

WasteDataFlow (WDF) User Group for England – minutes of meeting on 17 September 2019

1. Introductions

2. Action points from the last meeting were reviewed:

| Action point / owner | Progress |
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| Action 3 – “Waste from Households” figures in the “Raw Data Plus” and recycling reports have been QA’d. Defra and Jacobs (WDF Contractor) to agree desk instructions and timetable for release of these reports for (Local Authorities) LAs. | Discussed in item 5 of the meeting’s agenda. |
| Action 4 – Fly-Tipping Module (FTM) time-out issue affecting some users. | No ongoing problems reported by LAs. This will continue to be monitored. |
| Action 5 – Fly-tipping average weight of loads. | See Action 8. |
| Action 8 – Defra to review the standard weight information supplied by LAs and look at options to update these standard weights. If any other LAs were able to contribute information this would be appreciated. Defra will also investigate whether data on edoc (a voluntary record of waste transfers) or held by WRAP could usefully inform this analysis. | <p>Defra noted they’ve found it difficult to find information on this: LAs couldn’t provide information on request as it often wasn’t available, and upon review, there was no relevant information on edoc (electronic duty of care).</p> <p>Defra directed LAs towards the Sustainability Exchange website, which provides a ‘measure your treasure’ page with lists of the average weights of furniture and some household goods—though Defra recognised that this is of limited potential use.</p> <p>Defra recognised that this was an area with room for improvement, and requested that anyone with thoughts or comments come forward.</p> <p>The issue requires further consideration by Defra.</p> |
| Action 9 – Fly-tipping recording:- Jacobs agreed to share the contact details between these two authorities for further discussion related to the use of a tablet system to record fly-tipping locations and sizes remotely from incident sites which had made compilation of data more straightforward. | Details shared. |
| Action 10 – Defra to consider how to support this consortium looking at alternative means of collecting and entering WDF/FTM data, including distributing the contact details for the LAs who offered to lead on setting this up. | Discussed in item 6 of the meeting’s agenda. |

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| Action 11 – Defra to keep in mind possible demand for carbon metrics reporting for future prioritisation. | Defra noted that while integrated carbon metrics reporting could potentially be useful, they were unsure that they would have the development budget necessary to implement it. |
| Action 12 – Defra to consider adding a fourth check to WDF to flag changes in total household waste arising. | Defra expressed an intention to consider adding a total household arisings check as part of validation on WDF in the future. |

3. Update from Defra

3i. QA of 2018/19 data

Defra gave a brief overview of the status of the QA for the 2018/19 data, including examples of some of the more common errors encountered:

- Materials at the final destination node not matching with their above associated facility.
- Green garden waste being recorded as originating from a food waste or residual stream.

They reminded LAs of the auto final destination function in Qu100, which is available for organic facilities, dry recyclate reprocessors and re-use sites, and allows a data entry user to auto-populate the final destination node with a breakdown of the tonnages of materials recorded earlier in the tree.

3ii. Policy update and topical issues: Including updates on the recent change in ministers, the Environment Bill, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), standardised collections, and the Circular Economy Package (CEP)

Post-meeting note: The minutes are a reflection of the discussion in the meeting but due to the General Election, it must be appreciated that statements on Defra policy may be subject to change dependent on the outcome of the election.

Defra updated the LAs on the recent change in ministers: Theresa Villiers has succeeded Michael Gove as Defra’s Secretary of State, and Rebecca Pow has succeeded Thérèse Coffey as Defra’s Minister of State. Defra were unable to comment on the new ministers’ policies.

Defra outlined their expectation that the Environment Bill would go forward in the next session of Parliament, setting out green governance and protections for the environment post-EU. The bill was expected to include policies on air quality, restoring natural spaces, delivering sustainable water resources, and resources and waste

As part of the presentation, Defra updated the LAs on outcomes from the consultations that closed in May 2019. These consultations related to proposals for the introduction of separate food and garden collections for households and businesses, Extended Producer

Responsibility (EPR), the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), and a proposed tax on plastic made from less than 30% recycled material. Defra expressed thanks for all feedback and for the strong input from stakeholders and LAs. The consultation on DRS, which aims to increase recycling and reduce litter, received over 208,000 responses.

Key feedback from the EPR consultation included:

- The need for a definition of full net cost recovery.
- Strong support for the need for better packaging designs—the need for more clear labels and better public awareness of what these mean.
- Strong support for mandatory labelling.
- Mixed feedback on the best mechanism for achieving EPR.
- Mixed feedback on the proposed modulated fees system.

Where views were mixed, Defra expressed an intention to review the relevant research.

From the DRS consultation, 69% of respondents preferred an 'all-in' option that included containers of all sizes as compared to the 'on-the-go' option that restricted sizes to 750ml. However, though DRS is popular with the public, Defra expressed that there was still a lot of work to be done to build up evidence and evaluate the impact it would have on the reduction of litter as well as how it would interact with EPR and other policies.

Defra were considering the role of legislation around mandating separate collection of materials from households and businesses in England. Defra recognised that there would need to be some allowance for local circumstances and LA decision-making, and proposed that, in particular, the frequency of collections would be a matter for LAs.

Key findings from the consultations on consistency in collections and food waste were:

- The majority of respondents supported having a core set of materials collected from households and businesses
- That the core materials should cover paper and card, metal, plastic bottles and PTT glass and food waste
- A weekly food waste collection was supported by 80% of individuals, 72% of stakeholders, and 68% of LAs.
- The majority of respondents were in favour of including free caddy liners: 66% of individuals and 56% of stakeholders.
- There was mixed feedback regarding the necessity of a food waste collection and the potential difficulties—concerns were expressed that barriers of collection such as hard to reach locations, i.e. flats or rural areas, may make it difficult to implement a consistent model.

Other feedback related to:

- The categorisation of DIY waste.
- Waste from student accommodation and short-term holiday lets.
- The capacity for textiles at HWRCs.
- The distribution of HWRCs around the country.

Defra said the policies would be taken forward to a second consultation in 2020 subject to ministerial views.

As part of the presentation, Defra summarised that subject to ministerial views it would review the Controlled Waste Regulations and the role of HWRCs as set out in the Resources and Waste Strategy 2018.

Defra gave LAs a brief update on the Circular Economy Package (CEP), including the publication of new, detailed rules for reporting data on waste (see: [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2019/1004](#)) and a reminder of the CEP's new, broader definition of municipal waste. Defra informed the LAs that they were working in liaison with WRAP to determine how these new requirements could be met using the existing methodology available on WDF. This research will also investigate the location and capacity of existing final processor facilities with the goal of understanding process losses. The new rules for reporting waste require the reporting of recycling tonnages entering the final process rather than tonnages accepted by the final processor, as is currently reported. Defra hopes that the findings of the investigation will be able to be used to put together standard factors that can be applied to the recycling tonnage accepted by the final processor as LAs may find it difficult to obtain information on tonnages later in the process.

LAs expressed concerns that applying standard factors to recycling tonnages would penalise LAs with contamination rates lower than the national figure. Defra acknowledged this concern and queried whether LAs had previously been able to obtain the necessary information on process loss from their contractors. The LAs indicated mixed success and that some contractors didn't have the information themselves after the waste had been passed through multiple brokers. LAs pointed out that, even with the information, there was no way to prove that it was their specific waste being processed.

Defra concluded that they will provide a further update on the research study and potential standard factors at the next meeting.

Action 1 (Sep 19) – Defra to review the findings from the WRAP study, once carried out, and consider potential standard factors for process loss to present at the next user group meeting.

3iii. Defra – waste tracking service

Defra provided LAs with an update on the waste tracking project, which aims to track all waste through production, intermediate treatment and disposal in a digital format. Of fifty original supplier bids, five were selected to undergo a twelve-week discovery phase exploring their solution. This has now concluded. The scheme allows Defra to take two of these suppliers forward into a twelve-month contract to develop their prototypes with a budget of £500,000 each. Defra were unable to provide further information as no formal announcements have been made, but confirmed that the project is intended to cover the whole of the UK, not just England.

3iv. Update on WDF contract

Defra reminded LAs that the current WDF contract with Jacobs expires in January 2020. Defra hope that the waste tracking service currently in development will be the future successor to WDF. However, whilst this is still in development, Defra hope to renew the contract with Jacobs and maintain the current WDF system for another two years. This will

help ensure seamless continuity with WDF until the waste tracking service is ready to launch. Defra cautioned that nothing had been finalised.

4. WDF reporting – feedback and discussion

4i. Jacobs – general feedback or any points to raise

Jacobs raised the importance of submitting data by the deadline for each quarter and entreated LAs to communicate any issues that might delay their submissions. Timely data submission is important, they stressed, so that the validation process runs smoothly. Further, thoroughly validated data will help LAs respond to data requests from the public or media as it will enable the LA to direct the correspondent towards WDF’s downloadable reports.

When responding to requests for information from the public, or those who would otherwise not have access the data, Jacobs cautioned LAs against sharing information still at or below level 35; once published by Defra, data will be approved to level 40 and made publicly available. At level 35, data is not finalised and not included on the publicly available WDF reports. Any data at level 35 or below should only be shared with heavy caveats, Jacobs warned, and ideally not with the public.

Jacobs encouraged LAs to actively manage those users who can access the WDF system, specifically when users leave the authority, both for security reasons and also so that Jacobs or Defra don’t try to contact someone no longer employed by the LA. Similarly, Jacobs encouraged LAs to inform them of any change in their contact information.

4ii. Common data-recording queries or misreporting errors

The following were identified by Jacobs as common misreporting errors and their solutions:

- Mismatch at processor node and final destination node. Jacobs recommend the auto-Final Destination function, which allows a data entry user to auto-populate the Final Destination node with a breakdown of the tonnages of materials recorded at its parent node.
- RDF recorded as being sent to “Treatment unknown” when incineration is the most likely destination. This is often queried in Jacobs’ validation checks.
- Rejected materials being sent to RDF. From RDF it’s no longer a process rejection and should be recorded as refuse-derived fuel. The EA noted that material can be rejected from an RDF facility as not of sufficient quality and this was acknowledged by Jacobs but in the majority of cases the waste has been sent as RDF for incineration.
- Waste reported as arising from a bring bank site but no bring bank sites reported in Qu15a. LAs to be aware.

4iii. Reporting of aggregates, sand, fines under ‘other materials’

Defra requested that LAs provide comments in the Qu100 tree when designating tonnages of recycling as ‘Other materials’. LAs were reminded that, for material to be recorded as recycling, it must undergo appropriate processing and be used as a replacement for new materials rather than simply being used unprocessed for—as an example—backfilling or

repairing access roads. Defra informed the LAs that there was likely to be closer oversight of this issue in the future.

4iv. Feedback from LAs on the new Qu100 screen and data input features

LAs gave generally positive feedback, including appreciation for the new destination facility search function in the Qu100 tree.

Suggestions for future improvements included:

- The ability to filter the Qu100 tree to show only nodes without tonnages.
- The ability to sort the Qu100 tree alphabetically or in other ways such as by site type.

Action 2 (Sep 19) – Defra to consider adding the ability to filter the Qu100 tree to show only nodes without tonnages and/or to sort the Qu100 tree in other ways such as alphabetically or by site type.

4v. Any other feedback or suggestions

Facility selection

LAs conveyed that they found the process of searching for sites during data entry to be onerous and that they believed it led to an increase in the use of other/exempt facilities. In particular, they found the postcode search function to be frustrating as some facilities have multiple postcodes but only one might be on the WDF system. They expressed similar frustration with facility names on the WDF system, with some listed under previous operators or abbreviated, which make it difficult to find the facility.

Possible solutions discussed included updating the facility selection list with more modern search functions, and working with the Environment Agency to ensure consistency in how addresses are entered into the register.

Action 3 (Sep 19) – Defra to consider adding more modern search functionalities to the facility selection list and/or reviewing the base data provided by the EA.

Fly-tipping

Following anonymised feedback to Defra expressing concerns regarding variable methodologies used to report fly-tipping, LAs discussed their methods. LAs at the meeting estimated that approximately one third of fly-tipping incidents in their authority were proactively reported, where the fly-tip site had been reported by their crews rather than the public. Some LAs described issues with this leading to double-counting and stressed the importance of training staff to know what fly-tipping is (particularly around side waste) and how to enter it correctly into the LA's recording system, and subsequently into the WDF fly-tipping module.

Some LAs gave anecdotal evidence of LAs that did not report proactively reported fly-tipping.

Defra underlined the importance of the correct data being reported, as the figures derived are not only published but also used to inform policy. Defra had been in contact with several LAs in the course of their fly-tipping data QA, and planned to reinforce the existing guidance across all LAs in the near future. Defra informed LAs that the National Audit Office (NAO) was currently reviewing waste crime statistics, and they expect that the NAO will be delving more deeply into fly-tipping data and evidence in 2020.

Action 4 (Sep 19) – Defra to reinforce the existing fly-tipping module guidance.

Action 5 (Sep 19) – Defra to consider conducting an exercise with LAs to gather a more comprehensive understanding of how fly-tipping is reported and how LAs handle risks such as double-counting.

Final destinations of material for recycling

LAs discussed difficulties in obtaining information from MRFs regarding the final destination of materials. They reported that contractors often cited commercial sensitivity as a reason not to comply with the request for information. LAs in joint venture partnerships or with access to the information specifically outlined in their contract with the company had more success.

The Environment Agency (EA) proposed that LAs should consider having a standardised clause that could be used in contracts going forward. After discussion, it was concluded that this should be decided by the individual LA when they came to renegotiate contracts.

It was noted that public and media interest in the final destination of materials is expected to remain at a high level. Defra hope that the waste tracking service, once implemented, will provide better visibility downstream.

LAs also queried whether it would be possible to rename Facility Address to Facility Name and Address on the Qu100 tree. There was agreement with this approach.

Action 6 (Sep 19) – Defra to consider amending ‘Facility Address’ to ‘Facility Name and Address’ on the Qu100 tree.

5. WDF reports

5i. Feedback from LAs on the recycling report

Most LAs expressed that they hadn’t looked at the Q100 Recycling report, which had been released to LAs earlier in the year. Defra stated that there was an intention for the report to be made publicly available, and that this could potentially reduce the amount of time that LAs and government departments had to spend answering correspondence and FOI requests. Some LAs expressed concern that the information in the report may be easy for public users to misinterpret, and that they would need to have a closer look at the report.

It was decided that LAs should have more time to use and review the recycling report before general release is considered. LAs would report back further at the next meeting.

Action 7 (Sep 19) – Defra and Jacobs to agree guidance on the use of the recycling report to derive the WfH recycling measure.

5ii. Jacobs demonstration of the Raw Data Plus download

Jacobs provided LAs with a demonstration of the Q100 Raw Data Plus download. This is more user-friendly than the existing raw data download and a more manageable file size. There are plans to make it accessible to LAs in the near future and to public users in the long-term, and guidance documents are currently in production. Defra asked that LAs try to review the report and data, which could assist them in answering correspondence and data QA, but asked that LAs do this after review of the recycling report.

5iii. Data outputs/reporting requirements – ‘waste treatment/disposal’

Defra outlined feedback from one LA that a waste treatment disposal report on WDF would be helpful in responding to FOI requests. Defra expressed that, accounting for budget and resources, it was unlikely that a waste treatment disposal report would be a priority to produce.

It was concluded that if LAs felt the need for further reports after they had familiarised themselves with the recycling and raw data plus reports then the issue would be revisited.

5iv. Any other feedback or suggestions?

No other issues were raised.

6. Waste data management system – survey

Iain Stevens of Devon County Council presented an update on efforts to establish a consortium of LAs for the procurement of a standardised management system for waste data. He talked through questions from a survey that they intend to distribute to LAs in the near future. Comments were fed back and the questions were to be finalised.

The LAs currently engaged in the project aim to have results back from the survey and be able to present findings by the next meeting.

Action 8 (Sep 19) – Project leaders /Jacobs/Defra to determine how the survey will be distributed and then action it.

7. A.O.B.

Waste tracking service – user consultation

Defra introduced John Jones, a user researcher who is consulting on the development of the waste tracking service. He presented LAs with plans to recruit a panel of potential participants to test the waste tracking service at the end of each monthly cycle of development work and/or allow themselves to be interviewed about how they would like the service to function.

Defra will send out an invitation to join the user panel following the official announcement of phase 2 of the project. The invitation will be sent via e-mail to a mailing list based on the WDF list of users.

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| <p>Action 9 (Sep 19) – Defra to send out invitations to join the waste tracking service user panel following official announcement of phase 2 of the project.</p> |
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8. Date of next meeting and any request for agenda items for the next meeting?

The next user group meeting is likely to be scheduled for February or March 2020.

No further request for agenda items was made.

Attendees:

| Name | Organisation |
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| Alex Clothier (Chair) | Defra |
| Amanda Hulse | Barnsley MBC |
| Andrew Bean | Pendle Borough Council |
| Catrin Smith | Jacobs |
| Charlotte Paine | South Holland District Council |
| Chris Harbottle | Milton Keynes Council |
| Debbie Mansell | East Ridings of Yorkshire Council |
| Elizabeth Glynn | Jacobs |
| Hope Grimson | Defra |
| Iain Stevens | Devon County Council |
| Ian Lancaster | Lancashire County Council |
| James Gazzard | Leicestershire County Council |
| John Jones | Waste tracking system project |
| Julian Fox | Jacobs |
| Laura Hemingway | Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
| Lindsay Holmes | Defra |
| Mike Tregent | Environment Agency |
| Nav Rai | Warwickshire County Council |
| Nick Drake | Norse – Daventry District Council |
| Patrick Shannon-Hughes | WRAP |
| Phil Hadfield | Newark and Sherwood District Council |
| Philip Samosa | West Lancashire Borough Council |
| Rebecca Piper | Suffolk County Council |
| Rob Morris | Telford Council |
| Robert Andrew | Jacobs |
| Sarah Innes | Reading Borough Council |
| Stacey Clark | Defra |
| Stephen Unsworth | Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
| Steve Lawson | Luton Borough Council |
| Steve Lewington | Oxfordshire County Council |
| Suzanne Phillips | Hertfordshire County Council |
| Tania Stephens | Hampshire County Council |
| Tim Forster | North London Waste Authority |
| Tim Knowles | Jacobs |