

LGA Reuse Commission

Purpose of Report

This report sets out proposals for a LGA Reuse Commission for discussion and agreement.

Summary

Currently only a very small proportion of waste is reused. By taking advantage of the opportunities to increase reuse there would be potential environmental gains and cost reductions for councils.

In response to these opportunities 'Wealth from Waste' - the report from the LGA local waste review - recommended the establishment of a Reuse Commission to report on measures government, councils, businesses and the voluntary and community sector can take to mainstream reuse and drive growth in the reuse of products.

This paper sets out proposals on how this project could be taken forward.

Recommendation

That the Board **comment** on the proposals for the Reuse Commission project.

Action

To take forward the proposed project subject to Members' views.

Contact officer: Dan McCartney
Position: Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3238
E-mail: dan.mccartney@local.gov.uk

LGA Reuse Commission

Background

1. The amount of material councils currently report as reused is small by comparison to the whole waste stream. While official waste reporting may not capture all of the reuse activity that takes place, the real proportion of waste that is reused remains low. Material that could potentially be reused includes 149,000 tonnes of Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE), 165,000 tonnes of furniture and the majority of 1.4 million tonnes of textiles¹, which are currently disposed of via incineration or landfill each year resulting in a significant cost to councils and local tax payers.
2. There are economic and social as well as environmental benefits to increasing the amount of material that is re-used. By diverting material from disposal there can be both a saving to local authorities as well as an increase in economic activity as materials prepared for reuse have a value and can be traded at higher rates than disposal by-products. A thriving market in second hand products can bring additional jobs per tonne of material when compared to disposal², including activity by many voluntary and community sector groups. Reuse can also reduce environmental impacts in material production, distribution and disposal by giving products a second or extended life and thereby reducing the need for the production of new products.
3. The LGA's Wealth from Waste report proposed measures to foster a market for reused materials which included creating a standard to support increased consumer confidence and changes to the tax regime to boost the financial returns and bring more players to the market. The report proposed the establishment of a Reuse Commission to take these, and other related issues forward. This paper sets out the details of the project and next steps to take this proposal forward.

Objectives

4. The Reuse Commission presents the opportunity for the LGA to lead the way on development of policy and practice on reuse going beyond current ambition and achievements and to engage with key organisations that have an interest in reuse.
5. Proposed objectives for the commission are:
 - 5.1. Local authorities, government, voluntary and community sector and the waste industry better understand:
 - 5.1.1. the key barriers to and opportunities to increase the proportion of waste material reused;
 - 5.1.2. how an approach to mainstreaming reuse could provide additional value; and
 - 5.1.3. the means for increasing the value and income for reused materials.

¹ WRAP, Composition and reuse potential of household bulky waste in the UK August 2012.
<http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/UK%20bulky%20waste%20summary.pdf>

² Friends of the Earth, More Jobs Less Waste, 2010.

- 5.2. Councils are recognised for their contribution in leading the promotion of reuse, going beyond current central government ambition;
- 5.3. Recommendations from the Commission are reflected in national party policies.

Deliverables

- 6. It is proposed that the Commission will develop and deliver the following:
 - 6.1. Identification of the opportunities, value and savings that could be delivered from an increase in reuse;
 - 6.2. A set of good practice models for local authorities to increase reuse (top 5 ideas);
 - 6.3. Case studies of how councils are working with the voluntary sector and businesses to increase re-use; and
 - 6.4. A set of proposals to:
 - 6.4.1. outline and promote a reuse quality standard to provide greater consumer confidence;
 - 6.4.2. provide tax breaks for reused and refurbished products;
 - 6.4.3. increase reuse within a revised WEEE system;
 - 6.4.4. maximise the opportunities for local authorities as part of the Social Value Act and the role increased reuse could have in meeting the new social value considerations within commissioning and procurement; and
 - 6.4.5. Identifying associated policy proposals that could address the barriers highlighted by the commission.

Membership and role of the Commission

- 7. The Commission will be led by nominated representatives from the Environment and Housing Board and include representatives from across the waste and reuse sector.
- 8. The organisations involved will provide high level input and help steer, develop and provide challenge to the Commission as well as ensuring it accesses the appropriate data and evidence from across the voluntary and business sectors to inform the findings. The LGA Environment and Housing Board and its representatives on the Commission will provide leadership to the Commission and the Board will decide on content and recommendations.
- 9. The Board is asked to discuss and agree organisations which should be invited to sit on the Commission.

Process and indicative timescales

- 10. It is envisaged that the Commission will meet as a group to initiate and shape the focus of work on reuse and secondly to input and provide challenge to emerging findings and recommendations.

11. Research and policy development work will be carried out by LGA officers, working with organisations represented on the Commission and other partners.
12. It is proposed that work on the commission begins in September and it is anticipated to report early in 2014.

Financial implications

13. The proposals within this paper can be delivered within the existing programme budget.