planet with its clear goals and objectives, but does feel that some of the targets will need to be more fully discussed both with Government and local authorities themselves, as to whether the resources and funding will be in place to support their aims, and importantly, whether the timescales will be achievable.

A full copy of the report can be found at the link provided below:

<https://wrap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/OUR-PLAN-FOR-A-SUSTAINABLE-PLANET.pdf>

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