

Waste and Recycling Update

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The EEHT Board has recently been considering how EU exit will impact on waste and recycling policy, and how the LGA can be best placed to lobby on this. The Boards focus on waste and recycling policy has been timely as the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) recently launched its 25 Year Environment Plan. This report confirms the work the Board has been doing to review different methods for measuring waste and recycling in the future. It also summarises the waste and recycling elements of the 25 Year Environment Plan and gives Members the opportunity to discuss which aspects of waste and recycling our lobbying work should focus on (other elements of the 25 year Environmental Plan will be raised at future meetings of the Board). The report also contains an update on a recent Ministerial meeting.

Recommendation

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board Members are asked to formally agree the recommendations in section 8 and 11 of the report.

Action

Officers to progress as directed by members.

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Waste and Recycling Update

Background

1. The UK's exit from the EU will have a significant impact at local authority level, creating opportunities to do things differently and challenges that will need to be addressed. The LGA has identified priorities which it will be focussing on in order to ensure that powers repatriated from the EU do not stop at Whitehall, Stormont, Cardiff Bay and Holyrood. The environment has been identified as one of these key priorities.
2. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will ensure that the body of existing EU law, including environmental law, continues to hold sway in the UK. Key underlying principles of existing policy, such as the 'polluter pays' principle and the precautionary principle, are reflected in this legislation and in the historic judgements of the European Court, also covered by the Bill.
3. At previous meetings the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport (EEHT) Board has recognised that there is currently an opportunity to influence DEFRA's thinking about how it will deal with waste and recycling once we have exited the EU. In preparation for this the EEHT Board commissioned work on waste and recycling targets and has been considering how a framework for measuring these services could operate in the future.

Issues

Framework for measuring waste and recycling targets

4. At the December meeting of the EEHT Board there was a detailed discussion about the measurement of waste and recycling targets. The Board was presented with a piece of work it had commissioned from Eunomia Research and Consulting, looking at the options for measuring waste and recycling targets in the future. Eunomia suggested a framework built around residual waste arising (kg per person per year) and GHG emissions (kg avoided CO2 equivalent emissions per person per year).
5. Members had a wide ranging discussion. There was general agreement around the fact that greater focus around waste minimisation was needed. Members recognised that recycling rates have their limitations. This includes no incentive to minimise waste arisings and a bias towards rural and suburban areas which can benefit from targeting large quantities of garden waste. Plastics was also recognised as an area around which local government would like to deliver more on (this issue is discussed further on in this report).
6. Members felt it was important to understand where waste and recycling technology is heading and to have a broader environmental framework in which these issues can be addressed. Some form of dashboard of indicators was suggested which could incorporate residual waste as a primary indicator but also offer carbon emissions as part

of the future picture. It was also recognised that waste and recycling needs are different across the country and so a nationally set framework which could be implemented locally according to local needs would be welcome.

7. A question was raised about the impact on families of any new set of targets and those on low incomes. Eunomia highlighted that the per person measurement of targets delivered greater “environmental justice” as waste is addressed according to individual output rather than household size. Further work by Eunomia also suggests that there is no correlation between residual arisings and deprivation levels.
8. The Board is asked to formally agree:
 - 8.1. Support for the LGA to propose a review of the waste and recycling measurement framework for local government post EU Exit
 - 8.2. A national framework within which there would be freedom for councils to decide how to locally deliver on objectives
 - 8.3. Key metrics measuring the environmental performance of local authority waste by residual waste arisings (kg residual waste per person per year), with a longer term focus towards moving to GHG emissions (kg avoided CO2 equivalent emissions per person per year)
 - 8.4. Suggesting a dashboard approach incorporating several measures. This could incentivise waste management approaches which could reflect different objectives that address local needs. For example, a dashboard could contain measures such as recycling rate, residual waste per person, and GHG emissions avoided through recycling per person, but allow councils to focus on one indicator in particular.
 - 8.5. Officers working with the media team to develop an approach for communicating key lines from this work.

Waste and recycling - 25 Year Environment Plan

9. On 11 January 2018 the Government published its 25 Year Environment Plan. The Plan was launched by the Prime Minister and is a significant document as it sets the policy direction for the next 25 years – well beyond EU exit. The document acknowledges that there is a “once in a lifetime” opportunity to influence the environmental policy framework because we are leaving the EU. The Plan has provided a renewed sense of direction for DEFRA and we need to use this opportunity to lobby on waste and recycling policy in preparation for EU exit.

10. A summary of the 25 Year Environment Plan can be found in **Appendix 1**. A copy of the LGA press release issued in response to the Plan can be found in **Appendix 2**. Due to the wide ranging scope of the Plan it is suggested that this Board meeting focuses on the elements of the plan addressing waste and recycling. Future Board meetings can return to the Plan in greater detail if Members wish. Table 1 considers the key elements of the 25 Year Plan which impact on the Boards work around waste and recycling. The LGA's lobbying lines on each issue are presented for agreement.

11. The Board is asked to:

- 11.1. Note the key policy objectives of the Government with regards to waste and recycling
- 11.2. Note the LGA's lobbying positions and indicate to officers where positions may need updating
- 11.3. Identify any aspects of the Plan our lobbying work should specifically focus on
- 11.4. Indicate support for officers to lobby DEFRA and other partners on the basis of the agreed lobbying positions.

Table 1: Mapping key waste and recycling objectives from 25 Year Environment Plan against EEHT lobbying positions

25 Year Plan	LGA lobbying position
<p>1.Achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by end of 2042</p> <p><u>Production stage</u> Looking across the whole lifecycle, launching a call for evidence in 2018 seeking views on how the tax system or charges could reduce the amount of single use plastics waste.</p> <p>Working with industry to rationalise packaging formats and materials formats to make sure that more plastics can be easily recycled and the quality of collected recycled plastics is improved.</p> <p>Reforming the Producer Responsibility systems (including packaging waste regulations) to incentivise producers to take</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA supports the ambition to achieve zero avoidable plastic waste by end of 2042. • 98% of councils offer some form of plastic recycling. Limitations in recycling are due to the fact that producers use a range of different quality plastics and councils are only able to deal with the plastics that their contractor has the facilities to recycle. • Councils also have to consider locally what the financial case is for recycling plastic <p><u>Production stage</u> LGA will work with Treasury on the call for evidence on how the tax system/charges could reduce the amount of single use plastics waste.</p> <p>It is essential that industry rationalises packaging formats and uses plastics which are easy to process at the reprocessing stage and maintain a value on secondary markets. Local government would like to work with Government on a communications campaign around improving the quality of recycled material. This will help to ensure that recycling is of greater value than incineration.</p> <p>Reform of the producer responsibility system would be welcomed. Currently, the UK raises the lowest level of contribution from</p>

greater responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products. This will include exploring extending producer responsibility requirements to plastic products not currently covered by our existing regimes to create a better market for recycled plastic.

Consumption stage

Removing all consumer single use plastics from the central government estate offices.

Extending uptake of the 5p plastic bag charge to small retailers
Supporting water companies, high street retailers, coffee shops and transport hubs to offer new refill points for people to top-up water bottles for free in every major city and town in England.

The water industry plans to create a nationwide network of refill points, and an app to help people find the nearest place to refill their bottles with water free of charge.

Working with retailers and WRAP to explore introducing plastic-free supermarket aisles in which all the food is loose.

End of use stage

Continuing to support the industry lead on-pack recycling labelling system and encourage all brands and retailers to use this systems to provide information to householders.

Continuing to implement the Litter Strategy to reduce plastic litter and littering behaviour.

Implementing voluntary and regulatory interventions that can cut the amount of commonly littered items, and improve recycling and packaging reuse. This includes considering advice from the Voluntary & Economic Incentives Working group (set up under the

producers amongst all EU member states. Any new scheme must ensure that producers take greater responsibility for the life cycle of the waste they create. This burden is currently predominantly placed on council tax payers. Local government would like involvement in how any additional funding raised from producers is spent.

Consumption stage

The LGA supports councils in volunteering to commit to removing all single use plastics from their estate offices.

The LGA supports councils offering more refill points for people to top up water bottles

LGA to showcase Plymouth Plastic Free task force

End of use stage

The LGA supports clearer labelling of all items to provide householders with information about how to recycle products. Greater focus is needed on the products which are difficult to recycle and may require industry to offer take back schemes ie mattresses

The LGA recognises the impact on local communities of litter and littering. The LGA took part in the Litter Strategy taskforce. The

Litter Strategy), which is currently looking at measures to reduce littering and promote recycling of drinks containers.

End of life/waste management stage

Through the Framework for Greater Consistency, WRAP is working with industry and local authorities to ensure that a consistent set of materials are collected by all local authorities. Accelerate this shift to consistency in the materials collected. Working with the waste management industry and re-processors to significantly increase the proportion of plastic packaging that is collected and recycled.

Work with the Research Councils to help develop a standard for biodegradable plastic bags as part of emerging work on a national Bioeconomy Strategy (while also recognising the need to avoid microplastics pollution).

WRAP is working to develop a new cross-sector (business, government and NGOs) commitment to tackle plastic waste. This will align with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastic Economy and have an initial focus on plastic packaging.

implementation of any specialist schemes to tackle specific litter streams needs to take into consideration the impact of single item withdrawal on the viability of overall local waste and recycling schemes.

End of life/Waste management stage

Consistency remains a key area of debate. This is a problem which begins at the production stage where producers are not using consistent materials in the products/packaging they produce. If producers were consistent in this initial phase, local government would have a more consistent set of materials to collect and pass on to re-processors. Re-processors need to be able to accept a range of materials. This currently isn't the case as it is dependent on the market available for these materials.

Councils can only vary their current collections when contracts come up for renewal or by paying a penalty clause. Government needs to indicate if it would be willing to pay to deliver greater consistency in a shorter timeframe.

The consistency debate needs to be considered in the round and not just by focussing on the middle part of the cycle which local government delivers.

<p>2. Reducing food supply chain emissions and waste</p> <p>Continuing to work closely with WRAP, food businesses, local authorities and other organisations to meet Courtauld 2025.</p> <p>Work towards no food waste entering landfill by 2030. Many local authorities have introduced separate collection of food waste and we will work to support an increase in numbers so that the amount of food waste sent to landfill continues to decline.</p> <p>Ensuring that as food and catering contracts come up for renewal, central government departments and their agencies adopt the balanced scorecard approach to deliver benefits to the environment, consumers and businesses alike.</p>	<p>Many councils would like to be able to introduce food waste collection services. However, the business case for getting more councils to introduce food waste collections is marginal. This is because adopting a separate food waste collection can have significant upfront costs</p> <p>The Government should consider broadening the current producer contribution regime to include a food waste element to better share the burden of additional collections for councils.</p> <p>Further help is also needed from the Government to help create greater demand for household food waste as a product. Anaerobic digestion plants are one of the main consumers of food waste. Future expansion of these plants is uncertain due to changes in government subsidies for renewable energy. Government needs to provide clearer direction for the future of anaerobic digestion. Other options for using food waste could be to require a proportion of recycled compost to be included in non-recycled compost products, or in agricultural products.</p>
<p>3. Reducing litter and littering</p> <p>Continue to implement the Government's Litter Strategy for England, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introducing new regulations to improve local authorities' enforcement powers, supported by new guidance on its proportionate use. 	<p>The LGA took part in developing the Government's Litter Strategy. Councils have been given greater enforcement powers which in many cases will be welcomed. However, some councils have fed back that they do not have the resources to run enforcement activity. Others have flagged up that enforcement legal action can in some cases become protracted and costly for a council. Expectation around</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developing a national anti-littering campaign, led by the government and funded by the private sector. -Distributing a £450,000 Litter Innovation Fund to pilot, implement and evaluate small scale local research projects that could be replicated more widely. 	<p>enforcement activity needs to be realistic. We will continue to lobby on how these powers can be made more useful for local government.</p> <p>The LGA would support any national anti-littering campaign and supports the aims of the Litter Innovation Fund.</p>
<p>4.Improving management of residual waste</p> <p>Exploring different infrastructure options for managing residual waste beyond electricity, including the production of biofuels for transport and emerging innovative technologies.</p> <p>Looking at ways to increase the use of heat produced at waste facilities through better connections to heat networks. The facilities will become more efficient and emit less carbon dioxide. Investigating ways to cut carbon dioxide emissions from Energy from Waste facilities</p>	<p>The LGA is keen to talk to the Government about residual waste. We are interested in understanding the potential for residual waste to provide a new framework for measuring waste along with carbon emissions. We would like to understand how we could fit into the overall process of managing residual waste and the potential this could offer for alternative energy outcomes.</p> <p>There should be a clear role in this work for councils which are already involved in Energy from Waste facilities.</p>
<p>5.Cracking down on fly tippers and waste criminals</p> <p>Seeking to eliminate waste crime and illegal waste sites over the lifetime of the Plan, prioritising those of highest risk.</p> <p>Working with industry to explore options to introduce electronic tracking of waste.</p> <p>As part of the Resources and Waste Strategy, to be published in 2018, developing a new strategic approach to prevent, detect and deter waste crime.</p> <p>Taking a partnership approach to deal with the issue with industry, regulators and local authorities.</p>	<p>The LGA called for councils to be able to apply Fixed Penalty Notices for small scale fly-tipping and welcomed the introduction of this new power.</p> <p>When they take offenders to court, councils need a faster and more effective legal system which means fly-tippers are given hard-hitting fines for more serious offences.</p> <p>Manufacturers also need to provide more take-back services so people can hand in old furniture and mattresses when they buy new ones.</p>

	The LGA would like to be closely involved in the development of the Resources and Waste Strategy.
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Ministerial Meeting

12. The Chair of the EEHT Board met with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment Therese Coffey MP, on 23 January 2018. This was a useful meeting where a number of issues were discussed. On food waste the Minister flagged up that the EU Trilogue has mandated separate bio waste collections (not necessarily kerbside collections). The Minister is interested to hear from local government how we avoid sending food waste to landfill.
13. At the time of the meeting the Minister indicated that the impact of the China import ban was still being established. DEFRA are aware that different markets are being used to deal with plastics. Paper was flagged up as a greater concern. The Environment Agency is alert to the risk that any stock piled waste may present. The situation is being kept under review. The Minister stressed that the upcoming Waste and Resources Strategy would look at how to address longer term issues with markets. She indicated that the LGA should be involved in the development of the strategy.

Implications for Wales

14. We are working closely with the WLGA's environment team and will be sharing our lobbying approach with them.

Financial Implications

15. None.

Next steps

16. Members are asked to formally agree the recommendations in section 8 and 11.

Appendix 1

Summary of the 25 Year Environment Strategy

17. The 25 Year Environment Plan – A Green Future, (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673203/25-year-environment-plan.pdf) is an ambitious plan which seeks to provide a comprehensive and long term approach to the environment which extends across a quarter of a century. The key ambition of the plan is “to leave our environment in a better state than we found it”. The document recognises that there is clear momentum for positive change within Government and also in society. The ambitions for the plan are wide ranging within the UK but also identify a desire for us to be an international leader on the world environmental stage.
18. The plan has 10 goals:
- 18.1. Clean air
 - 18.2. Clean and plentiful water
 - 18.3. Thriving plants and wildlife
 - 18.4. A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought
 - 18.5. Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
 - 18.6. Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment
 - 18.7. Mitigating and adapting to climate change
 - 18.8. Minimising waste
 - 18.9. Managing exposure to chemicals
 - 18.10. Enhancing biosecurity
19. The Government’s actions will be focussed around six key areas:
- 19.1. Using and managing land sustainably
 - 19.2. Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes
 - 19.3. Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
 - 19.4. Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste
 - 19.5. Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans
 - 19.6. Protecting and improving the global environment
20. The plan will be reported on annually and refreshed at least every five years to ensure it is kept up to date. It sits alongside the Industrial Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy both of which are referred to throughout the plan. The Government will work with leading scientists, economists and environmentalists, to develop a set of metrics to chart progress by the end of 2018.

21. There are two further significant points for members to note. Firstly the plan indicates that the Government will be setting up a new independent environmental body to hold it to account. There will also be the development of a policy statement on environmental principles to underpin policy-making post-EU Exit. This will provide maximum certainty about environmental regulations as we leave the EU.
22. Secondly the concept of Natural Capital is a key feature of the plan. Natural capital is the sum of our ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, soils, minerals, our air and our seas. These are all elements of nature that either directly or indirectly bring value to people and the country at large. As signalled in the Industrial Strategy, over the coming years the UK intends to use a 'natural capital' approach as a tool to help make key choices and long-term decisions.
23. DEFRA wants to support strong local leadership and delivery through the plan. The larger environmental delivery bodies in the Defra Group, have therefore aligned around a common geography of 14 areas. Each has its own Area Integrated Plan (effectively, a joint statement of intent between the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission) that propose to develop into natural capital plans. These will be aligned with the 25 Year Environment Plan (ensuring a clear line of sight to national government) but be particularly relevant to the local area or geographies within them.

Appendix 2

LGA Press release issued in response to the 25 Year Environment Plan

LGA RESPONDS TO GOVERNMENT'S 25-YEAR ENVIRONMENT PLAN

Responding to the launch of the Government's 25-year Environment Plan, Cllr Martin Tett, the Local Government Association's Environment spokesman, said:

"We support the Government's ambition to tackle the scourge of unnecessary plastic waste.

"Councils have asked repeatedly for manufacturers and retailers, who both choose to produce and stock packaging which isn't easily recyclable, to get around a table with us and work together to explore solutions to this problem.

"What we need is packaging that is easily recyclable – this would not only make waste disposal easier for our residents, but save considerable amounts of money and energy, whilst protecting our environment.

"Producers need to switch to recyclable items so that plastic clogging up our environment becomes a thing of the past.

"We want to work with supermarkets and manufacturers so that we avoid having unrecyclable waste in the first place, and would urge them to switch to recyclable packaging where possible."