

GOVERNMENT OFFICE
WasteDataFlow Meetings

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Since the 6th December representatives from Defra, the Environment Agency and EnviroS have been holding meetings on a regional basis to explain key development plans for the WasteDataFlow system and to provide LAs with an opportunity to feedback WasteDataFlow issues directly. All 9 regions in England were visited.

The questions submitted on the question proforma prior to the meetings and corresponding answers have been compiled below. Please note that to avoid repetition similar questions have been merged into a single question and answer, and some authority specific questions have been rephrased so as to apply to all authorities.

All feedback and further questions should be sent to the WasteDataFlow helpdesk at:

WasteDataFlow@enviros.com

0161 874 3602

SECTION 2: DATA ENTRY

2.1 Recording rejects

Question: *The process of recording rejects in Questions 10, 17 and 19 needs to be clarified. Any rejection that takes place at the kerbside (needing to be recorded in Q10) would not be weighed as the material is generally left behind and not collected.*

Answer: A fact sheet on recording rejects is available on the WDF datasets page.

2.2 Accounting for changes in the waste management process (a Local Authority specific example)

Question: *On April 1st, we changed the destination of recyclable waste materials from our Waste Transfer Station in Louth. We always record tonnages both into and out of the site, but (as previously advised) use the tonnages and dates of waste coming in for WasteDataFlow reporting purposes. Given the change of destination, and the WDF requirement to record tonnages and destinations on a quarterly basis, and that there was a pile of waste in the station at the end of the day on 31st March, shall we :*

- *Record that all tonnages received at the site up to 31st March were sent to the old destination in March, and all tonnages received at the site from 1st April were removed to the new destination; or*
- *Use our figures for waste leaving the site to record in our March WDF return that some of the waste which came in during March actually went (albeit in April) to the new destination; or*
- *Do something else as suggested by WDF?*

Answer: The reporting principle for collected and sent material in WasteDataFlow is that you should report the amounts collected in the period in which they are collected in the appropriate collection question (e.g. Qu10 for kerbside recycle). You should also report the amounts being sent for recycling in the period in which they are sent for recycling, in Qu19. This may mean a discrepancy between the amount collected and the amount sent in a given period due to stockpiling, but this is a valid explanation and can be given in the Comments box. Clearly, over time, this stockpiling would be expected to balance out.

2.3 “Double” reporting

Question: *Would it be possible to link recycled weights of materials to a recycling destination to preclude re-entering the weights under the subsequent heading for recycling destinations. Currently we are effectively making double entries.*

Answer: There is a difference between the tonnages entered in Qu10, 11 etc and that entered in Qu19/35. The amounts in Question 19 should be after collection rejects (where applicable) and MRF rejects. Therefore this is not a double entry.

Question: WasteDataFlow asks for information on fly tipping and abandoned vehicles. Both of these have reporting systems/databases outside WasteDataFlow (one is also operated by the Environment Agency) - "Flycapture" for fly tipping and the DVLA for vehicle disposal). This is duplicating the reporting requirements of the Councils which in turn is wasting Council resources. As the Environment Agency operates both WDF and Fly capture can they be merged into the one system?

Answer: Regarding fly-tipping, the overlap between WDF and Flycapture is minimal – one question in WDF asks for the number of flytipping incidents. Defra have investigated the data use between Flycapture and WDF, and the Environment Agency have advised that they do use this information as part of their LATS audits and therefore want the question (Qu24) to remain for now. We will review this next year.

Regarding abandoned the reporting of abandoned vehicles, Defra have spoken at length with DVLA regarding the data Local authorities report to them on abandoned vehicles. The DVLA have a national vehicle enquiry database which local authorities (including the Police) sign up for to receive information. How we understand it works is that each officer that has signed up to the vehicle enquiry database has a unique registration number which is allocated to a specific area (for our purpose an area is district a council). Officers who 'sign-up' could be council officers, traffic wardens or police officers. What basically happens is that when a vehicle is presumed to be abandoned, the officer makes the inquiry on the database regarding that vehicle and in turn is given the information as to the current status of the vehicle, tax position and last registered owner etc. Each vehicle enquiry is registered on this database and with each enquiry subsequently allocated to the district where the vehicle was found. For the benefit of the system, if two different registered officers make an enquiry regarding the same vehicle, only one enquiry record is kept, which avoids double counting. No subsequent record, however, is kept of what happens to the vehicles after the initial enquiry has been made and the system is not indeed intended for this purpose. Some vehicles will be 'abandoned' under our current definition (both removed and destroyed) but others will not and eventually be returned to the owner.

The results, as may be expected, are much higher than the reported numbers on WDF, simply because of the definition - the DVLA definition being an abandoned enquiry and the definition in WDF being those vehicles that are removed and destroyed.

In addition to this the DVLA do keep a separate record from the specific 'wheel clamping section'. This is a record of all 'lifted' vehicles. However, in this instance, not all abandoned vehicles are lifted and indeed not all lifted vehicles end up being destroyed as again a proportion are returned to owner.

The conclusion is that the DVLA information is both interesting and useful, but does not provide us with 'numbers of abandoned vehicles, both removed and destroyed' and therefore cannot be used as a comparable alternative to reporting on WDF.

Question: There are many questions that are asking the same information in slightly different ways. As WDF has been in use for a number of years now, can the database be reassessed on how easy it is to use.

Answer: There is not much on the way of duplication of data. What 'duplication' there is is where a tonnage can be arrived at from two different sources and both are requested. In this instance it is more of a check than a duplication.

2.4 XML system

Question: Are there any planned changes to the WDF styles that will enable electronic input links to allow data to be uploaded to WDF rather than typed in, and if so, what is the timeframe? This would be useful for LAs updating their data recording, data reporting and accounts processes – key factors being direct data transmission of weighbridge data, web based input/output and e-invoicing.

Answer: The facility to upload data in XML format directly into the system has been developed and was launched earlier this year. Initially this is for the fixed format questions, but will shortly be extended to the variable length questions (19, 35, 51-65). This enables you to upload data in accordance with an XML schema, replacing the need to manually type in data. The XML can be generated either directly from your IT systems, or via a spreadsheet available for download on the Data Upload page on WDF.

Question: What are the real benefits of the new XML system – especially to authorities which have commingled recycling collections through to the MRF? Apportionment calculations, usually based on information/data supplied by the MRF operator, have to be done anyway and before they are entered into WDF – as far as can be seen there should be no need to enter them into a further document.

Answer: The Auto Upload system is not a replacement for data entry and nor is it compulsory. In fact LAs can input data into a question either using a mix of auto upload and manual data entry. The function has been added to give LAs who store their data in an electronic format the option to upload the data directly to the specified questions in WasteDataFlow, thus replacing the need to manually type in data. To support the upload of data into WasteDataFlow we have also posted an Excel spreadsheet on the WasteDataFlow website that can be used to generate XML in the correct format. If a LA's internal waste data system is Excel based then this could be incorporated into your internal system. Following the upload of the data each LA will then continue with the WasteDataFlow as normal, completing the comments and question complete box and rolling up the quarter and authorising the return.

In your example, apportionment calculations, these should continue to be done in your systems as usual and if you wished to use the XML-generator spreadsheet then the output of your calculations could be linked through standard Excel formulae to the spreadsheet.

Detailed guidance is available on WDF at:

<http://www.wastedataflow.co.uk/html/datasets.aspx#Guidance%20Manual>

2.5 Selection Lists

Question: Many 'destinations' are either not on the selection lists or are duplicated on the lists several times. Repeated requests for certain locations to be added have not led to any changes – what is the best way to get locations added to the list to minimise the use of 'other / exempt' in WDF entry and large amounts of text in the comments box. Can the addresses in selection lists be updated more frequently?

Answer: The selection lists on WDF are populated by the Environment Agency registers of WMLs (REGIS), PPC (PAS), and accredited re-processors (WEEE and NRPD). Historically, WDF has not updated this list as frequently as intended – updates were done in January and November 2007. From now on, selection lists should be updated on a quarterly basis.

Some sites operate under an exemption. Exempt facilities are, by their nature, exempt from a waste license and therefore full information is not available from the Environment Agency to populate the WDF lists. These will not be present on WDF. In this case the Environment Agency has asked that authorities continue to record the data within the other / exempt category on the selection list and further

information should be provided in the comments box. This information is used by Environment Agency during their LATS audits.

It is feasible that you know the site as a different name to that registered by the Environment Agency – contact the WDF helpdesk to gain guidance with searching selection lists.

WDF are moving towards regular quarterly updates of the lists. The Environment Agency has asked that authorities continue to enter details of exempt sites in the comments box.

Part of the development programme for 2008/9 is to improve the searching of selection lists and the display of information on facilities.

2.6 Waste classifications

Question: Why is reused material classified as municipal waste, when it returns to society in its original state?

Answer: It is collected as waste by the local authority and therefore comes under the authorities possession and control as waste.

Guidance on the definition of reuse for the purposes of the new National Indicators in England is available on the Defra website at

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localgovindicators/ni191-193.htm>

See also the Environment Agency Frequently Asked Questions on Reporting for LAS/LATs. The document is available at

http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondatab/acrobat/lats_las_faq_1963495.pdf

Question: Why isn't Tetra Pak included as a recyclate, I have been told it is because it does not contain a single stream material. However, batteries and tyres do not contain a single stream, but they are included.

Answer: You can report Tetra Paks as recycled materials if they are collected and sent for recycling. These will need to be reported as 'Other' materials in Qu10 (or the appropriate collection question) and Qu19. Tetra Paks are required to be recorded in such a way as they are considered to be 0% biodegradable. The % biodegradability of wastes for the purposes of LATS is laid down in the regulations to the scheme.

Question: With the list of materials that we track constantly growing, are there any plans to update and expand the list of average waste weights in appendix 2 to cover items such as tyres, gas cylinders, fire extinguishers, etc.

Answer: This particular item is currently being reviewed for inclusion within the 2008 development programme. Please note that due to budgetary and timing constraints this particular item may not be included within the finalised 2008 development programme.

Question: How should gully sludge be reported? In some Counties some of the local authorities collect gully sludge on behalf of the Highways Agency, whereas others do not. Emptying gully pots is the responsibility of the Highways Agency, who fulfils this through their arrangement with the local authority. Therefore this material does not come into the possession or under the control of the WCA, and should be excluded from MSW and not reported in WDF?

Answer: In essence waste collected under the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is household and waste collected under the Highways Act is non-household. As a consequence gully sludge should be recorded within WasteDataFlow in Q23 under the relevant household or non household category depending on which Regulations it was collected under.

Guidance on the definition of municipal and household waste for the purposes of the new National Indicators in England is available on the Defra website at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localgovindicators/ni191-193.htm>

In addition to this please note that Questions 1 and 3 on the Environment Agency's recently published FAQs also cover this question. Waste is only MSW and reportable for LATS if it is collected, disposed of or recovered by a local authority in its capacity as WCA or the WDA. If it does not come into the possession or under the control of the WCA or WDA then it is not collected municipal waste. The FAQs can be accessed through:

http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/lats_las_faq_1963495.pdf

Question: How do you define an MRF? Is it a facility where many mixed recycle and non-recyclate materials are separated? We send co-mingled cans and plastic, which has been hand sorted at the kerbside, so there are no contaminants in it, to a facility, which separates it. I do not believe this facility could truly be called an "MRF."

Answer: A Material Recycling Facility (MRF) is a facility designed to sort / separate co-mingled dry recyclables using a combination of mechanical, optical and hand sorting prior to onward transport for reprocessing. If a LA utilises a MRF then they should be completing Q58 within WasteDataFlow. A guidance note is available on the WasteDataFlow website regarding how co-mingled material should be recorded. Please note that a bulking up / transfer station is not considered to be a MRF and LAs utilising such facilities should not complete Q58.

2.7 Household figures

Question: PI guidance states that the latest valuation statement for Council Tax should be used for the total household figure for a local authority area. This audited figure is only confirmed at the end of the financial year using the updated valuation statement for that year. We are now encountering the problem that whilst we are using the most updated audited yearly figure used throughout the Council for the purposes of waste data flow, this is still an 'out of date' figure as it essentially refers to the previous year. We could use different household values for each month based on the last valuation statement for that month as the year progressed but this would not equate to an annual result derived from dividing annual totals by the number obtained from the last valuation statement for the year (which is how the PI is currently defined). It would also make deduction of trends more complex as both the amounts collected/recycled etc and the baseline number of household would be variables - Is there a consensus on how this should be tackled?

Answer: WDF follows the Audit Commission guidance and hence uses the end of year household figures from the valuation office and the mid-year ONS estimates of population. For 2006/7 data these pertained to end March 2007 and mid-2006 respectively. The dwelling stock figures have recently been updated to end March 2008 for use in the 2007/8 BVPIs .

During a reporting year there will be some time when the household and population numbers will be 'out of date', but they will always be the most up to date national datasets available and will be updated when national datasets become available.

Question: Some of the questions have information that is not readily available for accurate completion of the question until a .CSV file is downloaded. Can the data for questions Q4-9 be added to the form so we know what totals we should be using?

Answer: The population/household figures can easily and quickly be viewed by going to the Management, Authorities page and viewing your Authority details. A development suggestion has been logged to add the population or household figure to the screen on the relevant questions.

Question: When downloading reports such as 'Percentage of housing population served by a kerbside collection of recyclables' it is rather dispiriting for an authority still striving to achieve 100% coverage to find that apparently some authorities are reporting to 101%, 103% even as much as 109% receiving a service. Why isn't this picked up? It devalues the use of benchmarking reports from the system.

Answer: The calculation for the % of households is based on Qu7 and the pre-populated household figures in Qu2. The household population is taken from the national figures from the Valuation Office as at the end of the financial year. As there is a lag between these figures becoming available and the data entered by local authorities, there may be some small discrepancies in the basis of the numbers giving rise to a percentage greater than 100. This should be resolved at year end or should be rectified by the local authority concerned when reporting figures in Qu7. The calculation for BVPI 91 is done from Quarter 4 data for Question 7.

Question: Are there any plans to revise the totals for questions 4, 5, & 6? As part of Question 5 (return for a WCA), the user must complete the number of households using a particular receptacle for dry kerbside collection. E.g. South Staffs use a kerbside box (>50 litre) and a reusable sack as part of the service and in Milton Keynes household have BOTH pink sacks and blue boxes for dry recyclables so to total them is meaningless. Is it acceptable to enter the total number of properties receiving each container even though the total figure at the bottom will be greater than the number of properties in the district? Duplication of the number of properties also applies to Question 7 and 10.

Answer: Yes for Questions 5 and 10, but NO for question 7. Within questions 4, 5 and 6 it is acceptable to enter the total number of properties receiving each containment type even though the total figure at the bottom will be greater than the number of properties in the district as long as this is explained in the comments field. Please note however that property duplication cannot be recorded in question 7 as it asks about the number of households by number of materials. This means there should be no 'double counting' of households within that question as a given property can only receive a collection of 1, 2, 3 OR 4 or more materials.

SECTION 3: DISTINGUISHING THE REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES OF WCAS, WDAS AND WCAS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Question: The obligations imposed on the WDA's – timings, fines, etc. – should be equally applicable to the WCA's when they default. At the moment there is no incentive for WDA's to comply knowing that to default will be without penalty. If this is not possible, WDA's should be enabled to pass down any fines imposed, if the WCA fails to use WDF. Are there any measures being considered here to redress this position?

Answer: Under the LATS regulations, the reporting duty lies with the waste disposal authority. When the regulations were going through parliament, it was decided not to place this duty also on WCAs to minimise regulatory burden. However, the LATS Operational Review in 2007 recognises that WCA data is required for the WDA mass balance calculation and is considering options to incentivise reporting by WCAs. The recommendations from this review and the Government's response should be published shortly. In the meantime, authorities in two-tier areas are encouraged to work jointly to ensure all data required for LATS are submitted and validated to required timescales.

Question: Currently WCAs report on third party (community) recycling and reuse. However, in cases where this activity is managed and remunerated by the WDA should there not be a separate question in the WDA list for this activity?

Answer: If a WDA manages collection and disposal (including recycling) of municipal waste itself without involvement of the WCAs then this should be reported by the WDA. If it is only reported by the WCA then it will not be reflected in the WCA recycling rate. Admittedly there is not a question in WDF for WDAs to complete on third party recycling, but in most cases this is reported by the WCAs and there does not seem to be widespread demand for a new question on WDA third party. If there is, then this can be implemented but we do not want to increase reporting burden by introducing questions to suit individual circumstances of a few.

Question: How do Defra/WasteDataFlow deal with queries relating to differences in District/County figures? The current method of data entry to WDF gives potential for duplication and variance. Obvious examples are fly capture, home compost bin sales and the greatest concern due to the LATS implications, tonnages to landfill/compost and alternative final disposal methods. Here the WDA closes the audit loop following validation of weighbridge transaction and invoice payment with the consequence that all tonnages are known to be accurate. In general, the WCA's do not have this requirement and often rely upon 'private' arrangements with disposal points and therefore rely upon data that is unaudited. Is single sourced data input, and the consequential collective reduced workload, a consideration for future WDF submissions?

Answer:

- Authorities in two tier areas are strongly encouraged to work together to agree reporting procedures in their area to minimise risk of duplication etc. There are several good examples of this across the country.
- If by single source data input, you mean the WDA reporting all data then the rationale for the WCA reporting the recycle they collect was that they would be best placed to have this data available to them in a timely and accurate form.

In addition to Defra / WasteDataFlow please note that the Environment Agency also scrutinised residual waste reporting (Qu23) in all two tier authorities prior to the 2006/7 LATS Reconciliations. The outcome of this review was that some authorities' data had to be amended within WasteDataFlow.

Question: Regarding the recording of collection and disposal of fridges in Question 26, what do the WCAs report and what do the WDAs report?

Answer: Most WDAs and their constituent WCAs have come to an agreement concerning how fridges and freezers in WasteDataFlow are recorded and in the majority of cases we are now seeing that the WDA completes Q26 on behalf of its WCAs, to ensure there is no double counting. If no such agreement has been reached between a WDA and its constituent WCAs then the guidance in sub sections 3.9.2 and 3.9.3 of the WasteDataFlow manual on how fridges and freezers should be recorded should be applied.

Question: Are there any plans to change the reporting responsibilities in two tier authorities?

Answer: There are no plans to change the reporting responsibilities. It was considered as part of the LATS Operational Review and decided that a change was not necessary as all local authorities are completing WDF.

Question: Is there consideration being given to the method and style of data entry where there are joint working arrangements between WCA's? For example, can they enter the details as "one district" and both claim the recycling rate etc (which both have agreed to as they are currently similarly performing authorities)?

Answer: On a practical level it is feasible to make a joint return for WCAs. However, agreement to do this needs to be obtained from the Defra waste policy performance team, who will consider the contractual arrangements and implications for national reporting requirements. Contact:

Martin.meadows@defra.gsi.gov.uk

SECTION 4: DEADLINES FOR SUBMITTING RETURNS

Question: Could an option be made available to submit data on a cumulative basis each year? Each quarter requires both quarterly data to be compiled and earlier quarters to be checked for any minor amendments that are required (and almost inevitable). Submission of cumulative data would reduce the significant amount of time required for checking and making minor adjustments and WDF should then be able to calculate discrete quarterly figures if required. As a suggestion, perhaps the number of reporting periods be reduced, even to just a single annual report? Local authorities would then decide their own way of monitoring / prediction through the year, for LATS purposes all that is needed is an annual return.

Answer: The requirement for quarterly reporting is set out in the LATS Regulations and therefore a legislative change would be required to move to annual reporting. Discussion amongst the group present suggested there was not a general appetite to move to cumulative reporting.

In addition annual reporting would not allow errors to be identified and corrected early on and would not permit the production of quarterly management information for WDAs/UAs e.g. mass balances or the calculation of the Environment Agency's quarterly predictions of the quantity of biodegradable waste likely to be landfilled by WDA/UA in the LATS year.

Question: For Yearly questions the deadline is July of the following financial year- but this is just before the audit of Local Authorities final accounts. Is there any chance that the annual questions 31 and 32 on costs could be moved so that they fit the same timescales as CIPFA, as the WDF questions are due several weeks earlier and the figures aren't always ready. Figures may therefore not be completely accurate when they are submitted via waste data flow. How can this be overcome so that there are no discrepancies between the PI's produced by the Waste Data Flow system and the calculations we make internally?

Answer:

- The reporting deadline for annual questions is actually the end of June with validation to level 35 being required by end July. However, this is no different to the situation when the BVPIs were reported directly to the Audit Commission as these were due at the end of June. There are currently no plans to amend the reporting deadlines.
- Defra has investigated using the "RO5: Cultural, Environmental and Planning Services" data directly but this cannot be provided by CLG in time for the Audit Commission deadlines for BVPIs. This is because the RO data for all local authorities is a National Statistic and is therefore subject to pre-release restrictions in accordance with the Statistics Act. We therefore require authorities to complete Questions 31 and 32 in accordance with WDF/AC deadlines.

SECTION 5: VALIDATION PROCEDURE AND THE DATA RETURN PROCESS

Question: The issue of attempting to coordinate the input and output tonnages for accounting periods is difficult due to residual storage capacity and moisture loss etc. Are there any plans to address this in future releases?

Answer: The validation process undertaken by Enviro on behalf of Defra incorporates a number of cross checks within each return. Some of these compare 'collected' tonnages (input) with 'sent for' tonnages, for recycling and residual waste. Where there is a discrepancy, the validators query this with the local authority. Often this helps to identify errors within the return. In some cases it will be a valid discrepancy due to the practical nature of waste management over time (e.g. stockpiling). If the authority can provide this as a valid reason for the difference and enter a comment to this effect within the return then a comment will be entered on the validator's validation form and the return authorised.

Question: Are there any plans to make the data return processes quicker? There are sometimes problems with the system crashing and not saving changes to data, and sometimes validators can take over 10 days to respond to an authority's data set.

Answer:

- We have instigated queued processing of data roll-ups which should minimise the risk of overburden & system problems at key periods.
- The facility to upload data in XML format directly into the system has been developed (see 1.4 above).
- The validation team have targets of responding to all submitted data within 5 days of the return being submitted. For Quarter 1 2007/8 the average time between data submission and first validation response was 4.6 days.
- The validation spreadsheet is being reviewed and improved to facilitate the validation process and communication with LAs on their return.

Question: Notification is given automatically for data roll-up and authorisation. Can the same be done for the roll down of submission from level 30? At present there are times when the data is rolled down to level 0 with no notification.

Answer: When we launched automatic email notification we were wary of overburdening LAs with more email. However, the functionality exists in the system to provide notification of all steps in the data process. To 'switch-on' notifications of data roll-downs please contact the WDF Helpdesk.

Question: WasteDataFlow validators often contacts Local Authorities to ensure the accuracy of certain data when their trend systems show a variation of 10% on the previous quarter. What are the parameters for the assessment of the quarters as the existing parameters are too stringent and need to be expanded to take account of seasonal variances etc. Is there any intention to introduce profiling to relevant questions to avoid being contacted by the helpdesk in such instances?

Answer: The triggers used for checks vary according to the type of question and data. They have been set up to help identify errors. The validation team cannot assume that variation in your data is due to seasonal fluctuation – in many cases these checks do identify errors. However, we recognise that some questions, particularly around green waste, can be frustrating, and we have now modified the validation spreadsheet in an attempt to reduce the number of queries, which include:

- The validation spreadsheet now separately identifies how much of the variation in a return is attributable to green waste and we are advising validators to query data prior to rolling it back; and
- As there has been a problem on occasion with the reading of the comments associated with the data we have introduced a new validation spreadsheet that does bring the data and comments together.

In addition to the amendments to the validation spreadsheets we have also produced a guidance sheet covering how and why we conduct certain validation checks. This guidance note can be found in the following location on the WDF website:

<http://www.wastedataflow.org/documents/Guidance%20on%20the%20validation%20process.pdf>

Question: WasteDataFlow validators sometimes do not read the comments section of the questions as some questions that are asked are answered in this area. Could the database be amended so that comments can be identified to specific lines/material on the question page?

Answer:

- There has been a problem on occasion with the reading of the comments field and we have introduced a new validation spreadsheet that does bring the data and comments together.
- We will produce a guidance sheet covering how and why we conduct certain validation checks
- Adding comments to each line or material etc would be a large job and is unlikely to be progressed, but has been added to the suggestion log.

SECTION 6: ADJUSTING RETURNS AFTER SUBMISSION

Question: Sometimes mistakes are recognised or new data emerges after the deadline. If this happens, how would you like us to correct/balance this data?

Answer: Adjustments can be made in subsequent quarters where the adjustment required is not large and if it can be made without entering a negative value. Alternatively a level 35 roll down request can be made and, if approved by the Environment Agency and Defra, the change will be made by Enviros on behalf of the local authority. For 2007/8 data, only one roll down request is allowed. There are specific time frames and a protocol to follow for Level 35 roll backs which must be used. For further information please refer to the LATS Guidance on reporting, notices and penalties. This can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.wastedataflow.org/documents/LATS/LATS_PenaltyGuidance_final_011007.pdf

There are 3 main reasons for data changes to be required:

- Incorrect understanding/use of the WDF questions leading to large errors in data entered into multiple quarters
- Errors in monthly/quarterly entered data
 - Caused by typing error not trapped by validation
 - Caused by late arrival of contractor data
- Errors in data identified at the end of year
 - Caused by Contractor annual invoice/reconciliation
 - Caused by Audit Commission review process

It is hoped that instances of first type of error are now very unlikely. But when they do happen they would be assessed on a case by case basis. It is important to understand why the error occurred and instigate procedures to minimise risk in future. E.g. Separate individuals for data entry and authorisation, change checking systems in-house.

Errors of the second type are most likely to be smaller tonnages and corrected in the subsequent quarter or with a Q4 L35 roll-down. Also suggest to continue to push contractors/change contracts to ensure timely and accurate data returns from them. It is important to understand why the error occurred and instigate procedures to minimise risk in future. E.g. Separate individuals for data entry and authorisation, change checking systems in-house.

The final type of error may be after the LATS deadline, this would then need to be discussed with the Environment Agency. If before the LATS deadline then could be corrected with L35 roll down.

Question: *Can the correction of data input errors be made easier? Error corrections should be a simple matter of journal entry, so that accuracy is encouraged.*

Answer: This point needs further investigation and discussion. It isn't so much a technical problem as a procedural and timescale problem. There is always a balance to be struck between revising data and everyone meeting their respective deadlines. Defra, EA and Enviro are continuously considering options and procedures to make this process as smooth as possible for all and would appreciate any practical suggestions for improving this.

SECTION 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE

Question: What steps are being taken with regards to quality assurance as WDF is developed? When changes have been made in the past errors in WDF are often found only when data is submitted / validated. This can result in local authority officers spending much wasted time seeking to trace apparent errors in their data submission when in fact it is WDF at fault. For example, when the facility was introduced to increase the number of transfer stations used for any disposal facility the validation report did not pick up waste reported against the extra ones; the fault once corrected for one question continued to remain in others.

Answer: All developments to WDF are tested on a separate development site and subject to testing by the IT developer, Enviro and National Authorities. This procedure unfortunately did not identify the impact of the extension of the number of transfer stations in Qu51-65 on the validation summary sheet. Enviro have improved procedures in response to this.

SECTION 8: HELPDESK

Question: Can the number of available staff be increased from the one person manning the help desk number, especially during peak times? Enviro staff could be “assigned” a region or number of districts to avoid conflicting advice, improve efficiency and response times to a query? Another suggestion would be to have only one member of the Help Desk to deal with a district during validation periods.

Answer:

- The current budget in the contract with Enviro would not support more than one person at a time on the helpdesk and this seems to be sufficient to meet the level of demand. On average around 142.25 hours per month are spent on Helpline calls. It is unlikely that the possible improvement to the service would be cost effective.
- Enviro staff man the helpline in shifts. The helpline team are also involved in other Waste related projects when not on the helpdesk. If staff were allocated a region or authorities to cover then an authority handled by them would only be able to call when they were on shift. We don't think this would be acceptable to most authorities. It would certainly not improve efficiency or response times.
- We do not believe that there is a significant amount of conflicting advice given by the help desk now. For example we have standard answers to most questions.
- There has been no evidence of poor response rates.
- The validation team is different to the helpdesk team, although one or two are on both teams. One member of the validation team sees the LA through the full quarter. In many cases the same validator will do all the quarters for an LA.

SECTION 9: COMMUNICATIONS AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

9.1 User group / GO meetings

Question: The user group could become more effective by dissolving the group and reforming it with clear aims, targets, improved two way flow of information and a more fair method of obtaining a position on the Group. Non-group members should also be allowed to attend with a “question session” available for those who do attend.

Answer: The user group has a Terms of Reference (available on the WDF website along with members' details and all meeting papers). The user group process has been revamped to try and ensure the two way communication works. Each member of the group is assigned specific LAs to represent and all are emailed around 3-4 weeks before each meeting. The next UG meeting is early September, with meetings normally held in May and September each year.

It is hoped that regional local user groups can start, kick-started by the Regional GO hosted meetings.

Question: Can user feedback include; minutes, presentations, speaker notes and any other information, and can this also all be published in one go?

Answer: All presentations and reports on the meetings are released to the web-site and can be downloaded from:

<http://www.wastedataflow.co.uk/htm/partners.aspx>

Question: Can all and any information relating to meetings with WDF be disseminated very quickly as we will soon get into the process of compiling the data for the final quarter and, indeed, the full year and don't need to get into an avoidable situation of having to amend information?

Answer: A commitment has been made by Enviro and Defra to disseminate information from the Government Office (GO) meetings to attendees as soon as possible. A further commitment has also been made to publish the responses to all questions raised at the GO meetings on the WasteDataFlow website following the completion of all the GO meetings. However if any queries arise whilst you are inputting data into WasteDataFlow please do not hesitate to contact the WasteDataFlow helpline for guidance.

The presentations and reports of the WDF User Group for England are also published on the WDF website (under Who's Who, Project Management). There is also a quarterly newsletter that is published on the WDF website (see the News section).

Question: Regarding face to face meetings there are several trade events each year that Government Officers attend (even one directed only to Government Officers). WDF lack of appearance at these events is noticeable.

Answer: Thank you. Clearly there is a limit on the Defra/Enviro staff resource available to attend the large number of waste events, but we will give greater consideration to opportunities to communicate about WDF.

9.2 Guidance notes

Question: To ensure consistency, are there steps to be taken whereby any guidance issued by WDF on an individual basis will be included in the WDF guidance web page? To ensure national consistency guidance supplied to one WCA/WDA should be included in the newsletter and immediately incorporated into the WDF Guidance on the web. Additionally any notifications of additions / amendments to waste data guidelines should be published on the WasteDataFlow help page to ensure everyone is kept up to date.

Answer: Most major guidance is handled in this way. We produce fact sheets on key topics as guidance on the WDF website. These cover areas that are repeatedly raised to the helpdesk/validation. These fact sheets are kept under review. Please ensure you are always using the latest version by checking the website.

However, we do not intend to make individual guidance available on the website as a small change in individual circumstances can affect the guidance that should be given. There is a large variation in LAs particular contracts and operational circumstances and the one answer fits all approach can be misleading.

9.3 WDF Online

Question: A post it online function would be useful to allow other users to be able to amend/edit the list. It will enable us to know what has already been suggested and enable us to follow the progress of a suggestion. This can then be expanded to include an on-line forum where other authorities can discuss troubleshooting problems, share experiences and notify others of any changes guidelines notifications.

Answer: We trialled an online forum with the London LAs last year, hosted by the team at CapitalWasteFacts. Not one single user ever used it. We can put the suggestions list on the web site as a spreadsheet, but adding functionality to allow it to be updated by users is unlikely (but added to the suggestions list).

9.4 Emails

Question: Emails Containing Broken Links: Too many times emails sent out have links that go nowhere.

Answer: Thank you for this feedback, however when broken links are identified, it would be greatly appreciated if you could inform the WDF helpdesk of this error.

Question: Data Return Emails to WDF: Emails containing information regarding data returns not received by WDF.

Answer: Please give actual instances and we will investigate from our end. However email failure can have many causes.

9.5 Correspondence with the Environment Agency

Question: There have been several times when contact has been made to WDF only to find that we should be talking to the Environment Agency. The team at WDF do their best to link the WDA/WCA with the Environment Agency but this can take days to establish. At the end of a Quarter when this is requirement is more prevalent it would be nice to have a direct contact with the Environment Agency to discuss the issues that WDF do not handle.

Answer: There are technical advisors in the Environment Agency LATS team who take responsibility for different government office regions. Each LA now has a named technical advisor as a direct point of contact with whom they can raise technical queries about the LATS scheme. In the first instance general queries relating to LATS should be directed to the Environment Agency National Customer Contact Centre on 08708 506 506. Further details regarding this team are provided in the Spring 2008 Newsletter.

SECTION 10: DEVELOPMENTS TO THE WASTEDATAFLOW REPORTING SYSTEM AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Question: Regarding Q.17. can the previous information relating to numbers of bring sites/container types for the different materials be pre-filled?

Answer: At the moment, you have the option to carry forward data from previous quarters for the questions for which the data are unlikely to change from quarter to quarter. For the questions on tonnages only the comments can be brought forward. Question 17 asks for the tonnage of material collected through bring sites as well as the numbers of bring sites which is why the option to carry forward (or pre-fill) the data is not available. To enable data to be selectively carried forward for a single column (number of sites) only would require technical change to the system and therefore we don't propose to do this at the moment. However, this will be noted on the list of suggestions for development.

Question: The Council is awarding a contract for autoclaving waste and whilst it is intended that fibre will be recycled, the current uncertainty around biodegradability testing is making the development of a performance system and payment mechanism very difficult. Recent publications regarding issues around biodegradability testing for MBT processes indicates that this issue has not been developed within the agency.

What action is the agency/Environment Agency taking to advise authorities on testing of post treatment homogenised waste rejects destined for landfill and how these will fit into the WDF and MBEAM models?

Answer: Environment Agency guidance on the testing regime for assessing biodegradability % of MBT outputs to landfill is available on the Environment Agency website:

http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/1745440/444663/landfill/1764524/1693182/986852/987368/?lang=_e

Please note that there is no separate guidance for assessing biodegradability after autoclaving.

Authorities need only do testing if they want to claim an MBT reduction factor in the Mass Balance. The default MBT factor is 1.

An MBT workshop was held in November following which the Environment Agency has issued a consultation. Information on this consultation can also be found by following the above hyperlink. The Environment Agency is reviewing the results of this consultation, and will then prepare revised MBT monitoring guidance.

Question: Several authorities are considering or currently going through the process of changing their data recording, data reporting and accounts processes – key factors being direct data transmission of weighbridge data, web based input/output and e-invoicing. Are there any planned changes to the WDF styles that will enable electronic input links? Is there a plan to allow data to be uploaded to WDF rather than typed in, and if so, what is the timeframe?

Answer: The facility to upload data in XML format directly into the system has been developed (see 1.4 above).

Question: Prior to data roll up can the PI 82 a+b and BMW to landfill be produced by the system to enable the data input to be checked?

Answer: Yes, we are introducing a new 'pre-authorisation' validation page which will display key summary numbers such as the BVPIs to facilitate checking of the return prior to authorisation. You can also run the BVPI, MBC and Summary reports from the Data Authorisation screen when data are at level 10.

Question: Are there any plans to provide the opportunity to complete the return offline and then upload to the website to avoid problems of data entry during peak times?

Answer: We have not seen problems with people using the data-entry screens at peak times. Historically there were roll-up clashes, but the roll-up queue has eliminated this. The XML upload function can be used in this way.

Question: Many authorities enter figures for each calendar month (but on a quarterly basis). The PI report shows quarterly figures. Are there any plans to have a report showing monthly PI figures for people who collect and enter the data monthly?

Answer: This particular item is currently being reviewed for inclusion within the 2008 development programme. Please note that due to budgetary and timing constraints this particular item may not be included within the finalised 2008 development programme.

Question: Why does it taking so long to remove historic dates from the Data Entry field, as most of the dates still showing are not relevant? Could old historic data also be removed from roll up menu?

Answer: We agree that this needs to be done to tidy up the system. Historical data is scheduled to be removed from the WasteDataFlow website as part of this years development programme.

Question: Could WDF questions be set into a more realistic order so that compilation questions such as Q19 follow those questions containing items which have to be entered onto them? At present confusion can and does occur between compiler and evaluator. This can be exemplified with the latter complaining that the former is at fault with submissions when it is often the case that the evaluator has 'forgotten' about entries elsewhere which have been explained in notes.

Answer: This particular item could be reviewed for inclusion within the next round of development, however although it is believed that the question numbering realignment could be conducted relatively quickly within the system we would have some concerns regarding what impact such a change would have for data imputers as the majority of users are now fully conversant with the layout of the WasteDataFlow system and consequently we would have to consider this particular item in more detail prior to adding it to the development programme.

In addition to the above explanation Enviro recognise that some validation questions can be frustrating, and we have now modified the validation spreadsheet in an attempt to reduce the number of queries, which include:

- The validation spreadsheet now separately identifies how much of the variation in a return is attributable to green waste and we are advising validators to query data prior to rolling it back; and

- As there has been a problem on occasion with the reading of the comments associated with the data we have introduced a new validation spreadsheet that does bring the data and comments together.

In addition to the amendments to the validation spreadsheets we are also in the process of producing a guidance sheet covering how and why we conduct certain validation checks.

Question: Recording the final destination of materials in Question 19 can be very onerous. Tonnages need to exactly match those completed in questions 10, 11, 12 and 15a. If they don't, it can take a long time to find the error. To improve the data entry process could an extra column be inserted on questions 10, 11, 12 and 15a for the destination to be recorded instead of having a completely separate question? If more than one destination applies, then the "other" option could be used with comments as to which destination and tonnages are sent. This could also be applied to Question 35, whereby Question 35 could be removed if the tonnage destination for reused materials was put in the relevant question (10 or 12).

Answer: We have received feedback via these meetings and through the WasteDataFlow helpline regarding Q19 and the issues LAs are experiencing when completing this question. As a consequence of this feedback we are planning to undertake a review of Q19 as part of this year's development programme. We have already formulated a number of ideas internally regarding how we believe Q19 could be amended / developed over the next scheme year e.g. to change data entry in Q19 to be by material type as opposed to destination. We would however, appreciate it if LAs could send in their ideas either via their UG representative or via the WasteDataFlow helpline on how they would like to see Q19 developed to aid data entry as this will ensure that we develop the system to meet your requirements and needs.

SECTION 11: PRODUCING REPORTS

Question: Is it possible that after entering data you can check the accuracy of all the figures prior to submission? I.e. currently I have to authorise to Level 10 to then get my validation reports to check the accuracy and that data matches and then undo the authorisation to make amendments.

Answer: Yes. The accuracy of your data can be checked at level 10 by accessing the quarterly summary report ("Summ" button) on the authorisation screen. It is strongly advised that you review the summary report prior to data roll up as this spreadsheet allows you to view your quarterly data as the validation team view your data and it therefore may enable you to identify any data anomalies prior to roll up.

Question: In 'Reports', can it be made possible to run separate reports for (1) recycling and (2) composting?

Answer: You can. See the BVPI reports available under 'Summary Reports' or from the Data Authorisation screen for your authority.

Question: Will the benchmarking list be expanded so that you can choose more than 4 authorities, and the authorities won't have to be adjacent?

Answer: The new reporting functionality recently launched places data into Excel and enables you to report against any number of local authorities. You can also set up and save your own groups to report against. In WDF go to Reports > Summary Reports. New reports can be developed relatively easily now and suggestions for specific report ideas should be sent to the WDF Helpdesk.

Question: Will there be an option of benchmarking over 1 year?

Answer: In the WasteDataFlow reporting system reports can be run for any number of quarterly periods. Please note that we are currently reviewing whether or not to include the functionality to allow each Local Authority to benchmark 1 year's full data against the previous year e.g. 2005 / 2006 against 2006/ 2007 within the 2008 development programme. Please note that due to budgetary and timing constraints this particular item may not be included within the finalised 2008 development programme.

Question: Will there be an option for level 0 users to request a variance report, so there isn't the constant need to roll up from level 0 to level 10 and back down again.

Answer: The process of data roll up between level 0 and level 10 allows WasteDataFlow to aggregate all data entered especially that data entered on a monthly basis and as a consequence there are no current plans to allow users to view the summary report at level 0.

Please note that we are currently reviewing whether or not to include the functionality to allow each Local Authority to roll up data on a monthly basis to the 2008 development programme. Please note that due to budgetary and timing constraints this particular item may not be included within the finalised 2008 development programme.

Question: I want to run a report each quarter indicating performance against LATS targets for our authority and two partner authorities. In terms of the tonnages held in dataflow, which of the elements in a report provide the LATS usage?

Answer: Unfortunately this report is not currently available within the Summary Reports section of the WasteDataFlow website as Enviros do not hold details of each Local Authorities individual LATS targets. However each local authority can access their mass balance information on a quarterly basis from the authorisation page of the WasteDataFlow website and can use this information to track their progress against their LATS targets.

Please note that Environment Agency publishes predictions quarterly of the LATS allowances that all WDAs/UAs are likely to use in the current LATS year, based on validated data from WDF. All WDAs/UAs are notified by the Environment Agency of these predictions, but this information is available on the Environment Agency website.

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/1745440/444663/landfill/1764524/1693182/986852/1102546/1847932/?lang=en>

SECTION 12: MASS BALANCE CALCULATIONS

Question: Why is the tonnage direct to landfill in the BMW calculator not automatically picking up all of the tonnage? The Shropshire October to December 2007 figures are approx. 9,000 tonnes short. This has been reported to WDF but not yet resolved.

Answer: This issue was limited to an isolated problem in the system associated with Shropshire and has now been resolved. The calculation for the mass balance does include all tonnages to landfill.

Question: Are there plans to be able to use the mass balance accumulatively throughout the year, in a similar way to the BVPI reports? This will help in the monitoring of LATS compliance throughout the year.

Answer: We are planning to introduce the BMW to landfill as a report in the new excel reporting screen. This will give cumulative totals. Note that it is important to calculate the BMW to landfill figure as the sum of quarters, not to perform the mass balance on cumulative totals as this will give different results to the Environment Agency.

Question: We have encountered various discrepancies between our own recording system and WDF BVPI & LATS calculations. This was due to '3rd Party Recycling' being included for the purpose of BVPIs but excluded from LATS calculations. Why is this, and is there a way to recognise this in WDF from the available reports?

Answer: Both the BVPI and LATS calculations within WasteDataFlow include third party recycling. For further information on these calculations please refer to the individual BVPI fact sheets and the Mass Balance spreadsheets for your Authority on WasteDataFlow.

SECTION 13: BVPIS

Question: The calculation of BV82a and 82b using input and output data causes validation problems as output waste may move between the two indicators, an example of this is wood waste. WDF assumes this is to be BV82a on input. Composting outlets will now accept wood waste which requires it to be in BV82b for output. Furthermore the indicator should be based on “waste sent for recycling” and “waste sent to landfill” which generally has far fewer data points than waste received and therefore makes validation easier.

Answer: The BVPI calculations within WDF do take the tonnages recorded under wood waste as being dry recycling (82a). If, however, the authority knows that this material is being composted then the tonnages can be recorded under ‘other compostables’ which are counted in 82b.

Within WDF it is logically feasible to calculate the BVPIs either from the collected-rejected questions or from the ‘sent for’ questions. Both methodologies have advantages and disadvantages. The User Group was consulted on the methodology and based on their feedback we modified this to use a collection based method rather than sent for. This approach can be reconsidered for the new national performance indicators.

Question: Why is such a complicated calculation method used?

Answer: The BVPI calculation method appears complex as it has been designed to be robust to every possible form of data entry by all LAs. In most cases, it will simplify down to a few C-variables.

Question: Why calculations are apparently only performed to two decimal places? – This may lead to rounding errors and discrepancies.

Answer: WDF only rounds to 3 dps when calculating a C-variable and this should be sufficient to minimise rounding errors. Data entered into questions is not rounded.

Question: Why does the WDF system not record WCA rejects to landfill in the WDA landfill total in BVPI 82d, whilst it is included in the household waste arisings? This has the effect of giving BVPI percentages in 82a, b, c and d combined for the WDA that do not add up to 100%. This has been reported previously and acknowledged as a problem.

Answer: This issue was limited to an isolated problem in the system associated with Shropshire and has now been resolved. The calculation for 82d does include all tonnages to landfill.

Note that if the destination of rejects field in Qu19/35 is not completed, then it is assumed that these amounts are landfilled.

Question: One of the main issues with WDF at present are the discrepancy in BVPI generated information. For all quarters submitted so far using WDF since it has been in operation we have never managed to have our BVPI 82 add up to 100% despite using question 69 to help with the results. What are WDF, Enviros, and DEFRA doing about this? The knock on effect of this is the figures generated by WDF do not match internal figures generated causing auditing issues.

Answer: There may be valid reasons for the rates not summing to 100% in a given period (timings, stockpiling, other disposal routes being used). In calculating BVPI82 it is necessary to estimate the amount of household waste going to landfill/energy recovery from the reported amounts of municipal waste. This can be derived from the ratio of household residual waste in Question 23. Where this does not reflect an authorities' waste management routes (e.g. a disproportionately higher ratio of household waste goes to landfill than is collected) then Qu69 can be completed to adjust this. In practise some authorities have found the application of Question 69 data to be confusing. Defra acknowledge this and are considering options to rectify this. There is no easy answer and authorities are asked to consider their 82a-d figures prior to data submission.

SECTION 14: NATIONAL PIS

Question: What steps are being taken to ensure that Best Value Performance Indicators and the new National Indicators are being / will be calculated by WasteDataFlow (WDF) in full accordance with the relevant guidance? For example, population figures used by WDF in calculating BVPI84a in 2006/7 used ONS mid-year estimates for 2005, not the ONS mid-year projections (for 2006) as laid down in the guidance. 2007/8 BVPI guidance again states that mid-year projections should be used; WDF continues to use 2005 estimates. The new National Indicator guidance currently out to consultation again specifically refers to the use of ONS mid-year projections in NI191.

Answer: Defra Waste Stats, Defra LA waste performance policy and CLG worked closely on development of the new indicators. The new NI reports are available on the WDF website and guidance on the calculation methodology in WDF has also been provided.

The population figures used by WDF for the 2006/7 BVPIs are in accordance with the Audit Commission advice on their website:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/news-archivenews.asp>

The guidance for the new indicators will be revised to refer to estimates, not projections. In general, an estimate will always be more up to date than a projection and it is standard practice to use an estimate in preference to a projection when available

Question: What will be the effects on WDF of the new National Indicators 191 – 193 that will replace BVPIs from April 2008. Are preparations being made for implementing the new calculations that will be necessary? Can we make sure the calculations for the new PIs are more logical and easier for LAs to replicate please?

Answer: The calculation methodology for the new NIs in WDF was discussed with the User Group in March and this has been posted on the WDF website. A new set of reports has also been launched in WDF (under Summary Reports) for the new NIs.

The new PIs still require some complexity of calculation due to their definitions (e.g. household rather than municipal) but we have tried to make this as clear and transparent as possible.

Question: Can you please provide clarification regarding NI 193: Percentage of Municipal Waste Landfilled. In Merseyside, the WDA is responsible for the provision of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's) which previously the Merseyside WCA's have not been obliged to include in their performance reporting. NI 193 includes this waste and is to be reported by both WDA and WCA. Could DEFRA clarify whether WCA's will be expected to report on a District or County level? Assuming they are required to report on a district level, does DEFRA have a view on how the HWRC waste arisings should be apportioned?

Answer: WCAs are not required to report data for NI193 as it is not the duty of a waste collection authority to dispose of waste. We understand some WCAs in Merseyside are considering including NI193 in their LAA – if this is agreed then further discussions would be required on how the data to measure performance would be best captured.

Question: Given the new LA performance framework, will WDF retain the ability to calculate to old BVPI82a-d and 84 for reference so that we have continuity for comparison?

Answer: Yes, it is intended that we will keep the old BVPI reports in the system.

Question: Are there plans to amalgamate material sent for reuse and recycling, as at present the contents of textile banks must be entered in Q35 whilst contents of other dry recyclable banks (glass, cans and paper) are entered in Q19? At present, data entered as re-use has no bearing on any statistics within WDF, as it is not included as part of the denominator for total household waste and does not appear as part of material recycled or composted. Will this be changed in line with the new performance indicator?

Answer: The reuse figures are not used in the current BVPIs as reuse is explicitly excluded in the definitions. The reuse figures are used in Defra's national statistics (included in household waste and the national recycling rate) and queries are sometimes answered on reuse figures specifically. The new PIs include reuse and these tonnages are included in the calculation of NI192.

Reuse figures are used for LATS and contribute to the mass balance calculation.

SECTION 15: TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Question: The WDF training appears to have worked well. Bespoke training for WDAs and associated WCAs would be useful to ensure that WCAs and WCAs understand their responsibilities and ensure consistency of data. There would be a charge for bespoke training, however it would be a logical step in the training process and therefore should DEFRA pay for it?

Answer: There is a fixed budget allocated to training within the WDF management contract between Defra and Enviro. In developing the training programme we try to find efficient and effective ways to train the 394 local authorities in England. There isn't sufficient resource to produce bespoke training for all authorities. Some two tier areas have set up working groups that meet to agree internal consistency in reporting in their area. This seems to have been very successful. If there is a general demand for training on the principles of data reporting in two tier areas this could be the subject of a web session. Authorities are asked to provide the WDF helpdesk with feedback on their training needs which will then be taken into account when designing the content of the web-based training sessions.

Question: Will there be any training on using the reports, and more advanced functions on WDF, as all the training seems to concentrate on basic users at the moment.

Answer: Yes. The WasteDataFlow training for local authorities in England in 2008 has now commenced. We have only scheduled sessions up to the end of June, on the assumption that you are then likely to be on holiday. We will start training again in September. Training sessions, aside from the general user training, are available covering the following topics:

- BVPIs in WDF;
- LATS in WDF; and
- Reports in WDF.

We would welcome any further feedback on sessions to run. If you think other topics would be useful please let us know.

Please refer to the winter edition of the WasteDataFlow newsletter for further information and for further details concerning when these courses are being held:

http://www.wastedataflow.org/documents/newsletters/wdf_Issue_5.pdf