

The emerging findings of the LGA Reuse Commission

Purpose of Report

This report provides a summary of the work and emerging findings of the LGA Reuse Commission for comment ahead of finalising and launching the Commission's report.

Summary

The emerging findings of the LGA Reuse Commission are set out in **paragraph 8** of this paper. There is potential for an increase in reuse and the Commission has identified a series of themes that could drive both the demand and supply of reused products.

A draft of the Commission findings including recommendations will be circulated in advance of the Board meeting.

Recommendations

That the Board **comment** on the summary of the Reuse Commission findings and proposed recommendations (shared separately in advance of the Board meeting).

Action

As directed by members.

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The emerging findings of the LGA Reuse Commission

Background

1. The LGA's Wealth from Waste report proposed the establishment of a Reuse Commission to bring together key organisations to develop findings and report back on measures government, councils, business and the voluntary and community sector can take to mainstream reuse and drive growth in the reuse of products.
2. The Commission was led by a member panel chaired by Cllr Loakes and included input from a series of organisations from retail, the voluntary and community sector, the waste industry and local authorities (see **Appendix A** for full list of organisations). The Commission met twice and divided its focus between supply of and demand for reuse products. As part of the work of the Commission the LGA surveyed councils on their approaches to maximising reuse and also gathered a series of case studies of this work in practice. In addition, the Commission identified the key role that consumers will have in both providing unwanted items for reuse as well as buying second-hand items. To test consumer attitudes to reuse and inform the Commission findings the LGA commissioned polling with Populus.
3. In December DEFRA launched their waste prevention programme strategy which encompasses reuse. It promises the development of a number of activities on reuse and outlines a lead role for local authorities on waste prevention which the findings of the Commission will seek to respond to.

Findings of the Commission

4. The Commission findings will reflect on the many different ways in which reuse happens. This includes informal giving of products or 'passing them down' to a friend or family member or offering them to someone locally via an online platform like freecycle or freecycle. More formal second hand markets account for the reuse of many items which are bought and sold in various ways including car boot sales or via internet sites like ebay. In addition to this, arrangements are increasingly being put in place by retailers to take back items when a replacement is delivered on anything from mobile phones to sofas and washing machines. Equally important is the thriving charity and voluntary and community sector which collects and often repairs and refurbishes products to sell in their shops or provide to those in need.
5. The service provided by local authorities varies and includes anything from offering space for deposit of reuse of certain products at their household waste and recycling centres, to offering comprehensive kerbside bulky waste collection or running a shop selling second hand products. The delivery of these services is often done in partnership with voluntary and community sector groups and can also involve the diversion of reusable products to council tenants in need of support.
6. The Commission will develop findings on the potential to increase reuse and seek to quantify the cost savings to tax payers from increasing reuse activities by increasing diversion from landfill. It will provide recommendations for local and central government, the voluntary and community sector and the industry to help realise the potential of reuse.

7. The Commission has identified the following themes that would help to realise this potential:
8. Driving demand:
 - 8.1. **Consumers need confidence** to buy second-hand products and in particular electronic items. The review will include proposals to DEFRA and WRAP on a reuse standard which was identified as an area of activity in the Government's Waste Prevention Strategy.
 - 8.2. **Making reuse products more competitive is important.** Price has been identified as a driving factor in motivating the purchase of a second-hand product. The Commission identified a range of tax incentives which would increase the viability of reuse industries and proposals will be included in the final report.
 - 8.3. **The public sector can drive reuse through its purchasing.** Each year the public sector purchases many millions of pounds of products and has the potential in many instances to specify reused or refurbished products. This would help to drive demand for these products and have a positive effect by increasing the value of the reuse and refurbishment industry.
 - 8.4. **Design can have a positive effect** on the likelihood of a product's reuse or repair for reuse. To achieve this new business models will need to be developed that include sufficient incentives to product designers and marketers. There are opportunities to develop business models for consumer sales that build on the leasing model that is common between businesses (e.g. the lease of photocopiers or other business equipment).
 - 8.5. **Increasing the profile and opportunities for reuse** will be important both locally and nationally. An increased focus on reuse and its benefits as part of the DEFRA waste prevention programme would help local authorities and other groups to increase reuse locally and would have a positive effect on consumer demand for and supply of second-hand products and help to boost the market in refurbishment and remanufacture.
9. Driving supply:
 - 9.1. **Convenience is king.** The Commission highlighted the importance of a convenient collection and drop off service as the most effective means of ensuring householders provide unwanted items for use by someone else.
 - 9.2. **Preservation of value and clear advice on treatment.** The design of collection services and household waste and recycling centres to ensure products avoid damage in transit and storage can help increase the value and likelihood of products being reused. The Commission will develop recommendations on how clear and consistent advice on local reuse services and on treatment of unwanted items can be important in ensuring the maximisation of reuse. Findings will also be developed on where the most effective sources for advice would be on reuse for householders.

- 9.3. **Reuse can provide social value.** Local authorities now have a requirement to incorporate social as well as financial value within their procurement of services. The Commission will include examples of good practice to illustrate the potential of the Act as well as the potential for discussion with waste contractors to release social value through increasing reuse facilities.
 - 9.4. **Reusing WEEE.** Recent announcements by government on the WEEE compliance arrangements did not contain any incentive to increase the reuse, but will allow councils to manage WEEE streams themselves if they choose. The Commission will highlight this as a missed opportunity, but will outline the potential for reuse by councils that choose to manage WEEE themselves.
10. A draft of the findings of the Reuse Commission including recommendations will be circulated in advance of the Board meeting.

Next steps

11. To incorporate members' comments into a final draft of the report.
12. Carry out design work on the document (start of February).
13. Launch the report (early February).

Financial implications

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

Reuse Commission members

British Heart Foundation
Chartered Institute of Waste Managers
British Retail Consortium
Department of Environment and Food and Rural Affairs
Design Council
Environcom
Environmental Services Association
Furniture Reuse Network
London Community Resource Network
Warwickshire County Council
Waste and Recycling Action Programme
Emmaus
Cllr Clyde Loakes (chair)
Cllr Keith House
Cllr Clare Whelan
Cllr Jonathan Essex, Independent Councillor

The LGA has also engaged with the following organisations to feed their views into the work of the commission:

Nappy Alliance
Cabinet Office Behavioural Insight Team
White Goods Trade Association
EEE Safe
Reuseful UK
EEF - The manufacturers' organisation
Salvation Army
Charity Retail Association