

Consultation on Scotland's Zero Waste Plan

This response consolidates views that have been expressed members of The Environmental Association for Universities & Colleges (EAUC) that are based in Scotland.

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There was general agreement amongst the respondents; however, where there were divergent views all opinions have been recorded.

Question 1.

What further steps, if any, need to be taken to promote the waste hierarchy?

The past effectiveness of awareness raising needs to be assessed. Success in increasing recycling may not have been achieved as a result of an understanding of the issues. It may have arisen because kerbside recycling has made it convenient. This does not mean that the culture and underlying behaviour has changed.

Any further promotion should be focussed on sectors and areas where the greatest gains can be made and where the highest waste arisings occur. There is significant potential for confusion over certain terms that are in use such as 'preparing for reuse' and 'energy recovery'. If these terms cannot be simplified then there may be benefit in additional education/awareness raising about what these mean/require.

A barrier to the success of further promotion is the current definition of waste which can impede sensible reuse/refurbishment etc. A continued simplification of the regulatory arena for low hazard and top priority areas, especially those where there is high value in recovery or recycling would also help.

Investment in local/regional infrastructure should be focussed to support the proximity principle where practical.

Question 2.

a) Waste tonnage will continue to be the main measure of progress. However, should Government also use other ways of measuring progress? Yes/No.

Two conflicting views have emerged in response to this question:

No.

Waste tonnage is applicable here. Introduction of other measures, such as carbon savings, would complicate the process and be more difficult for the lay person to interpret.

Yes.

It would be useful to further break down

- construction and demolition and

- commercial and industrial

streams to allow further information and statistics on the category 'other treatment'. Alternatively it may be possible and valuable to collect data on these streams using the same categories as used in municipal waste.

b) If yes, what measures, how and why?

Use of a simple conversion to carbon savings, and possibly also recording of estimated greenhouse gas emissions, might be an additional informative measure. It may be possible to extend the emissions data to recycling and recovery by collecting data from the recycling/recovery operations themselves. In order not to hamper small-scale / community operations, data collection could be restricted to operations above a threshold size.

Relative proportions of hazardous/non-hazardous waste may also be useful measure.

Question 3.

a) Do you agree with these proposals on improving data? Yes/No.

Yes

Data should be improved. A credible baseline is essential to measuring. If data is only requested on a voluntary basis there will be poor compliance.

Again, prioritisation is essential. Although important to have statistics the fine tuning of this should not be pursued at the expense of allocating resources to projects and development of technology that will allow us to better minimise or manage the problem of waste.

One way to address this would be to place requirements on waste producers to make returns, rather than the support sectors. This would also have the benefit of highlighting the amount of waste they produce and the potential savings from minimisation. Large businesses could be required to submit annual waste returns and similar returns should be requested from smaller businesses periodically. Responses should be mandatory. Facilitation of the process could be by means of an on-line system. Perhaps the Consignment Note system could become an electronically generated form with waste information being automatically entered into a database. Use of good software and technology could minimise the resource cost of this and it may be possible to simplify the system so as to consolidate all waste returns.

Returns should be concise and specific, so as to avoid double counting.

b) If no, what should be done and how and by whom?

N/A

Question 4.

What should be the future role of Area Waste Groups and Area Waste Plans?

Options include:

i) Abolition (if so, how do you feel local needs could best be supported and developed?).

ii) Updating Area Groups and Plans to reflect this Plan's objectives.

iii) Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to prepare new Area Plans which focus exclusively on data and infrastructure, similar to the Strategic Waste Management Reviews.

iv) Using the Groups to monitor local delivery but with no Plan making requirements.

v) Other option. If so, please outline.

Area Waste Plans (AWPs) should be retained, however it is essential that their strategic effectiveness is reviewed and any shortcomings addressed. AWP's reflect the needs and demands of geographical areas that will vary wildly because of their inherent characteristics e.g. urban and centralised, rural and remote for example. Therefore such AWP's will have strategies that may differ in focus quite significantly in how they achieve Zero Waste. They should, however, be reviewed to incorporate the outcomes of this consultation. The development of AWP's should be done in partnership with neighbouring AWP to ensure a holistic waste management approach is given with a regional / national view in mind. For example two neighbouring AWP's could share a waste treatment facility / EfW plant and share the capital cost or subsidies. AWP's should be updated in partnership with SEPA

The practical effectiveness of each plan should be monitored by an area waste group comprised of suitable background/expertise and ongoing shortcomings should be identified and addressed in updated/revised plans. The delivery phases of the plans should also be monitored for effectiveness with shortcomings being identified and addressed.

Question 5.

a) Is there a need for a simplified delivery body programme? Yes/No. If yes, what form should this take?

Yes.

There are many organisations funded by the government doing similar / same thing. All of these organisations should sit within one umbrella body that governs what they do, allocates resources and assess their performance. Within this body a specific remit should be clarified for each 'section. The organisation should be known by a single name and it should be clear that the sections are a part of this. In effect delivery of a 'one stop shop' should be aimed for so as to prevent confusion and duplication of effort and maximise use of resources.

b) Are there areas where additional work is required from delivery bodies to support progress towards a Zero Waste Scotland? Yes/No. If yes, what are these areas of additional work?

Firstly, are all the existing bodies needed? If the majority of waste is produced through commercial and industrial processes than additional work is required in these areas.

A holistic approach to waste minimisation should be taken. In support of this, clear guidance on whole life costing should be available to allow informed decision making by individuals, organisations and companies. These need to be applied to purchasing and disposal process to allow sustainable choices to be made.

Research findings should be well publicised in a form that is easily assimilated by the public so as to combat 'green wash' and allow informed decision making.

c) Are there current areas of work which delivery bodies could stop doing? Yes/No. If yes, what are these areas of work?

Presently there are conferences, business breakfasts, help lines, guidance documents, Netregs, online tool kits etc. All of these are good, but fundamentally the best guidance is face to face or showing people practical examples within the field. A reduction in the former and increase the latter may be beneficial. A more focussed approach to the many events could deliver resource efficiency and minimise confusion amongst the target groups.

Question 6.

To date, development plans have not always identified sites and/or locational criteria for waste management plants. What can be done to ensure that development plans do so in future?

In some areas development plans have identified sites for facilities but planning has overturned such rulings due to controversy over the actual waste technology. This section states that LDPs have "regard to" and SDPs "expected to" consider waste management criteria. These are vague statements. Local Area Plans must be **required** to identify and designate appropriate potential sites and, where possible, these should be close to rail communication (or inshore ports). There is also the possibility of using planning gain to ensure compliance by all developers.

It should also be a requirement to try and ensure that any such location is convenient for associated operations (recover/reuse etc) to minimise transport and co-ordinate with adjoining areas. It may be possible to designate areas that attract multi-function development for waste management and recovery/reuse operations in the same way as we develop business and science parks. It should be a requirement that transport is other than by road when possible.

The Scottish Government should also take the opportunity to broaden the Planning Policy framework to enforce other waste minimisation / prevention and landfill diversion processes e.g.

- the use of Site Waste Management Plans
- inclusion of waste collection / management facilities within all developments above the domestic level.
- ensure that all developments meet or exceed minimum criteria. (For example, eco-design of developments, use of recycled content in construction, halving

waste to landfill, ensuring new housing developments are built to accommodate composting / EfW / recycling facilities within it)

Utilisation of brown field sites and cleaning up contaminated areas is preferable to use of 'new' land. Consideration should also be given to development of existing landfill sites into EfW facilities; after all they have a plentiful supply of fuel on their doorstep.

Question 7.

a) Should Government set a target of reducing municipal waste by 1% per annum? Yes/No.

If municipal waste includes commercial and industrial then 1% isn't enough as the waste hierarchy indicates that this is where our efforts should be focussed. Not producing waste in the first place means we don't have to deal with it later on. This should be considered through more effective eco-design, reuse and take back schemes, better procurement and changing the throw away society. Addressing the restrictions that arise from the current definition of waste would also help.

b) Should Government set any specific targets on reducing household waste? Yes/No. If yes, what targets?

There should be targets to reduce all waste and not just household waste. These need to be SMART.

Question 8.

a) Should Government set a target in relation to "preparing for re-use"? Yes/No.

There should be targets to reuse all waste. These should be informed by available markets for re-use but should be sufficiently challenging so as to stimulate markets without being meaningless.

b) If yes, what sort of target should be introduced and how will it be achieved and measured?

These need to be SMART. This document seems to imply that reuse targets were to be incorporated into the recycling target.

Question 9.

What targets, if any, should Government set in relation to the prevention of commercial and industrial waste and construction and demolition waste?

Setting of targets is a complex task and should be undertaken on the basis of sector (probably classified by various sub-sections of business, industry and public sector) and waste types. Targets could vary depending on size of company or scale of waste production. Intelligent application would be required: for example, 50% recycling might be easily achieved by an SME which is office based but very difficult for a large organisation such as a hospital that produced clinical, laboratory and special wastes which may not be able to be recycled.

Recycled content targets could be extended to eventually encompass all developments above a certain scale.

Question 10.

a) Have any potential waste prevention actions been missed?

Waste prevention actions should be based on those wastes that are most harmful and difficult to deal with. Recycling and other treatments are available for many waste streams but work should be done to identify actions that can be taken for other streams such as special wastes, liquids, clinical and radioactive wastes.

Redefining waste, or when a material ceases to be a waste, could assist. Introduction of legislation to require site waste management and other waste prevention management plans for larger businesses would bring benefits in prevention. A greater focus on minimising waste, rather than re-use and recycling, is imperative for all sectors but should be particularly targeted at young people through schools etc as these are the consumers of the future.

Specification of recycled content for all construction projects above specific size and potentially for certain sectors as a whole (e.g. printing) should also be considered.

b) Are there any actions listed which are not worth pursuing, and why?

All are worth pursuing but most effort should be spent where there currently isn't any being spent now. Prioritisation of approach is important so as to make best use of resources rather than trying to target too widely.

Question 11.

On improving municipal recycling rates:

a) Do you agree with the key actions needed to improve municipal recycling rates? Yes/No. If no, what else should be done?

Two conflicting views have emerged in response to this question:

Yes, some of them.

View A

Providing kerbside recycling does not change behaviour only the type of container waste is presented in. Present kerbside recycling rates are plateauing, now kerbside will need to offer more waste streams to increase rates. This will be very expensive and resource intensive. A different approach is required - encourage people to utilise bring facilities – which some will not presently do as they expect a kerbside collection.

If kerbside is to continue then such systems should be offered to commerce and industry, with a charge being applied if necessary. There should also be less individualised bins and more on street shared facilities or underground containment systems.

View B

Kerb side collection is essential to minimising other impacts such as multiple journeys by individuals and fly-tipping. This must go hand-in-hand with a drive for minimisation.

b) Should most (e.g. 80%) of the recycling targets be met through collections of recycle at kerbside and through recycling centres and points? Yes/No.

It is not relevant **how** targets are met.

A flexible approach may be useful, different geographical and demographic areas may require different approaches to deliver success. It's a difficult balance between making it easy so as to secure maximum co-operation and compliance and raising awareness on the issues of **preventing and minimising** waste. People lose sight of this fundamental requirement and focus on recycling.

Success requires partnership work, shared use of facilities across the board and support by the Government.

c) Do you consider that local authorities need more in-depth support to help improve municipal recycling performance. Yes/No. If yes, what should be done?

Yes, support is always needed. The Scottish Government should lead by example thereby promoting best practice. Government should **require** public organisations to improve performance and to meet specific targets and report against these. Setting this example will provide support to the aims and can be used as examples. Funding penalties could be used to drive this and any savings made by Government from resource efficiencies should be ring fenced and used in a transparent way to support local improvement actions in sustainability.

Subsidies should also be provided for developing new waste technologies and treatment facilities that deal with the problem in accordance with the proximity principle.

d) Do you consider that there could be a greater role for incentives to improve recycling performance. Yes/No. If yes, what type of incentives?

Two conflicting views have emerged in response to this question:

View A

The Government should give out vouchers. This is not encouraging people to accept responsibility for their behaviour at all, in fact its rewarding something they should be doing as a matter of course. Consideration should be given to variable charging. In the commercial and industrial sector the polluter is made to pay, perhaps the domestic sector should be aligned to this policy. Taxes should be increased on household waste disposal and these costs should be transparent to the public, fiscal measures normally work in adjusting behaviour. Consideration could be given to prizes for best performing streets – encouraging mass participation this way.

View B

Financial incentives would be difficult/expensive to operate. Direct charging in the domestic sector risks fly tipping. Removal of **all** domestic waste should be free at point of uplift/disposal, however the charge should be linked to property size (via value of property) and collected *via* a transparent component of the community charge in the same way as the charge for water and sewage services.

e) Should any changes be made to the categories of household waste where local authorities can charge for collection? Yes/No. If yes, what changes should be made?

Two conflicting views have emerged in response to this question:

View A

Yes. Householders should be made to segregate waste properly with no co-mingling of special and general, they should be charged for proper disposal at the kerbside or provided with a free service at bring facilities. This however would require much enforcement and policing.

View B

No. All household waste disposals should be free at point of collection.

Question 12.

What more should be done to encourage recycling in public places?

Provision of facilities! To encourage better recycling and minimal contamination reverse vending could be an option. Such public place provision would be expensive to install and resource intensive to service and maintain. Costs could be covered in the business rates charged for shopping centres or by planning gain. It is essential to ensure that all facilities are well serviced, clean, easily accessed and conveniently located. If full they discourage use. Also make sure they are located in places that are perceived to be safe to visit after dark.

The planning process to be followed when public bodies wish to install recycling facilities should be made easier so long as the facilities follow specific standards (e.g. style, collection frequency / cleanliness, etc).

Question 13.

Should a campaign be run reminding companies of their responsibility under Duty of Care? Yes/No.

The DoC is a legal requirement. The law states that ignorance is not a defence. If people go into any business it should be their responsibility to be aware of **all** legal requirements. There is already considerable information and guidance available on DoC. Resources could be better employed in other areas. Specialist training for professional advisers outwith the waste industry (eg bankers / lawyers accountants

etc) may provide another route to highlighting the requirements when they advise companies. The business waste advisers at Local Authorities could audit companies and provide guidance where necessary.

Pro-active enforcement given a high level of publicity may prove more effective than campaigns.

Question 14.

a) Do you agree that these are the priority materials and sectors for which tailored programmes of work should be developed? Yes/No.

Yes and No.

b) If no, what should be included?

Construction and agricultural waste should be high on this agenda, as should cardboard and polystyrene. There is a need to start resolving problems with wastes we do not presently reuse or recycle e.g. special, clinical and radioactive wastes and those wastes which are presently transported long distances for reprocessing; as we have to reduce our carbon emissions.

Question 15.

a) Should Government set a target on reducing the amount of commercial and industrial waste sent to landfill by 150,000 tonnes a year? Yes/No.

Yes. All targets should be SMART. Use of percentage targets may be appropriate.

b) Should Government set targets by specific sectors, companies or materials? Yes/No. If yes, which sectors, companies or materials, and why?

This cannot be set until 15a is done. Targets possibly need to be sector specific as there is a need to take into account what each sector does and how easily it can address the issues.

Targets could be extended to the commercial & industrial sector as a whole (for organisations above a certain size) with a view to collecting data initially and subsequently to bringing them in line with municipal targets. This would have the benefit of the potential for more joined-up thinking when it comes to the preparation of Strategic and Local Development Plans.

A fundamental requirement is that there must be a fair and appropriate application of this

Question 16.

a) Should Government explore further the merits of different forms of producer responsibility, which might more directly support household recycling collections? Yes/No.

Yes, but not household recycling collections only. It should cover special and difficult waste streams across all sectors.

b) Should Government explore further whether extended producer responsibility as outlined in Article 8 of the revised Waste Framework Directive should be introduced? Yes/No. If yes, what materials?

No comment

c) Should Government or other bodies do more to extend the concept of voluntary producer responsibility? Yes/No. If yes, what?

No. Voluntary agreements are ineffective

Question 17.

Do you agree that the cap should not extend to mixed waste treatment, such as Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT), Mechanical Heat Treatment (MHT) and Anaerobic Digestion taking mixed waste? Yes/No. If no, why not?

Recovery processes should only be encouraged when no other avenues are available. We are unconvinced of the need to cap. It is important that arbitrary caps do not prevent benefit being derived from waste. In some more remote areas capping may cause major problems in dealing with waste. Energy recovery from waste should be seen as a positive and renewable approach to tackling our current high demand on carbon intensive approaches to gaining energy. The development of appropriate infrastructure should be encouraged (e.g. tax incentives for a period of time). Additionally, some of these treatments will themselves result in the production of usable recovery streams (e.g. mechanical heat treatment of non-hazardous laboratory / hospital wastes resulting in clean streams of shredded plastics, card, etc).

Lifecycle analysis needs to be used to inform a decision on which, if any, wastes should be used for energy from waste if a range of options are geographically available. It is essential to ensure that any hazardous waste is treated by the most effective, but environmentally beneficial means that does not entail excessive costs.

Question 18.

Should the cap extend to single-stream municipal wastes going to energy from waste plants? Yes/No.

No.

Question 19.

a) Should Government support local authorities when they seek to procure or build infrastructure to treat residual waste? Yes/No.

Yes.

b) If yes, what should Government do?

- Make planning permission easier to obtain for these types of development; however it is essential that the chosen sites can be demonstrated to be those most suitable for the facility and not just those that it is most convenient and cheapest to develop. It is essential to separate legitimate public concern and informed local views from the ‘not in my back yard’ type of protest. Not all local objection falls into this latter category.
- Ensure all new developments incorporate waste management
- Subsidise / fund projects that accept waste from all sectors
- Ring fence savings from sustainable investment into new sustainable projects
- Ensure Local Authority waste contracts support and utilise local treatment and reprocessing facilities in accordance with the proximity principle
- Provide advice and technical expertise free of charge

Question 20.

Do you have any initial views on materials or streams or products which could be banned from landfill?

In theory most items should be banned from landfill, all that should go in is bottom ash material from heat treatment processes.

If banning products from landfill then infrastructure needs to be in place offering an alternative outlet. In the past, items have either been fly-tipped, stock-piled or co-mingled to below hazardous thresholds to get around such bans. There should be a focus on banning plastics (including polystyrene), cardboard and wood

Question 21.

a) What opportunities would arise in this area if Scotland had fiscal autonomy, with the power to set the rate of landfill tax in Scotland?

There is potential for boosting markets and the economy, but only with Government support. It would also show Scotland’s commitment to this issue compared to the rest of the UK.

On the down side there is also the potential to disadvantage businesses when compared to other regions/countries. This must be a level playing field.

b) What might the effects of a different constitutional arrangement for Scotland be in this area?

Further confusion over differences between UK regional legislation and policy. A risk of waste being transported between countries/regions for fiscal savings.

Question 22.

Are there any other points you wish to make?

A number of other comments have also been made by EAUC members. These are listed below. Not all members agree with all of the comments that have been made here.

- The document is too long to expect members of the public to read. The alternative small supplement produced by Waste Aware on this consultation is poor and its questioning will not provide sufficient answers from householders.
- Not all on-line links to the consultation seem to lead to a version where a glossary of terms is available (for example see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/19141153/0>)
- The document primarily focuses on household waste even though this is the smallest proportion when compared to commercial and industrial wastes.
- The document is not written in plain English and may be difficult to understand unless directly involved or have an interest in waste management
- The document jumps about topics and does not flow easily for reading
- Section 1.15 – Is this list in order of priority? The key priority areas here are implementing planning and developing infrastructure, not further research
- Section 2.4 – This section does not reflect at all on the points made in the chapter, there was no questions for us to discuss Eco-design, PPC, Eco-Schools, SWMPs, food waste etc – why?
- Section 3.1 – Why do we continue to insist kerbside is the best option? This is not economically sustainable for our local authorities to continue. There should be variable charging; forcing people to utilise bring facilities and more on street availability of recycling.
- Mention was made to Waste Aware Events at Perth and Kinross – is this available for everyone to utilise?
- How will we achieve 70% recycling when some areas have no reprocessing infrastructure and the same Government is asking us to reduce our car footprint, which means less transportation?
- Section 4.6 - Government should support treatment plants that will take commercial and industrial waste. This sector produces the most waste, by not providing any assistance you aren't supporting our existing or enabling the expansion of our economy.
- Government should lead by example
- Efficient procurement and purchasing consortiums that are knowledgeable on whole life cycle costing and waste /resource efficiency should be encouraged
- Training of procurement personnel in sustainability is essential.
- The need to remove choice or make less sustainable options more expensive and harder can be effective.