

## **WasteDataFlow (WDF) User Group for England – minutes of meeting on 8 February 2018**

### **1. Introductions**

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

3. **Jacobs overview** – main points:-

#### **3.1 Training**

Attendance at training webinars – there remains a high drop-out rate for courses. The reasons were not clear. Jacobs reminded LAs to let them know if there were specific problems, saying that the Webex system was easy to use but that it was advisable to dial in early so that any problems could be sorted out before the course start time. Jacobs can set-up 'dummy' meetings to test the Webex system prior to training webinars to ensure that there aren't any issues.

WDF training courses – Jacobs reported that courses had been reviewed, tweaked and extra time built in to answer participant questions. Jacobs reminded the meeting of the need for feedback. One LA attendee reported that he was new to WasteDataFlow and had found the Introductory and Q100 courses very useful and informative.

#### **3.2 Validation process & checks**

Jacobs explained that checks on incinerator bottom ash (IBA) and IBA metal (IBA 8% to 45% of input, IBA metal  $\leq 5\%$  of input) had been introduced and that authorities who didn't report these materials from the incineration process (just opting for "process loss") would find that they triggered the new validation rules. Jacobs also warned that LAs who send outputs from incineration to landfill might also find that the checks flag (even if the tonnages involved are within the thresholds) – this is because there is no material type associated with tonnages to landfill. Where the checks flag in this way for landfill tonnages, users are asked just to add a comment acknowledging the check during the roll-up process and stating that the incineration output is landfilled.

If authorities have no knowledge of the outputs of incineration then they should use the "Treatment unknown" node as the next destination of the input tonnage (in the same way as they would for unknown outputs of any other treatment process). This would avoid triggering the new validation flag for IBA and IBA metal (i.e. the check is sophisticated enough not to flag "treatment unknown" as a lack of IBA, as by its use "treatment unknown" is confirmation from the user that they don't know what the outputs are.) (If authorities know what treatment the outputs from incineration go to, but not the specific site, then they ought to use the "Site details not known" selection list item.)

On the tolerances of these checks one LA reported that because of lags in the processing of waste sent and its actual incineration, output tonnages could be stockpiled and therefore go out in a later period than the input tonnage was reported, and consequently

IBA rates could vary between 20% and 40%. This was noted by Defra and Jacobs. The LA was advised to report the outputs in the period in which they left the facility and to add a comment to explain the imbalance in the branches in those periods affected.

Jacobs explained that 3 new high-level validation checks would in due course be introduced for Total sent for recycling, Incineration and Landfill. Initial tolerances for the quarterly data have not yet been agreed but will be relatively high with the intention of highlighting more significant changes – possible tolerances are:-

- Recycling +/- 22% change in tonnage. A 5.5 percentage point increase in the overall recycling rate was suggested but cannot be easily calculated within the validation workbook.
- Total Incineration a decrease in excess of 500 tonnes and 15% in tonnage.
- Total landfill an increase of over 55 tonnes and 35% in tonnage.

Explanations for significant changes such as changes to collection schemes or charging, use of new facilities/treatment should be included as appropriate in the 'comments' where this will provide valuable contextual information when Jacobs/Defra carry out their data QA checks. Defra asked for feedback via email (this will be requested in the forthcoming newsletter). One LA commented that the tolerances on landfill and incineration looked a bit low for their volumes. Defra said that the checks were based around the idea of selecting around 15 LAs for each of the 3 items in each quarter and tolerances would be reviewed for usefulness in due course.

### 3.3 Data recording queries

Jacobs reported on a common data recording error with inconsistencies within the Q100 tree in the material type at the re-processor and final destination, e.g. mixed paper and card becoming mixed plastic at final destination. Jacobs pointed out that by using the "Final Destination" (auto-FD) button when completing Q100 would avoid this problem. It was agreed that a reminder of this should be added to the next Newsletter.

One LA asked if when a Q100 tree structure is imported from a previous quarter it could be arranged so that the most recent tree would appear at the top of the screen rather than at the bottom. **Action:** Jacobs to look into.

### 3.4 Reports

Jacobs asked for feedback on the value of C-variable reports (the calculated variables within the WDF system and reports) to show how each of the 1000 or so C-variables are calculated and in particular which C-variables would be most useful. One LA explained their interest in this originated for QA purposes – cross-checking data and mass balance purposes and that something quicker to use and easier to understand would be more helpful. For example, showing materials through process tonnages and whether they balance (Q10 – Q100) would help functionality and be easier to use. Jacobs and other LAs

explained how the existing WDF validation report could be used to address some of the points. Defra suggested that perhaps Jacobs could allow some time to take interested LAs through the validation process at the next meeting.

**Action:** Jacobs to canvass opinion on what validation to cover from attendees prior to next group meeting.

Jacobs gave a demonstration of the new Q100 recycling and Raw Data Plus reports. Whilst there were a few questions on the reports themselves – this did prompt discussion around the differences between “household waste” (HH) and “waste from households” (WFH) recycling figures and rates. The reports are not yet available for LAs to use but will be released shortly, after further testing by Defra.

To summarise:-

- National Indicator 192 (NI192) HH recycling rate is the old “legacy” measure and is used by industry in contract setting and publicity. When Q100 data was introduced the way NI192 is calculated changed, and so in WDF reports it is described with “comparator” in the heading to highlight it is not strictly a like-for-like measure, with rates calculated from pre-Q100 data. Compost like output (CLO) can potentially be counted towards the HH recycling tonnage depending on the factor applied to it.
- There are no plans to include IBA metal in the HH recycling rate (as was done for WFH) because of NI192’s use in existing contracts, legacy status and to maintain consistency with previous years’ data.
- The WFH rate is an agreed European recycling measure with very strict rules around the quality of materials which can qualify as recycled material. CLO does not meet quality rules which would allow it to be used for agriculture and it can therefore only be classed as “Recovery” with applications for use such as covering landfill sites. This means it cannot be included within the WFH recycling rate.

Environment Agency (EA) said that LAs are welcome to challenge these views but to note the expectation that quality standards for recycling will be tighter in the future.

Defra stated there are no plans to set recycling targets at the local authority level. There was acknowledgement that having multiple different recycling measures was confusing and it would be ideal to have a single measure. However Defra had retained the NI192 measure in recognition of its value to LAs. Defra asked whether LAs would be interested in WfH recycling information being available at a LA level and the consensus was that this would be of interest. There was also some interest in carbon metrics. It was also discussed that a “performance spectrum” could in the future be useful (e.g. a bar showing reuse/recycling/recovery/landfill with key metrics at different points).

### 3.5 **Guidance note updates**

Jacobs had restructured the guidance available on WDF, updated various guidance documents and had also prepared a draft FAQ document which had been circulated before the meeting. This had been done in response to feedback from last year's SurveyMonkey exercise. Comments on these and guidance generally were:-

- Hints and tips are useful.
- Examples of Q100 trees are very useful – but need to be kept fully up to date, each time there is a change to WDF. The tree examples make it much easier to gain an understanding of what is required than by reading pages of text. Action: Jacobs agreed to review the tree examples.
- A FAQ on reporting refuse-derived fuel (RDF) for export was mentioned as an addition.
- Could there be an auto-update of facility numbers that have gone red (due to change to licence etc.) rather than having to delete and reselect? Jacobs thought this could be difficult to process as it is dependent on the Environment Agency's data structure and there were tens of thousands of individual numbers. Action: Jacobs to look into. LAs to provide any further feedback on the FAQs by the end of February.

### 3.6 **Server upgrade**

The server is to be upgraded – this will be done over the weekend of 9th to 12th March and so will cause minimal disruption to LAs. Users will not see any change to the website, though its possible performance may improve slightly. [Post meeting note:- This was completed over the weekend of 17/18 March.]

## 4 **Defra Overview**

### 4.1 **LA waste and Fly-tipping statistics 2016 and 2016/17**

Defra gave an overview of the latest published statistics. One LA asked about where the average costings had come from in the fly-tipping statistics. Defra responded that standard figures were used for certain unit clearance costs, everything else was as reported by the local authority. Defra stated that the unit costs were in need of updating but would require advice from LAs, with previous efforts not being very successful. One other option could be to update costs using the Retail Price Index. However it would be much more preferable to get updated information from local authorities. Help was sought from meeting members – several offered help, though cautioned about how representative figures would be for the whole country. Action: Defra to contact LAs and investigate further.

One LA asked whether average weights for each of the size categories listed within the Fly-Tipping Module were available. Another LA responded to this point to say that they

had information on average weights taken from the previous Fly-Capture system, and agreed to share these with attendees upon request.

#### **4.2 25 Year Environment Plan, Waste & Resource Strategy and Circular Economy Package**

Defra gave an overview of current work and key highlights on these. The R&W Strategy will be published later in the year to support the 25 Year Environment Report. This was published in January here and includes:

- ambitions to eliminate all “avoidable” plastic waste by the end of 2042, including:
- extending the 5p single use plastic bag charge to small businesses on a voluntary basis;
- working with retailers and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to explore introducing plastic-free supermarket aisles in which all the food is loose;
- exploring how we can develop our producer responsibility schemes, to better incentivise producers to design more resource efficient products.
- setting out a plan for how we will work towards no food waste entering landfill by 2030, ensuring a valuable resource remains in our economy.

On the CE package, a provisional agreement was reached between the European Parliament and the Presidency on 17 December 2017. Currently, we anticipate a vote at EU level in March, although this is subject to confirmation by the Bulgarian Presidency. There are several targets in the Circular Economy Package, of which the 65% recycling by weight target by 2035 is just one.

A couple of points were noted:-

- The CE package would include and clarify various definitions.
- There was a query about what was meant by “avoidable food waste”. In the context of current work undertaken by WRAP on food waste currently, food waste such as bones, eggshells etc. would not be classed as avoidable.

There was some discussion about the extent of final destination reporting through WDF. A couple of authorities said that there were some practical difficulties in obtaining information where waste goes to a MRF with brokers unwilling to provide end destination information due to commercial sensitivity. There was also some discussion around how to apportion waste to individual LAs after it has been mixed with waste from other sources. The Environment Agency made reference to the Duty of Care (DoC) and the different obligations with transfer notes forming just one element and also reporting requirements under the Waste and Emissions Trading Act which was relevant to WDF. There was some appreciation of the difficulties and EA acknowledge a gap in the DoC guidance.

#### **5 SurveyMonkey exercise – potential actions in response to feedback**

Jacobs gave an overview of 4 possible improvements to Q100 layout and form screens, coding and data entry checks that might offer improvements to data entry. Which of these are taken on board will depend upon estimated costs and available budget. Action: Defra to review when costings available and in light of views from LAs.

## **6 Waste Data Management Systems**

Iain Stevens of Devon CC gave a slide presentation of his thoughts and findings as part of work his authority is undertaking to look at a new waste tonnage database possibly linked to more integrated digital services. Research so far had looked at 'off the shelf' standard systems, and alternative approaches being used by some other LAs. Digital transformation offers significant opportunities for LAs including more efficient and better customer service including customer accounts which potentially allows two way information between the authority and residents. Comment was invited from other attendees on what bespoke or other systems were in place, and whether there was interest in working collaboratively with Devon, or Nationally, on a system that could be adapted to and used by multiple authorities.

- Surrey CC have a bespoke system.
- All London LAs use Excel spreadsheets to compile data.
- Manchester LAs use Excel.
- Lancashire CC use a data management system for the 12 WCAs – showing its age and in need of development – but no funds available.
- One authority used the “love clean streets” app but commented that it was not cost effective as adds costs to each incident and not linked to other systems so data still has to be taken from this and added to other systems.

## **7 Waste tracking service**

Defra gave an overview of current work around a waste tracking service covering all waste – not just that managed by LAs and reported in WDF. This project is being conducted across all four UK nations and is currently in a “discovery phase” which is due to complete end March. Currently there is a lot of user research activity being carried out with selected LAs and waste management and treatment operators being interviewed about their data systems for recording and reporting waste. The Defra blog on the project can be seen here:- <https://defradigital.blog.gov.uk/2018/01/15/a-new-discovery-for-tracking-waste/>. LAs were encouraged to respond to the invitation to the online survey which had been sent to all LAs (closed 16 February).

## **8 Review of LA feedback – Numbers refer to item number on document circulated before the meeting.**

- 1) Request for guidance on how far to report waste from secondary and tertiary levels of treatment so clearer guidance can be given to the contractor to ensure material is correctly reported? “Online guidance – see:-

[http://www.wastedataflow.org/documents/guidancenotes/Specific/GN63\\_Question\\_100\\_Data\\_Entry\\_v2.0f.pdf](http://www.wastedataflow.org/documents/guidancenotes/Specific/GN63_Question_100_Data_Entry_v2.0f.pdf) . *This point is also partly answered by the section "Recording of exported material on WDF" above. Guidance to be updated.*

- 2) Request for a discussion on what systems Authorities use to collate the data prior to entering on WasteDataFlow? *See agenda item 6 section above on LA waste management data systems.*
- 3) Could WDAs complete Qu14 either (a) by site or (b) as a single entry. (b) would reduce the admin significantly and remove site-by-site detail which may / may not be used? *While feasible this could be quite complicated and it was not clear how much support there was for this.*
- 4) Q100 – Do sites really need to be set up separately as Recycling / Reuse / Composting or could the same facility be loaded with data entered under an appropriate drop-down? This would help reduce the Q100 tree and avoid entering data, only to find that the wrong facility ('reuse' rather than 'recycling') had been loaded and having to redo it. Small point but would mean each destination was entered only once on the tree. *This would require significant changes to the system along with changes to reports and validation. If the issue is that deleting and replacing sites is onerous, then it may be easier to look into the ability to update site types (although this couldn't be universal as not all types support all outputs). This would require some redesign of Q 100 part of WDF; ideas for potential improvements to Q100 data entry (following last year's SurveyMonkey) under review and awaiting costings.*
- 5) Could a check function be added to each node to ensure a visual ongoing balance between material category totals and outputs? *Under review and awaiting costings.*
- 6) Could a function be added that allows user-defined household / non-household ratios to be applied to specific materials? Currently these ratios are not material-specific. *Appreciation of the interest in this but not strong support for this as concerns this would increase reporting burden and add to likelihood of incomplete data / data entry errors and extra complexity in data calculations.*
- 7) Could average weights be established for each load 'type' within the Fly-Tipping Module for example a small van load = 75kg etc. This would mean that in the absence of actual weights, authorities could calculate fly-tipping weights from incidences reported. *Average weights are very difficult to estimate as very dependent upon waste type. Also see under section 4.1 above.*
- 8) Why aren't estimated costs given for 'tipper lorry load' or 'Significant / multiple load' fly-tipping incidents? *Costs very difficult to estimate – need more up-to-date data*

*from LAs, Defra asked if attendees with responsibility for completing fly-tipping returns would be willing to assist with updating current estimates. Action: Defra*

- 9) Could the WasteDataFlow database be amended so that the National Facility ID codes 23138 & 23139 could be amended so that Facility Address details could be manually entered to improve filtering to differentiate between facilities abroad like is available with 7932 – Other/Exempt. Currently I use the Monthly Comments field to enter further data, when I remember, but this results in all the facilities in question being compiled into only Facility Outside the UK but Within Europe or Facility Outside the UK and Not Within Europe. *Action: Defra / Jacobs to review if this would be a viable development. One LA also asked whether comments could be loaded from a previous tree as well as the address details.*
- 10) A user new to WDF and not yet able to complete training on how to use the site and access the data commented that they would have liked to see more self-teach options on how to use WasteDataFlow such as Contents of online help, Guidance Manual, Online demonstration videos for different parts of the tool etc. The usefulness of the guidance for new users could be improved by Signposting in new user login emails. Using and completing returns was regarded by attendees as one of the best ways of learning WDF, and it was suggested that a dummy LA and data could be set up on the system to allow new users to practise. The use of online video has been considered in the past but budgetary and technical constraints mean this has not been progressed. *Action: Jacobs to investigate the possibility of making dummy ID option available and if appropriate publicise via newsletter and in new user emails.*
- 11) Why has the reporting methodology for sending wood destined for recycling but sent for incineration been decided upon? This approach doesn't sit well with the general approach of WDF. WCAs input recycling information and WDAs input disposal information. Wouldn't the WDA be better reporting this?  
I am also not sure this is best logged as 'gate reject'. I realise there isn't a more appropriate option to select, but the thought of a load getting turned away at the gate is very different to the load being collected, bulked, sent to a transfer station, then sent onto various destinations in accordance with the contract. *This has now been covered in the FAQ document with a link to the guidance document as at item 1 above. LAs to report as best befits that WCA or WDA. It is important that this wood is properly recorded as rejects as from the regulatory position the whole load could be rejected.*

Date of next meeting:- A provisional date of Thursday 14th June 2018 is proposed.



## Attendees

Name	Organisation
Alex Clothier	Defra
Andy Mayes	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Carole Taylor	Pendle Borough Council
Chris Harbottle	Milton Keynes Council
Gary Fisher	Middlesbrough Borough Council
Iain Stevens	Devon County Council
Ian Lancaster	Lancashire County Council
James Gazzard	Leicestershire County Council
Julian Fox	Jacobs
Lindsay Holmes	Defra
Liz Glynn	Jacobs
Lorraine Beeks	Surrey County Council
Michael Richards	Cambridgeshire County Council
Mike Tregent	Environment Agency
Nav Rai	Warwickshire County Council
Rebecca Piper	Suffolk County Council
Richard Booth	Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority
Robert Andrew	Jacobs
Sofie Rasmussen	Leicester City Council
Stephen Didsbury	Bexley LB
Steve Lewington	Oxfordshire County council
Steve Sanderson	Environment Agency
Suzanne Phillips	Hertfordshire County Council
Tim Forster	North London Waste Authority
Tim Knowles	Jacobs