Attendees: Kate Foley (SKM Enviros), David Lee (Defra), Isabella Hayes (Defra), Debbie Fillingham (Lancashire CC), Stephen Didsbury (Bexley LB), Kitran Eastman (Warwickshire CC), Gary Armstrong (SKM Enviros), Andrew Baker (LB Harrow), Calum Clements (Central Bedfordshire), Andrew Warner (Worcestershire CC), Paul Wright (Suffolk CC), Eva McCelland (Gateshead Council), Victor Pitcher (Shropshire), Roy Thompson (EA), Sarah Pilgrim (Kent CC – Defra), Tania Stephens (Hampshire CC), Frances Howe (Hampshire CC), Michael Richards (Cambridgeshire CC), Carolyn Partridge (Buckinghamshire CC), Dawn Humberstone (Kent Council), Dave Hawes (ELWA), Nicola Garrett (Daventry Council), Nicola Percival (Herefordshire Council) – conference call.

Apologies: Justin Lomax (GMWDA), Andrew Dunn (BANES), Peter Marris (EA), Paul Martin (Cornwall Council), Ken Sherwood (Middlesbrough Council).

Key Messages:

1. The majority of the user group was spent discussing Defra's Waste Review, the data burden on local authorities and the results of the WDF survey which Defra has run during February 2011 to gather the views of WasteDataFlow users on how to reduce the burden of WasteDataFlow on local authorities.

2. Overview of WDF survey

- Key drivers for survey:

  - Review of waste policy, this is likely to be published in May 2011;

  - Streamlining of statistical reporting - removal of NIs and production of single data list. It is important to note that this list will be no different to WDF data requests;

  - There is also going to be a Treasury review of Government data. Defra will use the feedback from the WDF survey to respond to this request;

- The WDF survey has an England focus, but the devolved administrations have been interested in this survey and will be interested to see the uptake / know the results / see how this is going to impact on WDF going forward. Any changes to the survey will have to be agreed with Wales, NI and Scotland;

- The UK Statistics Authority will undertake an assessment of WDF in the summer. They are interested in how the outputs from systems such as WDF engage with the end user i.e. LA/public/wider organisations. The WDF reports are key to this;

- The WDF survey will remain 'live' until mid March mainly to encourage as many 'end-users' as possible to complete it.

3. Overview of survey results (please see attached presentation)

Mainly LAs in England have responded so far and to date (1st March) there have been 450+ responses;

Key issues to address prior to end April 2011 (please note this depends on agreement from Wales, NI and Scotland):

- Questions 21, 22, 28, 29, 30 – removed from annual return for England from 2011/12 onwards;

- Move questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 15a (WCA/UA), 13 (WDA) to annual questions (i.e. LA completes data in Qtr 4);

- Reasons for keeping the above as annual questions include a reduction in FOI requests sent to LAs, payment of contractors and WDF is a useful place to store all waste management data. User group representatives suggested providing reasons for retaining these questions as this would help them to justify it to their LAs in case it is questioned.

Other key survey results:

- Q.24 (fly-tipping) – there have been question as to whether the collation of this data is a repetition of Flycapture. The future of this question depends on the decisions made with regard to what information is required on fly tipping and the future of Flycapture as a system. LAs won't have to complete both; however we have to wait for the decision on Flycapture.

- Q.25 and 26 – the majority of the survey responses said to retain these. The reason for this may simply be because these questions are easy to complete.

Aspects to address post April 2011 (i.e. longer term developments).

- Questions 4, 5, 6, 7 - look at reducing the level of detail required in these questions. However, this needs to be consulted on as some LAs use this information to respond to FOI requests and have the data anyway.

- Removal of the function of entering transfer stations / bulk bays / transport type etc as it is felt to be unnecessary. Defra agree with this and can work on this in the medium/long-term, but it may not be possible before 1st April 2011, especially if some of the devolved administrations would like the options to remain.

- Shortening of lag between data entry and publication – Defra is always looking to shorten timescales, but they are tied to National Statistics requirements. User group reps commented that they may struggle to provide the data any quicker than 3 months. Also, user group reps stated that the time lag is necessary in order to get more accurate results. This is something which is being reviewed at national level.

- Review usability of Qu19 - end destinations and selection lists are a key issue for LAs in completing WDF returns (see below, comments re Qu19 and selection lists).

Most time consuming part of WDF return is Qu19:

- The aim is not necessarily to drop destinations, but potentially find a way of facilitating the entry of this data to make it easier and quicker. There is a range of practical changes that could be made to improve this question (see later notes).

- Comment from Andrew Baker (LB Harrow) - The main issue is that the data which is available is either not that specific or is not available from end destinations. LAs also don't have the contracts with the actual end destinations, but with brokers, resulting in the data not being a true picture of what is happening, therefore it is unrealistic for it to be used in reporting / FOIs.

WDF reports

- A key focus for post April 2011 is to improve the reporting aspects of WDF. This will make the information which is input more usable by a wider variety of users. It will also reduce the burden on LAs in relation to FOI requests.

- WDF plans to retain NI and BVPI reporting on the WDF system. Defra won't be making further clarifications to the NI / BVPI reporting / definitions / calculations from 1st April 2011 because they will both be redundant.

- WDF suggested providing a further set of reports which defines the headline figures outside of the NI/BVPI calculations e.g. tonnes recycled and tonnes reused. These would sit alongside the NI and BVPI reports. This would make reporting simpler and easier to maintain.

- LAs agreed with above, but recommended future reporting of BVPI/NI in order to provide a benchmark for LAs' data.

WDF submissions post April 2011

- LATS will continue to be monitored through WDF, so data needs to be completed as usual.

- Further details on the rWFD will be available in the summer of this year. This will set out the definition of household recycling and confirm what the UK needs to report to the EU to be 'target compliant'.

4. Local Authority Questions/Answers

Reporting

- Q: Is there a way of accessing a report that covers all 4 quarters as aggregated figures?

  A: There is no specific report on the summary reports tool that aggregates all of the quarterly data into one annual set of figures. However, all of the reports can be run for all four quarters at once to give an annual figure.

- Q: Can we get monthly reporting data from WDF?

  A: WDF does not currently allow you to download monthly data. WDF will look into developing CSV reports that provide monthly data.

- Q: Is it possible to make the EA report on the data authorisation page accessible when data is at level 10?

  A: WDF will review this function to allow this to be populated and therefore accessible by an individual LA when their data is at level 10.

- Q: Is it possible for LA to have access to the LATS report?

  A: WDF will review this option with the EA and update access permissions to allow all LAs to view their own LATS report.

Partnerships and reporting data in WDF

- Q: Once the NIs are no longer operational and if the LATS regulations are also revoked, how might that affect the way LAs enter their data?

  A: There would be the potential for data to be entered to reflect operational conditions i.e. partnerships submit one return to reflect their partnership operations and for Qu14 are able to enter data sent to one CA site all in one submission therefore submitting more accurate data.

- Hampshire CC raised the issue that to save money, a number of local authorities will be looking at the options for sharing vehicles and cross boundary collections. This will have impacts for WDF reporting. Hampshire CC suggested that WDF should produce a guidance note to advise LAs on how to report data in this circumstance.

WDF and carbon

- Q: Is there potential for WDF to monitor and report on carbon?

  A: There is the potential for a carbon metric, similar to that used in Scotland.

- There was great support from user group reps for the use of WDF to capture this data in order to avoid the development and data recording burden of a further database for LAs to complete.

WDF and back allocation

- Q: With NIs no longer being used as an obligatory reported statistic from 1st April 2011, how should back allocation of tonnages to WCAs be dealt with?

  A: Back allocation was initially used within WDF, to allow WCAs to include recycling from their residual waste stream in their NI192 calculation. However, with the NIs being revoked from 1st April there is arguably no need to back allocate tonnages now between WDAs and WCAs. User group reps expressed support for keeping back allocation as WCAs will most likely want to account for the tonnages that they have collected and the historic benefits of this will continue to be considered necessary by WCAs.

- There are a number of options to consider as ways to improve the back allocation data recording method. Some level of system development would be necessary with all options. Guidance would be produced to assist LAs in whichever option is decided on.

Qu19 and selection lists

- Q: Is it possible to update selection list management to make it more user friendly?

  A: Selection list updates are a complex process and are resource intensive. The following was proposed at the UG meeting:

  - The EA to update the selection lists annually;

  - If LAs can't find a facility on the list (via helpdesk), they should email the EA to request that it is added. The EA will then confirm that the facility has a valid permit and that it should be added to the system.

- Q: User group reps requested that LAs are notified when updates are made to the selection lists.

  A: WDF is currently investigating options to be able to develop a report which LAs can search by date for recent updates of facilities. However, in interim, helpdesk would send out list of updates on Qtr data submission email.

- Q: How long do we have to keep reporting other/exempt destinations?

  A: This information is checked on a quarterly basis by the EA to ensure that the facilities are authentic and appropriate for use by LAs. If a facility is exempt, it will never be shown on the selection list as it is considered that there would be too many to add and subsequently too many to check in the annual time period.

- WDF recommend using the function that allows the copying of comments from the previous quarter to bring forward the details of all of the facility names and addresses into the current quarter so that the information does not need to be added in each quarter. In addition, the development and use of Q.100 may also overcome these issues, as it has a free text field to detail other/exempt facilities.

- Q: Would it be possible to have multiple options for other/exempt e.g. other/exempt 1, other/exempt 2. This would make it easier to report data in Qu19.

  A: This option is not currently feasible within in WDF system. However, we are looking at ways to make it more efficient to report data in Qu19.

Question 100

- Q: What is Q.100 and when is it expected to go live for data entry in England?

  A: Q.100 is a new question that has been developed with the aim of providing a way of recording the pathways of waste streams and materials from collection through to their end destination – it is aimed to be a one-stop question to eventually streamline the WDF question structure.

- At present the question is being used by 4 Welsh authorities. It is excluded from LA question lists and we aim in England to start using Qu100 from Qtr 1 2011/12. If a LA wants to use Qu100, they are advised to contact the helpline to request that Qu100 is included in their question list. Training and guidance will be developed.

XML Upload

- Q: If only 7% of users are using the XML data upload tool (according to the user survey results to date), is it worth spending time developing this to improve it?

  A: XML upload was originally developed as a technical solution for the waste management system development industry. Three options are available: 1) take it away as a data upload option; 2) make it better with dedicated development time; or 3) leave it as it is.

- Decision was to leave as is for now, but ensure that error codes are understandable by LA.

Key Actions:

1. Defra unlikely to publish raw data set, but will provide a responses document to address all comments and confirm the actions as a result of the survey.

2. WDF/Defra to look to consult with LAs and devolved administrations on further changes to questions (i.e. reduction of detail required).

3. WDF to review development time to update BVPI and NI reports into easier to use format.

4. Defra to draft standard response email re. NIs coming to an end, requirements for LATS reporting and how the system will be used going forward.

5. WDF to review costs and times for developing monthly reporting in WDF.

6. Review access level permissions and ensure that EA report is available to all LA users when data is at L10.

7. WDF to review feasibility to allow all LAs to view their own LATS report.

8. WDF to include a response to the question of partnerships/sharing vehicles in the FAQ document.

9. WDF to review options to make reporting of back allocated tonnages easier and more reflective of the waste management solution.

10. WDF to review development opportunities to make the selection list update process quicker. This would come from the 30 day development time (budget).

11. WDF to investigate time and cost for developing report to allow LAs to search for recently updated facilities on the selection lists.

12. Defra/WDF to confirm which questions Qu100 is likely to replace for England.

13. Review error codes on XML upload and make these more understandable for LAs.