



Consistency in Household and Business Recycling in England.

To: All Chief Executives, Senior Policy Officers Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Following on from the 2019 consultation, this latest Government consultation details

Key issues

- The consultation on consistency in recycling collections is one of a set of three which aim to greatly improve the UK's recycling and ultimately waste management system. Other consultations are taking place on a deposit return scheme (DRS) and extended producer responsibility (EPR)
- This is the second consultation on consistency which aims to bring finer detail to those proposals contained in the first consultation, which took place in 2019.
- Based on the responses to this second consultation the secretary of state for Defra will set out materials which local authorities and businesses will have to recycle by law. These recyclable waste streams must be collected separately from other household waste, and they must be collected for recycling or composting.
- The briefing note attempts to summarise those elements of the consultation which will have the greatest impact on local authorities.

specific policy proposals for increasing consistency in recycling collected from households, businesses and other organisations.

This briefing note aims to summarise the key points of the consultation which can be found at: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/consistency-in-household-and-business-recycling/>

The closing date for responses to the consultation is 4 July 2021

Respondents should also be aware that Government is also consulting for a second time on adjacent policy proposals as part of the collection and packaging reforms: for Introducing Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging across the UK and introducing a Deposit Return Scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Background

In this recent consultation, Government is asking what respondents think of their plans to increase the consistency in materials collected for recycling from households, businesses and other organisations in England.

Government believes that by increasing consistency in the way recyclable materials are collected, this will lead to less confusion for people with regards to the materials that can be collected for recycling at the kerbside. This in turn, will help to make sure that less waste goes to landfill and more materials can be recycled.

Government is particularly interested to find out:

- which materials should be collected as part of the dry recyclable waste streams
- provisions for food and garden waste collections
- possible exemptions from the requirements set out in the consultation
- topics to be included in statutory guidance for local authorities
- transition timelines for local authorities and businesses

The Consultation

Core set of recyclable materials

Due to strong support in previous consultations, Government has legislated in the Environment Bill for a **core set of dry recyclable waste streams** to be collected from households. These dry recyclable waste streams are: glass, metal, plastic, paper and card. Government's intention is that the following materials will be placed in regulations as having to be collected by all local authorities:

- glass bottles and containers – including drinks bottles, condiment bottles, jars
- paper and card – including newspaper, cardboard packaging, writing paper
- plastic bottles – including clear drinks containers, HDPE milk containers, detergent, shampoo and cleaning product containers
- plastic pots, tubs and trays
- steel and aluminium tins and cans

In addition to the above items, Government also proposes that the required recyclable waste streams will also include the following items:

- Aluminium foil
- Aluminium food trays
- Steel and aluminium aerosols
- Aluminium tubes, e.g. tomato puree tubes
- Metal jar / bottle lids
- Food and drink cartons, e.g. TetraPak
- Plastic films, e.g. bread bags, carrier bags – proposed for later implementation.

Government recognises that most local authorities already collect the majority of materials they are proposing to include in the dry recyclable waste streams. This is particularly the case for metal packaging, glass, paper and card, and most plastic packaging aside from plastic films.

As a consequence of this recognition, Government would therefore expect all local authorities to be able to collect these materials (with the exception of plastic film) by the end of the financial year in which payments to local authorities under Extended Producer Responsibility commences (currently proposed to be 2023 / 24 subject to consultation).

For local authorities that do not currently collect all of the materials on the list, based on previous stakeholder engagement, Government anticipates that these additional materials could be incorporated within this timeframe but are willing to hear of any problems which may be encountered which may prevent this such as: collection or sorting contracts; lack of sufficient MRF or reprocessing infrastructure; difficulties in securing end markets; and other issues such as unmanageable cost burdens.

The exception with regards to the core material collection expectations is with regards to plastic films, where Government is proposing that this should be phased in with a defined 'end date' of the financial year 2026 / 27. However, any authorities currently collecting plastic film should continue to do so.

Again, any authorities who feel they will not be able to meet this target will be asked to give reasons as to why this is unachievable.

Government is therefore seeking views within the consultation as to whether local authorities agree to these set of proposals with regards to collection of core materials from both households and flats by 2023 / 24, on the understanding any additional costs will be met from Extended Producer Responsibility payments due in 2023 / 24.

The Separate Collection of Food Waste

The Environment Bill will require local authorities in England to arrange for the separate collection of food waste for recycling at least weekly.

With regards to the collection of **food-waste**, Government has provided a definition for local authorities and businesses as to what they feel best describes this material.

'All food material that has become a waste, whether processed, partially processed or unprocessed, intended to be, or reasonably expected to be consumed by humans and including any substance, including water, intentionally incorporated into the food during its manufacture, preparation or treatment'. This includes the following:

- Food scraps
- Tea bags
- Coffee grounds

Government, proposes that the above accurately describes the materials to be collected as food waste from households, businesses and non-domestic premises.

Government believes that the provision of caddy liners in the collection of separately collected food waste should be promoted as good practice and that guidance should be provided on caddy liners, including on caddy liner material types. As such, Government will set out further detail on collection arrangements for food waste and other waste streams in statutory / non-statutory guidance.

Government proposes that local authorities already collecting food waste separately must, as required under the Environment Bill duties, continue to collect this for recycling from all household properties, including flats, at least weekly, in the **2023 / 24** financial year. There may be local authorities that require longer to implement a separate food waste collection service,

- Local authorities without existing contracts in place that would be affected by introducing a separate food waste collection service, will be required to have a separate weekly food waste collection service in place by the **2024 / 25** financial year at the latest, as this will give additional time required to procure the necessary capital goods and implement separate food waste collections effectively.
- For local authorities with existing long term mixed food / garden waste collection or disposal contracts in place (e.g. In Vessel Composting contracts), we propose that they should transition to a separate, weekly food waste collection service for all household properties including flats, as quickly as contracts allow – anticipated dates between **2024 / 25 and 2030 / 31** subject to further evidence on the associated costs and benefits. This will also include those Local authorities with long term residual waste disposal contracts affected by introducing a separate food waste collection service (e.g. some Energy from Waste or Mechanical Biological Treatment contracts For these local authorities, there may be some barriers to implementing a separate food waste collection service and Government will be exploring the transitional barriers including costs (arising from, for example, amending or breaking existing contracts where necessary).

In **all the cases above**, the collection service introduced should be a separate food waste collection, unless an exception applies that would allow the collection of food waste with garden waste,

Again, any authorities who feel they will not be able to meet this target will be asked to give reasons as to why this is unachievable.

The Consultation is looking for views as to whether separate food waste collections, including the use of collection caddies, should be included within waste recycling collection services, and clearly if not, the reasons why it should be excluded.

Compostable and biodegradable materials

Government proposes to provide further guidance to local authorities and other waste collectors on the collection and disposal of compostable and biodegradable materials in kerbside waste streams. In doing so they are interested to receive comments regarding how greater consistency can be achieved via collection and disposal as well as whether a composting phase should be included in anaerobic digestion processes.

Definition of and separate collection of garden waste from households.

Government proposes that the following should be included in the description of garden waste included in regulations.

Unwanted organic material arising from a garden, including:

- Grass cuttings
- Garden weeds
- Plants and flowers
- Hedge Clippings
- Leaves
- Twigs and small branches

This **excludes**:

- Waste products of animal origin
- Bulky waste (including but not limited to garden furniture and fencing)
- Plant pots
- Garden tools or other gardening equipment
- Soil, stone, gravel or bricks.

In the previous consultation there was mixed support that, if a free minimum collection service for garden waste is introduced for households with a garden, this should be a minimum fortnightly collection service, equivalent to a maximum capacity of 240-litre (either bin or sacks) and local authorities would be able to charge for more frequent collections and / or additional capacity. Eighty per cent of householder respondents supported the introduction of free garden waste collections, but 71% of local authorities were not in favour.

Government is therefore seeking further views on the materials included and excluded as well as updated costs and carbon benefits of this proposal i.e. losses of

income from green waste collection charges, carbon reduction, increases in green waste recycling due to free collection and also savings to residents by introduction of a free service. Also, with the proposal that the collection should be the equivalent of a weekly 240 litre allowance and a charging mechanism for additional green waste beyond this amount. It should also be noted that any new additional burdens to local authorities incurred through this policy, would be covered by the Government.

Linked to garden waste collections, Government is also seeking views on options, either alongside or instead of a free, minimum collection service for garden waste, and the extent to which they would achieve the aim of increasing the recycling of garden waste and decreasing the quantity of garden waste in residual waste streams.

Within the consultation, Government is willing to consider the possibility of mixing recyclable materials collected (either organic or in-organic) where by doing so it does not reduce the amount of the material collected or its quality if they were collected separately. Examples include:

- Plastic and metal
- Glass and metal

Government is also seeking other similar examples.

With regards to exemptions to separate collections e.g. where it is not technically or economically practicable, or where there is no significant environment benefit to collecting two or more waste streams separately individual assessments need to be written to justify mixing materials.

Government proposes only one assessment will be needed across a whole service area or partnership or where several authorities may use the same waste infrastructure.

In order to ensure consistency and quality of materials, Government is intending to provide guidance on how different types of recyclable waste should be collected separately from each other.

Other non-statutory guidance

Government proposes to work with WRAP, to develop and publish non-statutory guidance on good practice around collection. This may include guidance around the collection of waste streams not included in the Environment Bill (for example, sanitary products and hazardous waste), and may also include guidance on areas such as bring sites and litter collection.

The aim of the guidance will be to demonstrate current good practice in service delivery from across the country and help inform scheme design in light of any future changes needed under New Burdens and Extended Producer Responsibility.

Dry materials to be collected from non-household municipal premises for recycling

The four dry recyclable waste streams are to be collected from non-household municipal premises (glass, metal, plastic, paper and card). It is felt that by adopting this approach that it will ensure consistency between what people are able to recycle at home, at school and at work.

The types of materials to be included in each recyclable waste stream will be specified in regulations. Government's intention is to include the following materials in regulations, so that they are required to be collected **by all waste collectors**:

- glass bottles and containers – including drinks bottles, condiment bottles, jars
- paper and card – including newspaper, cardboard packaging, office paper
- plastic bottles – including clear drinks containers, HDPE (milk containers), detergent, shampoo and cleaning products
- plastic pots tubs and trays
- steel and aluminium tins and cans

In addition to the above items, Government proposes that the recyclable waste streams will also include the following items:

- Aluminium foil
- Aluminium food trays
- Steel and aluminium aerosols
- Aluminium tubes, e.g. tomato puree tubes
- Metal jar/bottle lids
- Food and drink cartons, e.g. TetraPak
- Plastic films, e.g. bread bags, carrier bags

Again, it is proposed that these additional items, with the exception of plastic film, should be collected from non-household municipal premises in the financial year 2023 / 24.

APSE Comment

In producing this briefing note it is accepted that not all, the areas within the consultation document have been addressed. For example, there are other areas within the consultation which local authorities may have comments on, such as the requirements on MRF's to monitor packaging waste as well as to whether recycling credits should still be

paid for packaging waste bearing in mind more costs are now built into the EPR requirements to cover packaging waste management costs.

There are also sections on non- municipal waste which again may impact on local authorities to a lesser degree.

There are also other considerations, such as assessing the costs of bringing about public change to accept the proposed changes and the wider benefits beyond those gained from improved recycling levels, but again the briefing note has addressed those areas which are likely to have most impact on local authority members.

APSE welcomes the proposals with a caveat, and that is that whilst the aims of improving consistency of recycling materials has been a goal for many years, there is a real need to ensure there is sufficient and timely funding to finance these changes, but also that the infrastructure is in place to not only accept the higher levels of better-quality recyclables but also the reprocessors and end markets are in place to utilise these materials. Added to this, is that markets are developed in order to utilise these reprocessed materials if we as a society are to close the circle, an area which local authorities could support through their procurement policies.

If we are to achieve a truly circular economy, which not only supports the waste sector, but also brings about economic and environmental benefits, then we cannot introduce legislation such as that proposed, without ensuring there is the supportive framework in place to make sure it works and is sustainable.

APSE would encourage member authorities to respond fully to this consultation and welcome copies of submissions being shared in order to inform APSE's overall response, please send to wpriestley@apse.org.uk

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