



Briefing 11/47 August 2011

# A Waste Data Strategy for Scotland

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and Email Contacts (Scotland)

CC: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

This briefing highlights the key points contained in the Waste Data Strategy for Scotland document, developed by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in accordance with the requirements of Scotland's Zero Waste Plan.

## **Key issues:**

- Understanding what waste is produced and how it is managed.
- Development of new business opportunities, including the development of a new waste management infrastructure.
- Business and local authorities need to benchmark their waste management performance.
- An information-base with which stakeholders can work towards delivering the objectives of the Zero Waste Plan.
- Monitoring progress towards domestic and European targets.
- Raising awareness of waste management issues.

## **Background**

The purpose of the waste data strategy is to improve the information available on waste and deliver the following benefits:

- Give an improved understanding of what waste is produced and how it is managed.
- Provide information to support the development of new business opportunities including the development of new waste management infrastructure.
- Allow businesses and local authorities to benchmark their waste management performance.
- Aid policy development and support the successful implementation of Scotland's Zero Waste Plan.
- Monitor the progress towards domestic and European targets.
- Raise public awareness of waste management issues.

Considerable progress has been made since the year 2000 in improving the way waste is managed in Scotland. There has been a 58% reduction in the total amount of waste sent to landfill and an increase of 5%-37% in the amount of local authority collected municipal waste recycled/composted.

## **Summary of Report**

According to SEPA, implementation of the Waste Data Strategy in Scotland will deliver a substantial improvement in the understanding of what waste is produced and how it is managed. It will provide an information-base from which waste producers, the resource management sector, the Scottish Government and regulators can work towards delivering the objectives of the Zero Waste Plan.

The strategy focuses upon collecting data where there is a clearly defined requirement, ensuring that the administration burden is both minimised and proportionate to the amount and nature of the waste produced. The work of organisations that collect and interpret waste data will be coordinated by the strategy and key messages for the general public will be promoted in an attempt to influence society's attitude to acquiring, using and disposing of resources.

Waste data requirements over the period until 2025 are identified in the strategy, which also aims to track how resources flow through society and in particular what happens to those resources once they are disposed of. The ultimate objective is to be able to produce a mass balance and hence know where, when and how all of the waste produced is managed and transformed back into a natural resource.

The main drivers for the collection and reporting of waste data are:

### **Statutory Requirements**

- Waste arisings and management tonnages broken down by waste source and waste type/material.
- Recycling rates for specific waste source and waste type/material.

- Tonnages of biodegradable waste landfilled.
- Waste management capacity.
- Waste transfers from relevant sites.

#### Zero Waste Plan Requirements

- Scottish waste arisings and waste management method split by waste from households, commercial and industrial (C&I), and construction and demolition.
- Biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) landfilled in Scotland.
- Special waste produced in Scotland.
- Waste imports and exports, split by management method.
- Additional waste management capacity requirements.

#### Requirements of Key Data Users

- Waste prevention initiatives and data.
- Scottish waste arisings and management data.
- Regional waste management capacity.
- Waste material flows.

There are three main sources of waste: households, commerce and industry, (including construction and demolition). Scottish local authorities report data on waste collected from households and commercial and industrial waste collected on or on behalf of the local authority using "Waste Data Flow". Fly-tipping is collated by Keep Scotland Beautiful on behalf of Zero Waste Scotland.

A large proportion of waste that arises in Scotland passes through around 1,100 licensed or permitted waste management sites in Scotland which are regulated by SEPA. They largely submit paper based statutory returns but do not currently provide adequate information on the economic origin of the waste. Statutory returns from licensed or permitted sites do not contain information on the waste that is transferred on site to a final product. This makes the identification of waste recycled difficult. A number of licensed/permitted sites are allowed to carry out more than one waste management activity, causing difficulty when reporting data on the amount of waste handled by each activity. Waste may also be used in some industrial processes that are not classed as waste management sites or may be handled on sites undertaking activity that is exempt from Waste Management Licensing.

It is also important to note that data on waste prevention is not currently reported but will be in the future in order to monitor the Government's forthcoming Waste Prevention Programme (WWP).

Accurate data on commercial and industrial waste is needed to:

- Understand how much waste is produced in Scotland and help businesses benchmark their waste activities against others in their sector.
- Identify business opportunities to reuse and recycle waste by highlighting the potential resource value of commercial and industrial waste.

- Inform the waste management industry and ensure effective planning of new waste management facilities.
- Provide information and evidence for the development and monitoring of government policies as well as providing a sound basis for statutory reporting.

Data collected quarterly from waste management sites provides good information on how waste is managed. However, there is very limited information on the type of business that produced the waste and thus in its current form the data cannot be used to provide information on commercial and industrial waste produced by economic sector. A new way of collecting data is therefore needed that will provide more accurate information. Although the Scottish Government introduced regulations under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 that gave SEPA powers has to request data from businesses.

Currently the reporting on household waste arisings and management include waste originating from households and waste from other commercial premises, in the future household waste will mean “waste from households” only.

Waste that is collected for recycling may pass through a number of facilities before being recycled into a final product. This makes it difficult to track and measure. The point at which recycled waste is measured may change in the future when “End of Waste” criteria are published by the European Commission.

The reporting of data from WasteDataFlow on waste sent for recycling by local authorities is important for monitoring domestic and European household waste recycling targets. However, SEPA believe that the quality of waste data relating to the final destination of this waste needs to be improved, especially where waste is exported to recycling markets. The Zero Waste Plan currently requires an additional way of reporting the recycling of Scottish waste based on a resource displacement carbon metric as well as tonnes of waste recycled.

The correct use of the European Waste Catalogue to describe waste is essential for accurate reporting. There is not always a consistent approach to the coding of waste by waste management operators, this can be improved.

In order to support investment in new waste infrastructure or increase the productivity of existing infrastructure, it is important to have information on the actual operating capacity of facilities, not only their permitted capacity, as well as the capacity for individual materials.

The recycling of Scottish waste often takes place outside of Scotland, as a result accurate data is not always available. Similarly, actual data on the arisings of waste packaging, batteries and waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) in Scotland is not currently available.

Having sector specific information on the composition of mixed commercial and industrial waste will help the Scottish Government target initiatives to drive change. Obtaining data on all waste streams would help support development of business opportunities and focus attention on specific materials. The quality of all waste data that is collected needs to be continually assessed and improved, including the introduction of electronic data collection systems that will increase efficiency.

Reuse and repair activities managed by the Third Sector and others will be difficult to monitor. To address this separate targets with associated data reporting may need to be set up in order to monitor specific Waste Prevention Programme projects.

The main outcomes of the Waste Data Strategy most pertinent to local authorities will be:

- The reporting of household waste arisings and management is in line with the WFD and ZWP.
- The development and implementation of recycling guidance to support the ZWP.
- The development of a resource displacement carbon metric for all waste recycled in Scotland.
- An improvement in the reporting of final destination for recycled materials in WasteDataFlow.
- An improvement in the quantity of data reported on fly-tipping
- An estimate of the amount of BMW landfilled in Scotland split by household and C&I sources.

The development and maintenance of a Waste Data Strategy for Scotland will be a continuous process of analysis and review and has been developed with direction from a Stakeholders Steering group. It is proposed to create a permanent Technical Advisory Group (TAG) which will review the waste data products resulting from this strategy and provide a forum for stakeholders to express concerns and/or suggest improvements in the process.

Waste data will be published on-line wherever possible. The Scottish Government is developing a website which is likely to contain a section to be used as a dedicated forum for publishing waste data.

The strategy itself will be reviewed every three years.

### **Conclusion and APSE Comment**

APSE acknowledges that waste is a major issue for Scotland, particularly in relation to its impact on climate change issues and the environment in which we live. Both national and local government have a key role to play in ensuring that the nation as a whole combats climate change and builds a more sustainable future for our communities.

APSE would encourage any measures which help to achieve this, but would ask that policy makers remain mindful of the current global financial situation and whilst progressing these very important measures, attempt to keep pressure to a minimum on already stretched local authorities.

APSE would suggest that local authorities put in place their own plans for meeting all relevant targets and requirements, including those in relation to SEPA's Waste Data Strategy, ensuring integration into daily operations and long-term planning.

Performance Management Tools, such as APSE Performance Networks, may be helpful in not only establishing a baseline for how a council compares with similar authorities but also for identifying good practice from other councils that can be learned from.

For more information on this topic and a copy of the full Waste Data Strategy for Scotland, please visit [www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)

For more information on APSE performance networks please visit [www.apse.org.uk/performance-networks.html](http://www.apse.org.uk/performance-networks.html)

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