

Gweinidog dros yr Amgylchedd, Cynllunio a Chefn Gwlad
Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Your ref:
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Dear *Janet*

WAG RESPONSE TO AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON WASTE MANAGEMENT

Thank you for your letter of 28 June. I welcome this opportunity further to clarify the Assembly Government's actions in respect of the issues you have raised following the Audit Committee Report on the Regulation of Waste Management.

Recommendation 2

The Assembly Government has to be mindful of obligations under EU and domestic legislation, such as the Landfill Directive, and will therefore maintain a strong focus on increasing the sustainability of municipal waste management and in particular of diverting biodegradable municipal waste from landfill disposal.

However our Strategy addresses the sustainable management of all waste and Chapter 5 of Wise About Waste sets out the range of approaches taken to targeting action distinguished between those where WAG has direct influence (as with municipal waste) and where our influence and leverage is indirect.

What is in train to address non municipal waste streams

Management of non-municipal waste is determined by market forces, subject, of course, to the regulatory framework. The Assembly Government works closely with EA Wales, with Defra and the other UK administrations as appropriate to ensure that the regulatory framework is appropriate to the task of safeguarding human health and the environment. While recognising that waste management will be provided by the market, the Assembly Government has taken, or has supported a range of activities to improve the sustainability of waste management in businesses in Wales.



Materials Actions Programme and other support for businesses.

The Assembly Government has invested £9.5 million over three years in a Materials Action Programme to improve resource efficiency across businesses which will both reduce the amount of waste being generated and improve the management of this waste. We are investing a further £550,000 over a three years specifically to reduce the amount of hazardous waste generated by small and medium sized enterprises and to improve its management.

Construction and demolition waste

Construction and demolition waste amounts to some 5 million tonnes per year in Wales. The Assembly Government is supporting the Constructing Excellence campaign and is providing £200,000 additional funding for EA Wales to support this programme through a survey of construction and demolition waste arising. This will be reinforced by the implementation of the requirements in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act for site waste management plans for construction sites. Requiring specific provision for waste management will emphasise to the construction industry the cost savings to be made from waste reduction and recycling in the same way that PPC has had this effect on industry more generally.

Public sector waste minimisation

The Assembly Government has introduced a Public Sector Waste Minimisation Campaign across Wales which includes organisations outside the National Assembly for Wales "family" such as the Ministry of Defence and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. Organisations across Wales have signed up to reduce and to improve the management of their own waste. The campaign includes a training package for organisations' own waste management officers.

Pollution Prevention and Control

The implementation of the European directive requirements are already having a dramatic effect on the amount of waste being generated and, together with the effect of changes introduced under the landfill directive, on the management of that waste.

During the period over which IPPC has been implemented the Environment Agency has undertaken a review of progress that has shown that many regulated companies have made significant reductions in waste going to final disposal as well as improvements in resource recovery. However, although it seems IPPC has encouraged these improvements, resource efficiency appears to be primarily driven by increased competition forcing companies to make cost-savings as well as specific legislation such as the Landfill Tax. These drivers are raising the environmental awareness of companies, many of whom appear increasingly to be including environmental considerations in their general cost-control measures.

The effects of moving to the PPC regime are supported by changes to the regulation of landfills by the progressive implementation of the Landfill Directive, and by the application of PPC to landfills as well. The effect of these changes has been to

● increase the cost of waste disposal to landfill thus increasing the advantage of seeking other, more resource efficient and sustainable options. One example of the changes caused is of a Welsh business now sending waste material from steel manufacture to Germany for recovery rather than to landfill for disposal.

However PPC does appear to be having a more direct effect on resource efficiency in companies new to integrated permitting, such as food and drink. In these companies, IPPC is encouraging the setting up of more systematic approaches to resource efficiency and waste minimisation, permit requirements include for example regular waste audits and waste minimisation plans and the introduction of low waste techniques.

Declines in the UK industrial base will in part explain the reduction in total waste disposal seen since 1998. However, the trend of increased waste recovery is a reflection of a drive towards increasing resource efficiency. This is reflected by the rationalisation of the cement industry, dominated by several key players, aimed at reducing risk and improving plant efficiency and cost effectiveness.

For those sectors showing growth, such as the paper and pulp sector, reductions in waste disposal can be solely attributed to improved resource efficiency.

By understanding the reasons for the above improvements in resource efficiency, Environment Agency Wales is able to build into PPC permits priorities for future resource efficiency improvements such as improvements to systems, and targeting of sectors and companies where resource efficiency improvements are more likely.

Relevant recent developments

Recent relevant developments exemplifying engagement with non municipal waste streams include:

- Work by Environment Agency Wales with the NHS and more recently local health boards to develop up clinical waste reduction strategies
- Continuing awareness raising by the Wales Waste Forum in respect of Hazardous and Agricultural waste
- A survey of construction and demolition waste, and of industrial and commercial waste by Environment Agency Wales. Results, available soon, will feed into the work of the regional waste planning groups.
- The Environment Agency's draft corporate strategy commitment to seek an 8% reduction in waste from regulated industry and a 15% reduction in tonnes of hazardous waste from regulated industry by 2011.

The review of the waste strategy in 2007, on which work will start early next year, will allow the effect of these various aspects to be evaluated and consideration to be given to what further action might be necessary to tackle non municipal waste streams.

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Assembly Government continues to work with local authorities in developing the Regional Waste Plans and has funded a Waste Mapping GIS project to

inform planning decisions on the location of waste facilities. Further evaluation of the landfill capacity continues to be undertaken. As requested in your letter, the Assembly Government will include information about this aspect in future responses to the Committee.

Recommendation 4

The Assembly Government has funded EA Wales to carry out a waste data review to assess future data needs and any additional powers required, this review will include obtaining data on site capacity and coding sites to the R&D codes required by the EU waste statistics regulation. As requested in your letter, the Assembly Government will include information about this aspect in future responses to the Committee.

Recommendation 5

The Assembly Government response on this aspect reflected the phase of the Waste Awareness Wales campaign that was current at the time. The Assembly Government is aware that a wider range of waste facilities will be needed, including those for non municipal waste streams, and that publicity, including the later stages of the Waste Awareness Wales campaign, will need to address this.

The Assembly Government will also use the follow up work from the GIS study on possible locations for new waste management facilities to promote the awareness of the full range of waste management facilities that will be needed and to aim to dispel the myths surrounding the range of technologies needed.

The Assembly Government has commissioned an evaluation of the effectiveness of the first phase of the Waste Awareness Wales media campaign and the findings of this will be used to shape future campaigns which will include the aim of de-mythologise waste management facilities. The findings of the Welsh Assembly Government's Sustainable Development Awareness and Branding Report suggest that the early phases of the Waste Awareness Wales campaign were effective in getting the message across.

The Assembly Government will also consider issuing statements, perhaps through Waste Awareness Wales, confirming the policy already outlined in the Wales waste strategy which supports the establishment of the full range of waste management facilities needed, not just those associated with recycling. These statements can draw on the work of the Defra study into the health effects of waste management, published in 2004, to seek to allay public concerns over health effects of waste management facilities.

(Defra: Review of environmental and health effects of waste management: municipal solid waste and similar wastes.)

Recommendation 9

There are over 3,700 exempt facilities in Wales. Generally they are low risk activities which do not warrant the usual level of waste management licensing. However, the Assembly Government and Environment Agency Wales recognise that a list this long needs to be regularly reviewed to ensure that the facilities on it are still current and are still operating in a way that justifies the exemption. However, a review will require a

comprehensive work programme for which there is no charging mechanism. The Assembly Government is discussing with Environment Agency Wales a scoping study during 2005-06 to assess and cost the work needed. This will include:

- an assessment of the register to identify those activities which will not be caught by the new regulations,
- a mixture of desk top investigation and inspection to see if the activities listed are still being carried out and are exempt activities,
- a revision of the register based on these results,
- a potential repeat this exercise every 5 years or so (bearing in mind these are lower risk activities) to keep the register reasonable up to date.

Any bid for additional resources to carry out this work will be assessed against the competing priorities at the appropriate time.

Additionally the Environment Agency Wales waste data review will include some cleaning up of the data on exempt facilities. Environment Agency Wales are also looking at how useful information can be provided to others e.g. regional waste planning groups, so they can assess the facilities required in future.

Yours sincerely



Carwyn Jones AM