

# WasteDataFlow User Group for England

Place of Meeting

London and Salford (video-conferencing)

Date

19<sup>th</sup> November 2013

## Present

Alison Large	Suffolk County Council
Andy Williams	SKM Enviros
Carole Taylor	Pendle Borough Council
Chris Gillett	Solihull MBC
Claire Drake	Hampshire County Council
Daniel Cope	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Debbie Fillingham	Lancashire County Council
Elaine Rock	Staffordshire County Council
Garry Wells	Environment Agency
Gary Armstrong	SKM Enviros
Helen Matthews	Defra
Isabella Hayes	Defra
James Kirkham	East London Waste Authority
Janine Johnson	Leicestershire County Council
Jim Holding	Defra
Josie Murdoch	Staffordshire County Council
Julian Fox	SKM Enviros
Justin Lomax	Greater Manchester WDA (MBC)
Keith Brierley	Greater Manchester WDA (MBC)
Mark Partlett	North London Waste Authority
Michael Richards	Cambridgeshire County Council
Michelle Whitfield	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Neil Azavedo	Surrey County Council
Pat Thomas	Defra
Paul Wright	Suffolk County Council
Steve Lewington	Oxfordshire County Council
Steve Sanderson	Environment Agency
Sunita Patel	Amey
Susan Stapley	Cumbria County Council

## Apologies

Nav Rai	Warwickshire County Council
Stephen Didsbury	Bexley LB

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**Operational update from SKM Enviros**

Update provided on operational aspects, including the following.

**1.) Data timeliness**

An increasing number of LAs are not meeting the reporting deadline. There may be a variety of reasons for this but LAs still need to make sure there is adequate resource to complete WDF.

**Note:** Earlier publication of data outputs would have benefits if Defra disallows pre-level 40 access.

**Feedback from the LAs:**

Timeliness could be tightened (although there can be issues in making sure data from small operators are received).

There will be more and more times when finalising data is delayed due to resource shortages but this will not be resolved by allowing more time.

There would be benefits in WCAs having an earlier deadline because WDAs need their WCAs' finalised data before they can finalise. This was mentioned as meaning two months for WCAs leaving the last month for WDA and as meaning giving WDAs a fourth month.

**Action Action 1:  
SKM to provide options to Defra on tightening the timetable.**

**2.) Validation**

More LAs have been making use of the validation spreadsheet, which has improved the comments that LAs have been making in their returns. Also some LAs send the answers to the validation queries to the helpdesk as soon as they have authorised their return to level 30 which has been very helpful. However, the majority of LAs are not making use of this validation spreadsheet and further use of it is to be encouraged.

**Note:** LAs could also put responses to the points raised by the validation spreadsheet into the question comments box.

**3.) Portal usage**

From September 2013 the use of summary reports has been monitored. 2,445 reports were generated by local authority users in September 2013 and 3,339 in October 2013. Information on which the most popular reports are is also available. Approximately 150 users a month are making use of the summary reports.

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**Data Quality update from the Environment Agency**

- 4.) Now that LATS is no longer relevant, the EA's interest is more focussed on recycling rates.  
Discussion around the use of rejection rates within WasteDataFlow; LAs currently need to take rejection rates on trust from their MRFs and do not have the jurisdiction that the EA has to verify that material is being process in accordance with a facility's licence. WDAs have a role in checking rejection rates but it is contract-specific with no central guidance. Although WDAs cannot audit facilities they could report back to EA on the potential need for an EA audit.  
By April 2014 it is expected that the impact of the new MRF rejections on the EA's validation of data will be clearer.

**Action Action 2:  
EA to propose how to make use of WDA intelligence in planning audits.**

**Action Action 3:  
EA to propose how to tighten up our evidence on rejection rates within WasteDataFlow.**

**Defra update**

5.) **UK recycling rates and targets**

Update on the latest published statistics for UK recycling (England headline rate is 43.2%). LAs present queried whether recycling rates could be maintained. Since the removal of the LATS targets on recycling LAs are focussed on saving money and need to find the cheapest way to handle waste; there is interest, e.g. in charging for garden waste collection. Other cited issues affecting rates include the stopping of green waste collections in winter (which can also affect mixed food and green waste collections) and current difficulties in recycling wood waste (due to e.g. closure of Sonae plant).

Defra said that there were no plans to fine LAs for poor performance or to set new LA-level targets but that no options were ruled out at this stage.

LAs are keen to know what is going to happen to landfill tax to allow for financial planning beyond March 2015.

It was noted that street-sweepings are not counted as "waste from households" so will not be part of new recycling calculation.

It was questioned whether a distinction could be made in WasteDataFlow between wood waste sent to "biomass" and sent to "energy from waste" (also see point 10).

**Action Action 4:  
Defra to assess how much wood is recycled and how much garden waste is recycled in the winter quarters. Defra to make a statement about landfill tax plans.**

**Action Action 5:  
Consider whether WasteDataFlow questions can be amended to distinguish**

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**biomass and energy from waste (SKM/Defra).**

**6.) Fly-capture**

The possible incorporation of Fly-capture questions in WasteDataFlow was discussed. It was agreed that there were no arguments or objections to gathering fly-tipping data within WasteDataFlow (provided that this replaced and was not in addition to the use of Fly-capture).

**Action Action 6:  
Decide whether to proceed with incorporating Fly-capture questions in WDF (Defra, by end of December).**

**WRAP update**

**7.) Changes to Questions 4, 5 and 6**

WRAP could not be present but reported that there is consideration of amending Questions 4, 5 and 6 in WasteDataFlow to align with data collected by WRAP in its survey.

WRAP's survey is voluntary and the data are not validated and are available later than WDF data, but WRAP's survey data contain information about individual schemes (which WDF currently does not).

It was agreed that the expansion of the drop-down lists in WDF questions to match better the bin sizes in use (in line with categories in WRAP survey) would be a good idea.

The idea of taking the data from WRAP (given points above) was less popular.

**Local authority issues**

**8.) Street-sweepings**

LAs queried how water from drainage of street-sweepings is to be included in WDF reporting, as this can add to the overall tonnage of residual waste (and therefore NI191 and NI192 are negatively impacted).

The guidance (for example provided by Wales) tends to assume that loads are drained prior to the facility (and therefore weighbridge), but this is not always the case now.

For example, one authority described a street-sweepings drainage system designed to capture grit from street-sweepings for reuse. If weighed by load, this would be pre-drainage so the weights would include water. Several attendees raised similar issues. This raised the wider question of whether there is consistency in the handling of moisture loss in WDF questions.

**Action Action 7:  
EA to consider how this ought to be handled and reported and report back to the**

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**group.**

**9.) Question 14 reporting**

It was queried whether Qu14 (HWRC data) could be answered by WDAs with the provision of a total tonnage rather than having to break tonnages down into individual WCAs. However, some authorities like the breakdown so there was no consensus on needing a change.

It was noted that in Northern Ireland this question requires the provision of data by individual HWRC.

**10.) Wood waste**

It was queried why wood waste cannot all be counted as construction and demolition waste. The interest in this is largely driven by current difficulties in recycling wood waste (see item 5) but there are inherent difficulties in changing reporting and no consensus for change. The LA view on this was led by whether they currently recycle wood or not. Most did, and so preferred wood to stay as household recycled.

**11.) Edoc**

It was queried whether there are any plans to link edoc (the Environment Agency's new electronic duty of care system) with WasteDataFlow. Use of edoc will be voluntary and is for tracking the transfer of waste rather than final reporting of tonnages – the data are at too early and granular a stage and there was consensus that it was not appropriate to link to WDF at this stage. Therefore there are currently no plans to allow edoc to link into WDF.

**12.) Reporting quarterly and annually**

Discussion over whether there would be any appetite for replacing quarterly reporting with annual reporting (there is no plan for this). There was no interest in this – LAs felt that it would be difficult to report back over that time period and validation of the data would be a lot more difficult, plus granularity of the data would be lost.

**13.) XML Generator – end-destinations**

Query received by email in advance of the meeting, but not discussed at meeting due to time constraints:

- *The destination drop-down list needs to be manually reselected, if any changes (however minor) are made to an end-destination. Is WDF aware of this technical issue?* (Response: Yes. When you download the generator it takes the data that is currently in your selection list. If you update your list you then need to download

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a new generator.)

#### 14.) XML Generator – usage

Query received by email in advance of the meeting, but not discussed at meeting due to time constraints:

- *Is it known how many local authorities use the XML Generator and is a survey planned?* (Response: The system shows that 34 authorities in England have used the XML generator this calendar year. No survey is currently planned.)

### Developments

#### 15.) Financial year versus calendar year

Defra would prefer to report statistics by calendar year rather than by financial year. LAs will continue to use financial year statistics. Although few if any use Defra's LA-level tables users thought it would be confusing to have two different sets of statistics available. Financial year must take priority for LAs.

Comments and queries that were received by email in advance of the meeting are summarised below:

- *Right at the start of the WasteDataFlow processes there was a lot of discussion on whether we should use the Landfill Directive year July to July or the financial year. The drawback of using the financial year was that we had to meet the Landfill Directive targets three and half months earlier than required under the Directive. If we move to calendar years will that lead to having to meet the Landfill Directive targets in 2019 rather than 2019/20, another three months earlier?* (Response: There is no planned change to the process for the submission of data by LAs; the change would be in the reporting of statistics by Defra.)

#### Action Action 8:

**Defra to make a proposal for national level statistics on a calendar year basis whilst retaining LA level data on a financial year basis.**

#### 16.) Back-allocation

The proposal to stop the back-allocation of tonnages (from WDAs to their WCAs) was discussed.

Back-allocation was wanted by WDAs who see it as more than just the recycle in the residual waste stream. WDAs are working with WCAs to give them responses for Q19 which is a form of back-allocation covering rejects for all materials sent for recycling (e.g. relating to the use of a MRF).

Defra and EA were against back-allocation of the recyclates in the residual stream because they want to encourage more segregation at collection (i.e. back-allocation does not necessarily support the waste hierarchy).

WDAs see the important thing is what is actually recycled regardless of the process used

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to obtain it. They want recyclate extracted from the residual stream and recyclate extracted from incinerators to be counted.

It was questioned whether the use of Qu58 (for MRFs) and the reporting of the resulting recyclate by WCAs was not in itself a form of back-allocation.

Although the stopping of back-allocation would not on its own affect the calculation of national recycling statistics (just change the distribution of in which authority the recycling occurs), the change in individual authorities' rates could be difficult to convey to the public, councillors & co. This could have a damaging effect on recycling efforts.

Comments and queries that were received by email in advance of the meeting are summarised below:

- *WDF should be mindful that whilst asking for feedback on the stopping of “back-allocation” in relation to the next meeting they are also sending out updated advice on back-allocation through other forums. This needs resolving as it is undoubtedly causing confusion and major issues for local authorities. For instance the “November Newsletter” contains a linked update for “Street Sweepings” advising tonnages to be to be back-allocated. (Response: no final decision on back-allocation has been taken so tonnages can still be back-allocated in current reporting.)*
- *We did not think [back-allocation] was counted anyway towards NI 192. We would support a consistent approach across all authorities and see the logic in this approach.*

**Action Action 9:  
Defra to make a new proposal relating to back-allocation for further consultation.**

### 17.) Opening disposal questions to WCAs

Discussion over whether it would be sensible for WCAs to have access to disposal questions if required. Use of these questions by WCAs would be rare but some WCAs do have e.g. their own arrangements for trade waste.

Decisions on this would be affected by decisions on Question 100 (see item 18).

### 18.) Use of Question 100

Discussion over whether Qu100 could be put in place for England, to replace the disposal questions (Qu51 onwards). Description of how Qu100 works (tree structure etc.) given by SKM. Scotland and Wales already use Qu100.

Qu100 would maintain the same level of detail as the existing disposal questions and would just replace those questions. The roll-out for England would incorporate any learning and feedback from Scotland and Wales.

Qu100 was seen as an option to do on a mandatory basis from April 2014 if it can be ensured that WDAs and UAs do not have additional work apart from the set-up and if enough training can be provided. There was also discussion that Qu100 use could have an optional/trialled take-up from April 2014 and a number of LAs expressed their interest

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in being in that group.

Discussion over whether Qu100 would replace Qu19 and Qu19a for WDAs and UAs (as it does in Scotland and Wales) and what this would mean for WCAs' completion of Qu19 and Qu19a.

Some WDAs effectively complete Qu19 for their WCAs but as long as they are providing the same amount of data the move to Qu100 ought not to create more work.

If Qu100 were to be completed by WCAs (to replace Qu19 and Qu19a) then the training programme would need to be intensive than if just for WDAs and UAs.

LAs would find it useful to have more information about the use of Qu100 (in addition to the guidance which is already available on the website). It is not likely to be possible to provide a "sandbox" site yet because training must be available when that happens.

Comments and queries that were received by email in advance of the meeting are summarised below:

- *Question 100 is something we would support but would be interested to know if WDF have estimated the impact on authorities with regards to time (training, inputting, errors/validation etc.) Would it be possible to have a date when Question 100 would become mandatory? (Response: see notes above.)*
- *Whilst we think it would be useful to have all this information in one question we would need more information on what the question entailed and would welcome any simplification of the WasteDataFlow process in general.*

**Action Action 10:**

**SKM to see if Qu19 data can be derived automatically from Qu100 and consider issues relating to WCA completion of Qu19 and Qu19a.**

**19.) New reports**

Defra want to set up WCA reports focussed on collection achievements and WDA reports focussed on disposal achievements.

New reports were accepted as a necessary evil. Some LAs were concerned that the old reports would no longer be available on new data periods – many still make use of old reports particularly e.g. NI192.

LAs want to see details of the new waste from household recycling calculation. Some concern was expressed over the effect of the calculation on rates, e.g. for authorities with a large amount of university-sourced recycling which would no longer be counted as household.

The WDA representatives want the main focus to be on their joint achievements in working with their WCA districts to minimise waste, save money and increase recycling. If introduced, new reports will be available from April 2014.

Comments and queries that were received by email in advance of the meeting are summarised below:

- *We (as do a lot of authorities) use NI192 for reporting to the public/media on our recycling performance and have targets that are based on these figures. Changing the mechanism for calculating this could impact on our reported*



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*performance and incorrectly give the impression that we have seen an increase or decrease in performance.*

- *Since street sweepings are not classed as waste from households under the EU definitions we may see a decrease in our recycling performance to the tune of around 5-7000 tonnes at a stroke.*
- *How do we separate materials on Q23 or Q10 that are not from a household but are recorded as household waste (e.g. schools)? (Response: guidance on any impact on reporting will need to be issued once Defra's specification of the "waste from households" recycling rate has been circulated.)*
- *A worked example or comparison between the current NI192 calculation and the new calculation would be useful. The feedback previously given is that the NI192 report would remain available to local authorities, albeit that it would not be updated to take into account future definition changes. It is widely used. It is useful to have the old NI/BVPI reports so that trend data can be calculated.*
- *As BVPIs and NIs are no longer a national requirement and other reports will take their place, what are WDF's intentions with regard to validation and verification of data returns from local authorities? Will the process currently in place suffice all auditing requirements by all parties involved or is anything further expected? (Response: When validating LAs' data we do not look specifically at the NI or the BVPI figures – the validation process contains numerous checks which compare tonnages in individual questions within and between quarters. A change to national indicators would not on its own directly affect the validation process.)*

**Action Action 11:**  
**LAs to send in views on what they think would be good reports.**

**Action Action 12:**  
**Defra to circulate a specification of the "waste from households" recycling rate calculation.**

**Any other business**

**20.)** None.

## **Matters from last UG meeting (14<sup>th</sup> February 2013)**

### **Actions and issues arising**

These were not discussed at the meeting due to time constraints, but listed below is an update of actions from the last UG meeting.

- i.) *Defra to review reporting in WasteDataFlow now that NIs, and soon LATs are no longer with us. Rules that have applied to data reporting that may have been restrictive will no longer be binding us. What will we be able to do differently after LATS has ended?*

See update in minutes above relating to this.

- ii.) *Defra to ask the Policy Team if the carbon metric reports can be produced for historic data*

There is no objection in principle but Defra does not have the resources to do this work at the moment.

- iii.) *WasteDataFlow to inform Local Authorities when the reprocessor reports are made available to the public.*

These are now available and this was communicated in the newsletter following the user group.

- iv.) *To send a link to the WRAP Local Authority Waste and Recycling Information Portal to LAs*

This was done after the user group – in the newsletter.

- v.) *Canvass Local Authorities to get their opinions on the following points:*

- *Contact all WCAs and determine how many of them are managing the treatment of their own waste*
- *Contact WCAs/WDAs to determine if there is an appetite for back-allocation and if so if WCAs would want a Qu19a to report back-allocated tonnages sent for recycling (to distinguish them from source segregated recycle)*
- *Contact WDAs and UAs to see how many want to use Qu100.*

WasteDataFlow sent an email to all LAs after the user group meeting to get their feedback on the points above. The data was analysed and the results are below:

Based on the following LA numbers

Number of UA	Number of WCA	Number of WDAs	Total
91	229	32	352

### Feedback stats

#### 1. WCA waste management

Total Yes	Total No	Total responses	Total number of WCAs and WDAs	% response	% Yes	% No
6	44	50	261	19.16	12.00	88.00

#### Notes:

- The response % and yes/no % are based on the total potential response for this question being all WCAs plus WDAs which equals 261. UAs were not asked this question.
- Some WDAs will represent WCAs on these issues so % response is likely to be higher than this in reality.

#### 2. a) Back-allocation - Is there is an appetite for back-allocation?

Local Authorities asked if they are currently back-allocating						
Total Yes	Total No	Total responses	Total number of WCAs and WDAs	% response	% Yes	% No
15	32	47	261	18.01	31.91	68.09

#### Notes:

- The response % and yes/no % are based on the total potential response for this question being all WCAs plus WDAs which equals 261. UAs were not asked this question.
- Some WDAs will represent WCAs on these issues so % response is likely to be higher than this in reality

b) Continue to back-allocate/or interested in back-allocating?

Local Authorities that would like to continue to back-allocate/or interested in back-allocating?						
Total Yes	Total No	Total responses	Total WCA and WDA	% response	% Yes	% No
27	21	48	261	18.39	56.25	43.75

Notes:

- The response % and yes/no % are based on the total potential response for this question being all WCAs plus WDAs which equals 261. UAs were not asked this question.
- Some WDAs will represent WCAs on these issues so % response is likely to be higher than this in reality

3. Question 100. How many UA/WDAs want to use Qu100?

Total Yes	Total No	Total responses	Total UA and WDA	% response	% Yes	% No
37	7	44	123	35.77	84.09	15.91

Notes:

- The response % and yes/no % are based on the total potential response for this question being all UAs plus WDAs which equals 123. WCAs were not asked this question.

Conclusions

In summary...

- Only 12% of WCAs that responded to the survey manage the treatment of their own waste (independently from their WDA). The majority of WCAs (88%) do not manage the treatment or disposal of their own waste. It is therefore questionable if there is sufficient demand to open up the waste treatment and disposal questions to WCAs that treat their own waste. A higher response rate is needed to draw stronger conclusions on this point.
- A third of WCAs or WDAs that responded to the survey record back-allocated recycle. Two thirds of respondents do not engage in a back-allocation process.

However, over 50% are interested in applying a back-allocation process when completing their WasteDataFlow returns. Qu19a was suggested as a possible option for WCAs to record back-allocated recyclate (i.e. recyclate from the residual waste stream) to differentiate between this and source-segregated recyclate. Some LAs would welcome an additional question to record back-allocated material. A higher response rate is needed to draw stronger conclusions on this point.

- Of the WDAs and UAs that responded to the survey the majority (84%) would like to use Qu100 (only 15.41% disagreed). The response rate to this question was 35%.

**vi.)** *SKM Enviros will investigate the development side of populating Questions 4, 5, 6 with numbers taken from the WRAP survey.*

See update in minutes above relating to this.

**vii.)** *WasteDataFlow to investigate ways of overcoming Data Protection issues which do not allow LA email addresses to be passed on to User Group representatives without having positive confirmation from each LA to do so.*

We are going to develop the data administration page so there is a mandatory tick-box to be completed to indicate if new users agree to their details being passed on to other users (e.g. User Group representatives). When a user profile is updated the tick-box will also have to be completed. It will take some time to go through all the WDF users to see if they agree to their details being passed on. In the meantime WDF sent the UG agenda to all users and provided users with the relevant representative's details to send the feedback to them directly. Representatives were contacted and asked if they agreed to their details being passed on to WDF users before this process took place.

**viii.)** *WasteDataFlow to send User Group Reps a list of all the Local Authorities they represent.*

Done – see point above.

**ix.)** *WasteDataFlow to share the development list with the User Group Representatives.*

Still to do.

**x.)** *WasteDataFlow to get feedback from Welsh LAs regarding Qu100 and whether this has increased or decreased the reporting burden*

This has been done. The feedback from Wales is positive. SKM Enviros delivered a presentation on Qu100 at a LA meeting in Birmingham earlier this year.

**xi.)** *Defra to decide what they mean by moving to Qu100. Will Qu100 be mandatory or optional?*

See update in minutes above relating to this.

**xii.)** *To add a total tonnage section to Qu19a after being approved by Defra.*

Done. Now a total tonnage sent for recycling and total rejected tonnage is at the bottom of Qu19a.

**xiii.)** *To make it possible to upload comments from the previous month in Qu19a.*

Done

- xiv.)** *To add a note to the LACW report to state WCA back-allocated tonnages are being back-allocated.*

Done: The following note has been added to the report:

NB – WDAs running this report that back-allocate waste to their WCAs will notice that the back-allocated tonnage appears in both the LACW Collected for Recycling, Composting and Reuse (includes collection rejects) and LACW sent to other disposal routes figures. The Total LACW figure used in the NIs does not double-count the back-allocated tonnage.

- xv.)** *To resolve the data reporting issues for back-allocated tonnages by next WasteDataFlow reporting year. Source-segregated recycling tonnages need to be reported separately from residual recycling tonnages.*

See update in minutes above relating to this.

This is linked in with the development of Qu100 for England and stopping back-allocation. Any changes are likely to be implemented in April 2014.

- xvi.)** *The XML generator needs to be developed to include all questions in WasteDataFlow.*

Done.

- xvii.)** *The XML generator is not guaranteed to work with anything above Excel 2010. We need to ensure the generator will work with these versions of Excel.*

It does work with other versions of Excel above 2010.

- xviii.)** *If there is demand to freeze panes in the collected/sent for recycling/reuse questions this is something that can be added to the development list.*

No demand so far. Not a priority development