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October 2013

From Lord de Mauley
Parliamentary Under Secretary

I understand that many local authorities are currently looking at their arrangements for collecting and disposing of waste.

Since 2000 the national household recycling rate has risen from 11% to 43%. This is a massive increase and local authorities should be proud of the part they have played in achieving it. But there is no time for complacency. The increase in recycling rates has slowed. To reach our EU target, recycling 50% of all household waste by 2020, will require sustained effort and, whilst we have seen the amount of recycling increase, this has not been accompanied by an increase in the quality of recyclates coming through.

So we need to push ahead on all fronts, driving up both quantity and quality whilst driving down costs. To build up our local and rural economies we want our domestic glass and paper industries to be able to rely on a consistent supply of a good standard of recyclates produced here, without resorting to imports. Local authorities have an important role to play in achieving this, but they will need good information about what happens to the recyclates they collect.

It is for that reason that we are hoping to publish new regulations this winter, requiring information about the quality of recyclates that our Material Recovery Facilities produce. It is also the reason why we fully support the new requirements for the separate collection of waste paper, plastic, glass and metal.



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The revised Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) in effect requires member states to set up separate collection where necessary and practicable. Supporting European Commission guidance was published in June 2012.

The Government and Welsh Government transposed these requirements through the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, as amended by the Waste (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012.

It appears that some local authorities may be taking the view that co-mingled collections of paper, glass, plastic and metal waste streams will remain permissible in all circumstances after 1st January 2015. I therefore thought it would be helpful now to remind local authorities of the effect of the Regulations.

From 1st January 2015 an establishment or undertaking which collects waste paper, metal, plastic or glass must do so by way of separate collection. These requirements apply where separate collection:

- (a) is necessary, in effect, to provide high quality recyclates, and
- (b) is technically, environmentally and economically practicable.

Where waste paper, metal, plastic or glass has been collected separately all reasonable steps must be taken to keep that stream separate from other waste streams wherever this is necessary to provide high quality recyclates.

It is clear that the intention is that these requirements should represent a high hurdle. I am aware that co-mingled metal and plastic are relatively easy to separate at a MRF. However, at present many of our existing MRFs struggle to keep glass shards out of the paper stream. In addition many MRFs produce low quality mixed glass which needs further sorting and can be uneconomic to re-smelt. I look to local authorities actively to address these problems, by the effective implementation of the new regulations and by tackling problems with operating practices.

Separate collection does not of course mean that each household will need more bins. For example, many areas have kerbside sort systems where materials are sorted before being loaded into the waste collection vehicle. The WRAP website is a useful source of help.

Any local authorities considering new collection or disposal plans should take care to ensure that they are placing themselves in a position to fulfil their legal duties from 2015. This is particularly important for local authorities who may be considering moving away from separate collection, or including glass within a co-mingled stream. Local authorities should consult their own lawyers as necessary, and should keep a clear audit trail given the potential for legal challenge.



I am aware that this is a challenging time for local government as budgets reduce and expectations increase. I would urge all local authorities to work more closely with each other to sharpen procurement practices and share both facilities and services where possible.

I hope this is helpful to you and would be grateful if you could share this message with your members.

Rupert de Manley



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