

WasteDataFlow User Group for England – minutes of meeting on 28th February 2024

1 Introductions

As has been done previously, the User Group meeting was hosted online.

The introduction outlined the planned schedule for the day, including a brief outline on how attendees can contribute to the meeting through providing feedback and general comments.

2 Update from Defra Waste Statistics Team

2.1 Waste Statistics Publications

Defra provided an update on the publication of the waste and fly-tipping statistics for the reporting year 2022-23.

The publication of the fly-tipping statistics for 2022-23 occurred on the 17th January 2024. These figures are now available on the Gov.UK website [here](#). The main findings from this publication which were highlighted during the meeting included the following:

- In 2022/23, local authorities in England dealt with 1.08 million fly-tipping incidents, a decrease of 1% from the 1.09 million reported in 2021/22.
- In 2022/23, 60% of fly-tips involved household waste.
- The most common place for fly-tipping to occur was on highways (pavements and roads).
- The most common size category for fly-tipping incidents in 2022/23 was equivalent to a 'small van load' (31% of total incidents), followed by the equivalent of a 'car boot or less' (27%).
- In 2022/23, 42,000 or around 4% of total incidents were of 'tipper lorry load' size or larger. For these large fly-tipping incidents, the cost of clearance to local authorities in England in 2022/23 was £13.2 million.

Those in attendance were asked whether there were any questions.

The first question related to differences in the returns made by those local authorities who include proactively cleared fly-tipping incidents compared to those who do not include these incidents. Defra confirmed that there's a requirement for local authorities to confirm the reporting basis for their return, whether that be all incidents, proactively cleared or customer reported.

Defra highlighted that all local authorities should be reporting all fly-tipping incidents where possible, or be actively working towards this reporting basis where it is not currently possible. It is acknowledged that the reporting basis can change for reasons which are outside of the local authorities' control, such as software errors, so local authorities are encouraged to enter comments where the reporting basis does change.

The second question was asked around the potential publication of average weights for each of the fly-tipping size categories. Defra will investigate the potential of working with interested parties to gather the required information to enable this.

- The publication of the waste and recycling statistics for 2022-23 for England occurred on the 31st January 2024. These figures are published on the Gov.UK website [here](#).
- The findings from this publication which were highlighted during the meeting included the following: The Waste from Households recycling rate was 43.4 per cent, down 0.7 percentage points from 2021.
- Total Waste from Households decreased by 1.7 million tonnes (-7.2%) to 21.5 million tonnes.
 - Dry recycling fell by 0.4 million tonnes (-7.1%)
 - Organics fell by 0.4 million tonnes (-11.9%)
 - Residual waste fell by 0.8 million tonnes (-6.0%)
- Local authority collected waste sent to landfill decreased by 0.3 million (-16.4%) to 1.8 million tonnes and now accounts for 7.2 per cent of all LA waste.
- Local authority collected waste sent for EfW decreased by 0.3 million tonnes (-2.7%) to 12.0 million tonnes and is the disposal method for 48.7 per cent of all LA waste.
- The overall average Household recycling rate for England was 41.7 per cent, down 0.8 percentage points from 2021/22.
- Across the country household recycling rates ranged from between 17.7 to 61.6 per cent.
- There were 66 (20%) local authorities had an increase in their recycling rate., while 267 (80%) local authorities had a decrease in their recycling rates.
- There were decreases in dry recycle and organics across each quarter, with the bulk of the fall in organics was in July to September 2022.

Defra also highlighted that, since publication, the population figures have been updated on WasteDataflow. Household performance indicators which use the population figures have since been updated on Gov.uk.

Those in attendance were asked whether they had any initial questions regarding this publication. The first question related to the statistics being published online by news organisations while the information was only at level 35 on WasteDataFlow, so would not have been available for public users to download.

Defra response on this point: We believe this refers to a table of local authority recycling rates published online. This was after the statistics and datasets were published on Gov.uk, and the tables appeared to have been taken directly from the datasets on Gov.uk. Data on WasteDataFlow is rolled up to level 40 after data is published on gov.uk. Data rollup cannot be prearranged to take place simultaneously with the time of publication as any delay to publication on Gov.uk would result in a data breach. However, in the future Defra and the WasteDataFlow helpdesk team will try to ensure data roll up is more closely aligned to stats release time.

2.2 Proposed amendments to the Fly-Tipping Module data entry page.

Defra provided an overview of proposed changes to the current data entry page for reporting fly-tipping statistics.

This proposed change would be to add a new section which contains 2 questions on the financial value of fly-tipping related Fixed Penalty Notice (FPNs). Specifically, this section will ask the following questions:

- “For Fly-Tipping offences under section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, please enter the amount you have set your fixed penalty notice at?”: and;

- “If you offer a reduced Fixed Penalty Notice for early payment, please enter the amount you have set this at? If you do not offer an early payment discount, please leave this field blank”.

Those in attendance were asked whether they had any initial questions regarding these changes, with none being raised.

2.3 Waste Tracking Service Update

Defra provided an update on the Waste Tracking Service (WTS), which will provide a digital platform for the tracking of waste across the UK. The WTS will replace the current WasteDataFlow system once fully operational.

The Government published a consultation on WTS in October 2023, which received over 700 responses, and these are being considered. Defra thanked those who contributed towards the consultation.

In 2024, the WTS will be publicly available to users on a voluntary basis – this is likely to happen in phases with specific groups of users being invited to use the service over time.

The consultation response stated that from April 2025 legislation will come into force across the UK, to mandate use of the service, subject to approval across all four legislatures and after parliamentary approval via an affirmative statutory instrument.

The service for green list waste exports has been built and is being tested, starting with a small number of users who have been invited to participate in the testing that we will expand. The WTS team will iterate the service based on the feedback from users. If any local authorities are directly involved in completing Annex VII forms and would like to participate, there is this specific sign-up link: https://defragroup.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXxcxul19KlpQ3Q

For UK waste (hazardous and non-hazardous), this is currently in the design phase where there have prototype designs that we are again testing with users. This is the separate sign-up link if you would like to be invited to participate: [Waste Tracking Service User Panel \(qualtrics.com\)](#).

Primary focus for the scope of Waste Tracking is Annex VII forms for green list waste exports and imports, hazardous waste consignment notes and waste transfer notes, including waste returns and the information collected through WasteDataFlow including incidents of fly-tipped waste.

Waste Tracking may well also deliver items relevant to simpler recycling and EPR (extended producer responsibility). Out of scope – no direct collection on LA waste management costs or actions taken in relation to fly-tipping incidents.

The WTS team highlighted the below core principles which are being explored and tested:

- Required for all UK waste movements (household as well as businesses), with **exceptions** for certain activities where individual records to a consolidation point won't be required, for example LA household waste collections.
- a simple way to record frequent regular movements of the same types of waste between the same parties within the UK which does not involve individual records for every movement (“season ticket”).
- A record will need to be created on the service for a movement **before the waste moves**.

- The **person arranging the movement** i.e. the person who is classifying the waste (or receiving the classification) and then deciding where it should go, **will be the person responsible for creating the record**.
- Carrier to add confirmation of collection within 2 working days of collection and receiving site to confirm receipt within 2 working days of receiving the waste.
- The **information** to be recorded will mostly be the information already required by transfer notes or consignment notes.

The WTS team then provided a few specific examples relevant to a local authority's activities:

- Household waste collected from domestic premises by local authorities: there will not be a requirement for a waste tracking record for every collection of household waste from individual domestic premises by local authorities or contractors working on behalf of local authorities. Waste tracking records for this waste will begin when it is taken into a waste receiving site.
- Household waste recycling centres (HWRCs): Householders will not be required to record anything on the digital waste tracking service about waste they have produced which they move themselves. Operators of HWRCs will also not need to record the receipt of waste from householders on the waste tracking service. Operators of HWRCs will need to record information about any commercial business waste accepted onto sites. This is akin to current requirements to complete records about these types of transfers. Waste tracking records will also be required when waste is removed from a HWRC.
- Litter: A person or organisation collecting litter (including authorities collecting litter as a statutory duty) will not be required to create digital waste tracking records for the movement of that waste to a collection point.

The WTS team emphasised that they want to engage with interested parties to ensure the successful implementation of WTS. The specific examples of such engagement activities included the user panel, 1 to 1 discussions, engagement with stakeholder groups (WDA, NAWDO, LARAC etc.) and through existing forums and events.

Further information on WTS can be found on Gov.UK [here](#).

Local authorities are encouraged to contact Defra with specific queries around at:-
Waste.Tracking@defra.gov.uk.

Further information on Defra resources and waste forums and newsletters can be found [here](#).

Those in attendance were asked whether they had any initial questions.

The first feedback was from an authority who had limited existing knowledge on this subject and wanted to instigate a 1 to 1 discussion between themselves and the WTS team. The WTS team encouraged anyone who was interested in setting-up such meetings contact them using Waste.Tracking@defra.gov.uk.

The second question related to how the WTS accounted for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). The WTS team confirmed that they were actively working alongside colleagues who are implementing EPR, Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and Simpler Recycling. The intension of this joint working was to prevent duplication and ensure the use of consistent messaging and terminology.

The third question related to whether WTS was going to replace WasteDataFlow. The WTS team said that while WTS will collect much of the information currently collected by WasteDataFlow some data for example e.g. questions around waste containment, LA collection and disposal costs, Fly tipping enforcement actions, will not be collected by WTS and how this data will be collected is being discussed. It is currently thought that the WTS and the WasteDataFlow systems will both operate at the same time for a period, allowing for cross comparison of data and statistics across the two systems..

The fourth question was raised by a local authority who is preparing to bring their waste services in-house at the end of the current collection contract. They raised concerns that WTS was to be introduced at the same time as they would be undergoing this change, and that they were currently introducing a new IT system in preparation for the service being brought in-house. The WTS team acknowledged that there was wider demand for sharing of information on data standards, including API standards. This work was in progress but the team were mindful of not releasing versions that were not suitably mature. The WTS team encouraged the local authority to join the user panel contact so they could be included in relevant user engagement and to use the WT mailbox for any specific enquiries.

The fifth question ask whether the Fly-Tipping Module would be part of WTS or would remain part of WasteDataFlow. Defra said that because not all Fly tipping information could be collected by WTS there would be a continuing need to collect some Fly tipping information such as enforcement actions outside of WTS.

2.4 Feedback from the WasteDataFlow team

It has been identified that a small number of authorities have a significant number of facilities in Qu100 which are regularly unused. As most of the workbooks associated with WasteDataFlow submissions have a limit on the number of rows which will be included in a specific calculation, this can lead to there being excessive rows in the workbooks, and means that these occurrences of excess rows then need to be flagged for later correction.

The WasteDataFlow team reminded those in attendance that they should remove facilities which are unlikely to be reused and keep Qu100 as small as possible. It is believed that this would also benefit local authorities as Qu100 would then become more navigable as the number of potentially similar entries are reduced.

The WasteDataFlow team stated that they appreciated that the facilities used by local authorities can change on a regular basis and so they may wish to retain facilities if there is the potential that these become relevant again. Where the workbooks allow, this approach is encouraged as it prevents the creation of additional work if needing for them to be potentially recreated in the future.

3 Any other business

A question was raised on the contamination rate published by OFLOG. Defra confirmed that the contamination rate was based on the rejection figures taken from the published Table 1, which is not currently provided to local authorities through WasteDataFlow. It will be discussed as to whether it is possible to share the data used by OFLOG to calculate their dashboard contamination rate.

The next User Group meeting is expected to take in late autumn or winter 2024/25.