

WasteDataFlow (WDF) User Group for England – minutes of meeting on 4 July 2018

1. Introductions

2. **Action points** from the last meeting were reviewed.

3. **Presentation by Defra:** EU circular economy proposals, Waste & Resource strategy and 25 year environment plan.

Defra talked through a slide presentation of the Circular Economy Package (CEP) – Key points are:-

- Setting targets for recycling of municipal waste, reuse and recycling of packaging waste and reducing the landfilling of municipal waste for 2025, 2030 and 2035.
- Agreeing minimum requirements for Extended Producer Responsibility schemes.
- Introducing measures to prevent waste generation.

Local authority questions following this were:-

Where are the Brexit opportunities for the waste sector and how do these deviate from EU policy? After 2020 UK ministers would be in a position to look at changing or introducing different measures.

How are measures likely to affect local authorities (LAs)? Defra said that there will be broader recycling targets – not just for LA waste. Current 2020 recycling targets just relate to “waste from households” (WfH), but after this time targets will become much broader and include household-type waste from C&I sectors. As work continues on the CEP there will be wider consultation of the industry. Environment Agency (EA) commented that the CEP would clarify or introduce more robust definitions e.g. around TEEP. Defra will keep the User Group (UG) up to date on relevant items.

4. **EA policy on reporting of final destinations** EA presented slides aimed at giving clarity on expectations for the reporting of final destinations of waste materials.

EA have a briefing note on the reporting of final destinations. The main points are:-

- That evidence is robust and WDAs take full responsibility to satisfy themselves that not only is their waste being diverted from landfill but that it is being recycled and recovered legitimately.
- We require the final facility destination for materials handled in the UK (see Section 2.6.6 of the [Q100 Reporting Guidance](#)). When recyclates are destined for export we expect that the UK destination will be the final reprocessor or Material Recovery Facility (MRF) prior to the material being received at an export facility (reported as

“Recycling reprocessor” or “Reuse” facility, with the destination site recorded as “Outside UK-EU” or “Outside UK-nonEU” as appropriate) and that the material will be suitable (i.e. Green List).

- Nothing has changed in relation to the regulation or guidance.
- None of the information should be deemed commercially confidential, where it pertains to end destinations.
- Following these requirements will generally meet the Duty of Care.
- We need to take a collaborative approach.

Comments

EA added that following the Chinese ban it has become apparent that some materials being exported under the premise of being on the green list were not of sufficient quality to meet the quality requirements, and that now other export destinations (Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, India & others) were in the process of applying similar standards to the Chinese, or increasing port inspections.

With the possibility of temporary trade bans, quality of materials exported for recycling is going to be a top priority. The information provided by LAs about final destination of recycling is going to become increasingly important. There are also concerns from other countries about the stockpiling of lower quality materials. For example, in Poland there have been some big fires in stockpiled material which had been exported to non-existent processing plants. LAs have a duty of care to check where material is being sent, and should report issues back to the EA.

LAs asked for clarification of the legal obligation for the recording of final destination facility types, which some brokers view as commercially sensitive or where the authority did not have a contract with the third party (final destination) company and so did not have leverage to get hold of the information.

EA referred to the explanatory notes for the WET Act. This information is not viewed by EA as being commercial as there is a requirement for it to be recorded and it is available on other data systems (such as customs) and questioned whether LAs would have an agreement with their contractors/brokers that this information will be provided to them. EA queried whether LAs would generally consider a processor’s accreditation when entering contracts, and whether they would check information supplied from them on material final destinations reported. It was acknowledged that in practice it was not always easy to source the final destination information and it could be time consuming but it was important to remain well informed and to flag any issues as early as possible as they emerge. EA emphasised the importance of a collaborative approach and accepted that multiple destinations from multiple suppliers via brokerage would require some apportionment of waste based on typical/average figures.

EA again underlined the risk of business as usual – if materials continued to exceed rejection rates of 2.5% (0.5% for China) then we were likely to lose outlet markets and with around a 10 year lead in to design, finance and build extra capacity in the waste stream this could cause major problems.

LAs queried how reporting of materials should be done when the brokers were known but not the final processor/destination and whether specific QA checks were made on how materials were reported. Defra responded that in this case the facility type could be declared as “Site details not known” or “Multiple destinations” could be used as appropriate. If the end treatment was not known, then “Treatment unknown” could be used but the associated tonnage would not be reported as recycled. Defra viewed as most important that LAs could be confident that the waste had actually been recycled, especially in case of any possible audit on the authenticity of reporting against the household waste recycling target by the EU or NAO.

Jacobs/Defra did not routinely QA the end destinations reported but would sometimes identify issues as part of other checks and would follow up on these. The advent of the new raw data report (RD+) would make this easier to do – though time had not yet allowed for this, Defra/EA would be following up soon.

ACTIONS: Defra/EA to add the key points from the discussion on expectations on end destination reporting to WDF reporting documentation, including whether it is acceptable to report the broker as the end processor or to use unknown/multiple sites. Start work to compile a list of accredited reproprocessors.

5. Defra – presentation – review of validation of published “waste from household” recycling figures for England

a) Validation – Main points

Quick Review – data for July to Sept 2017:-

- 3,100 checks produced for 345 LAs.
- of which 1,800 were for response.
- Average of 9 checks per LA, ranging from 1 to 32.
- 71% of checks were for data validation.
- 29% were relating to missing facility or material/treatment details etc.

Defra explained that this review examined data extracted from the WDF system at the level 35 data authorisation point. Given the complexity and amount of data collected in WDF at LA level the number of validation checks triggered seemed reasonable. The validation data revealed that at this level checks generated few revisions, but were useful as some LAs provided comments on reasons for changes to tonnages in the “for response” check. However a great number of responses (to “for response” checks) are very short, such as “correct” and Defra asked if this could be improved. Noting this data

reflected checks made towards the end of the data submission process LAs were asked to comment on how useful the checks were to LAs during the data input process and checks at level 10.

LA responded was that if further detail was required in responses then authorities would try and give it, but it's extra work and Defra need to explain (via the newsletter perhaps) why information is required.

ACTION : Include a note in the next newsletter on the use of comments supplied through the data QA trigger checks.

b) Revisions to Waste from household figures for England.

Defra explained that QA work on data produced by the RD+ revealed several small gaps in the Waste from Household (WfH) calculation methodology, and as a consequence they will be revising published recycling figures for England in the next LA waste stats publication and datasets, due to be published in Nov/Dec 2018. At an aggregate England level, the change was very modest and had no impact on the headline WfH recycling rate; it was only at the individual LA level that these would have any significance.

- Some tonnages reported as for Reuse in Q100 tree are not included in WfH totals. This problem arises where materials described as materials for recycling going through a MRF subsequently become designated as for Reuse. If no Reuse collection data was reported by that LA at collection the tonnage is assumed to be WnfH (waste not from households) by the calculation.
- Some tonnages of recycled metals that have been through incineration are reported by LAs as "Other scrap metal". These were not previously included in the calculations because of a rule to exclude any material except for "metals from incinerator bottom ash". "Other scrap metal" will now be included but LAs are encouraged to report as "metals from incinerator bottom ash".
- A reporting error resulted in only half of one LA's recycling being included in one quarter of 2015/16. This will be corrected. The error occurred because the LA concerned had entered an identical tonnage in each of the 4 waste source split boxes (Household waste / non-Household waste / WfH / WnfH) in the Q100 tree.

It is necessary to make the revisions to published data for 2015/16 and 2016/17 recycling figures as the future availability on WDF of an online WfH report would produce different figures to those currently published for England and would result in questions about data consistency and accuracy.

Now that WfH figures in the RD+ and recycling reports have been QA'd Defra and Jacobs will work towards releasing these reports for LAs to use on WDF. **ACTION:** Defra and Jacobs to agree desk instructions and timetable for release.

The WfH report is in the early stages of development but it is hoped to produce this within the next 12 months – the intention is that this would be made available to LAs before going live.

One LA whose Household (HH) recycling rate currently includes significant tonnages of materials that do not count towards the WfH measure (e.g. compost-like output), expressed concern about the negative publicity that a WfH recycling rate is likely to generate for their council. The WfH rate in this case would be significantly lower than the HH measure and Defra will need to be very clear about differences between the two recycling rates, otherwise that LA and those with similar waste management practices could come under criticism for recycling rates following release of WfH rates at LA level.

6. LA feedback

- a) **Data validation:** Jacobs had received a couple of pieces of similar feedback relating to consistency of validation across LAs, both generally and within the same WDA family. Primarily these were queries about the reporting of final destinations (see section 4 above). One of the LAs also queried the number of decimal places data should be reported to.

Jacobs explained that where possible a single member of the validation staff dealt with all of the WCAs within a WDA “family”, but noted there had been a change of staff dealing with one of the WDAs providing feedback.

There is no specific instruction on WDF about the number of decimal places that data should be reported to. It is up to the LA to decide to how many decimals they should supply data to but it was noted that the official definition of the old National Indicators specified they should be calculated to 2 decimal places.

Defra pointed out that there is a feedback email address for those wishing to comment on the service or validation etc.: feedback@wastedataflow.org. This email goes direct to a senior member of the team and LAs were encouraged to use this. To date no feedback has been reported through this email.

- b) **Fly-tipping module – data saving:** Several LAs reported data saving issues using the Fly-tipping module where users were getting the message “Error saving data”. Jacobs reported that their development team was looking at this issue, and explained that this was a timing-out issue. The time limit for data entry had been increased from 30 to 60 minutes (this could be extended) and is believed to be dependent on data being saved rather than keystrokes. If LAs encountered problems, they could provide Jacobs with a screenshot of the data entry screen (with data) and Jacobs would enter this manually onto the system to check for further issues. Defra asked if a “Time out” warning could be added to data entry systems. ACTION: Jacobs to resolve and monitor situation, to review if timeout warning message necessary.

- c) Recording of soil, plaster, demolition wastes and rubble:** A LA commented that at a HWRC it was possible to charge for certain types of waste e.g. construction and demolition DIY type of waste. They wanted to know how soil and rubble from HH sources should be recorded as either HH or non-HouseHold (non-hh). Defra advised that the classification as regards charging was separate to WDF reporting and that a LA could record it as HH if from a HH source. For the purpose of the WfH methodology soil, rubble and plasterboard were all regarded as non-HH. However, the soil is eligible for inclusion in the NI192 HH recycling rate, the others are non-HH recycling materials and would be automatically excluded from the calculation.
- d) Fly tipping – average weights of loads:** LAs asked if there had been any progress in finding information on average weights – these would help them provide weights by incident type. Defra reported that follow-ups from the last meeting had yielded one good response. However, this was a WIP and that help was still needed to produce some useful figures. Several LAs offered to help out with data. ACTION Defra to contact LAs who offered help.
- e) Can data for multiple CA sites (Q14) be entered as a single block rather than site by site?** Several LAs supported this idea and one responded that was how they already supplied their data. Defra/Jacobs recalled issuing recent advice on this that they would look out. ACTION: Defra/Jacobs to review and reiterate past advice given on this query from previous UG meetings.
- f) Does IBA validation check disposal and recycling?** Jacobs responded that validation checks only look at recycling tonnages as these are reported against a material type. Waste going to Landfill is not identified by materials type and so the validation check would not capture this.

7. Defra presentation on Govtech challenge for development work on possible future waste tracking service

Govtech is a new £20 million R&D funding initiative announced in Nov 2017 to connect and support tech companies with public sector organisations, to find innovative solutions to operational service and policy delivery challenges using the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) process supported by Innovate UK.

The scheme is administered by Treasury and Government Digital Service (GDS). Govtech funding has been secured to support a waste tracking service (WTS) for the UK.

Phase 1 (discovery) work with a duration of around 12 weeks will award up to £80,000 for up to 5 bids. Phase 2 (Alpha) allows up to £500,000 for 2 contractors to develop a prototype WTS system over a period of 9-12 months. The deadline for bids for phase 1 is 25 July with work expected to start by early November.

Why do we need a waste tracking service?

- Businesses do not have the information they need to identify and unlock the potential value of waste materials to reduce raw materials costs and develop new revenue streams.
- Infrastructure planning and investment decisions.
- Protecting the environment through more effective regulation, including tackling waste crime.
- Meet legislative requirements under the CEP and commitments under the 25 Year Environment Plan and the Industrial Strategy and those that will be forthcoming through the UK R&W Strategy.

Defra added that one of the requirements of any new system was for it to be able to communicate with and use data from existing industry systems.

8. Defra presentation on LA recycling analysis.

This presentation detailed work using WasteDataFlow data to benchmark recycling rates across LAs, but taking into account selected “external” factors affect an LA’s recycling rate. WRAP have concluded the 3 most important of these external factors are:-

- Proportion of ‘high rise’ properties.
- Proportion of population living in rural households.
- Amount of social deprivation.

For simplicity the analysis used 3 variables:-

- Prosperity or Deprivation. This being the proportion of the population who were classified Social Grade D & E in the 2011 Census.
- Rural Proportion – % of the population living in rural households.
- Low rise Proportion – % of households that are not ‘high rise’.

A technique called Data envelopment analysis (DEA) is used with data from the 3 “external” factors as inputs and the NI 192 comparator HH recycling rate as an output. This allows identification of the LAs who are the best performers – at the “frontier” of what is being achieved – rather than those who have a certain set of circumstances which may help result in a high recycling rate. This is useful as it allows those LAs to be compared to lower performers to see what outside of the external influences could be affecting recycling rates. Defra explained this analysis is a work in progress, which will need to be repeated with all LA waste & recycling.

LAs thought that this could be an invaluable tool for finding out what may help them to improve recycling rates, comparing to nearest “neighbours” could be really useful.

EA added that other factors that might be useful to take into account were transient populations and associated language barriers this can carry where there are problems in residents understanding recycling regimes and requirements.

LAs queried how much of an impact collection systems could have on the results. Defra confirmed that this would have a major effect and that the results should be treated with caution, as there were still many different issues to consider.

9. Jacobs on going work etc.

- a) Jacobs reported that they had been removing invalid users from the system, there were approximately 600 accounts on the system which have not been used in the past year – presumably where people had moved on to other areas of work or left LAs. They reminded the group that it was important that administrator users within LAs manage the users for their LA. When users move on their access should be removed (to avoid data security issues) and new users set up when appropriate, rather than using an ex-user's id and password. If administrator users have any difficulties managing the users for their authority they ought to contact the helpdesk.
- b) Jacobs reminded the group of the need for LAs to tidy their Q100 trees - some LAs have trees in Q100 with many blank branches.
- c) Jacobs reported on the newly introduced high-level validation checks – and that in the last quarter's data, the recycling check had thrown up 32 queries, incineration 10, and landfill 23. These numbers were as anticipated and comments against these looked informative and would assist Jacobs and Defra in their data QA and avoid the need for any further explanation.
- d) Jacobs presented a slide showing a mock-up of a revised Q100 data input screen. This is being developed as a result of last year's user consultation exercise, with an aim to ease data input allow online validation and easier tracking of errors etc.

This is a work in progress so not yet finalised, but was generally well received.

Comments from LAs were:-

- Concerns that the upper window will not show enough nodes (the current window doesn't either); the window will still be scrollable and could be resized.
- Could all branches with a tonnage imbalance be shown together on the same screen?
- Could processors be arranged in a preferred order or grouping?
- Currently the same processor could be in the tree twice – for recycling and reuse – but may be at opposite ends of the tree – ordering by processor would help data input.
- Could an end-of-tree completion balance be shown?
- An alternative to the bottom of screen boxes would be additional tabs but generally not a preferred option – better to see all in the same screen.

ACTION: Defra/Jacobs to take forward as a development item.

AOB

Defra said that the next UG would be in February 2019 and reminded the group that Defra were open to ideas for presentations, including presentations from LAs and would welcome feedback on meeting agenda.

Attendees

Name	Organisation	Location
Phil Hadfield	Newark and Sherwood District Council	Manchester
Carole Taylor	Pendle Borough Council	Manchester
Andy Mayes	East Ridings of Yorkshire Council	Manchester
Richard Booth	Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority	Manchester
Debbie Fillingham	Lancashire County Council	Telephone
Alex Clothier	DEFRA	Manchester
Robert Andrew	Jacobs	Manchester
Gary Fisher	Middlesborough Borough Council	Manchester
James Alderson	Shropshire County Council	Manchester
Marc Chadwick	Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority	Manchester
Stephen Unsworth	Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority	Manchester
Tim Knowles	Jacobs	Manchester
Emma Dingley	EA	Manchester
Rebecca Piper	Suffolk County Council	London
Suzanne Phillips	Herefordshire County Council	London
Tim Forster	North London Waste Authority	London
Tania Stephens	Hampshire County Council	London
Steve Lewington	Oxfordshire County Council	London
Chris Harbottle	Milton Keynes Borough Council	London
James Gazzard	Leicestershire County Council	London
Iain Stevens	Devon County Council	London
Liz Glynn	Jacobs	London
Lindsay Holmes	DEFRA	London
Sofie Rasmussen	Leicester City Council	London
Mike Tregent	Environment Agency	London
Vicky Pudner	WRAP	London
Ian Everett	DEFRA	London
Jonathan Hickie	DEFRA	London
Julian Fox	Jacobs	London
Sarah Innes	Reading Borough Council	London

Annex: Screen mock-up as presented in item 9d.

Waste Movement Tree

Load structure from Jul 10 Go

Q100:Waste sent for treatment or disposal

- Landfill 1 – Non-Hazardous landfill (qu52): xxxx Tonnes – Example Landfill company Ltd BT1234AB
 - Facility Description
 - Facility Type
 - Total Tonnage
 - Facility Name
 - Facility Code

Probably amend tree tool so lines aren't broken.

May allow user to change the height of the tree window to view more or less of the tree.

Scrollable within this window.

Waste Details

Facility/Process Type: Reuse (qu35)

Facility Name: Other/Exempt [change](#)

Facility Description: Reuse 2

Facility Address: [Text Area]

Facility Code: [Text Field]

Waste Stream Type: Source segregated recycle

Tonnes Input: 0 (Please see the the Materials section.)

New Output Final Destination Delete Save Cancel

Materials

Show my materials

Material	Tonnes
Green glass	[Text Field]
Brown glass	[Text Field]
Clear glass	[Text Field]
Mixed glass	[Text Field]
Paper	[Text Field]
Card	[Text Field]
Books	[Text Field]

The "Materials" and other sections to the right could be tabs; the tab bar could run horizontally or vertically and would display details of the section selected.

Scrollable within this window.

Waste Source Split

Tonnes HH Sources	[Text Field]
Tonnes non-HH Sources	[Text Field]
Tonnes WfH Sources	[Text Field]
Tonnes Wnfh Sources	[Text Field]

Transfer Stations [Dropdown]

Comments [Dropdown]

Waste Movement Summary [Dropdown]