WasteDataFlow

REPORT OF THE SEVENTH WASTEDATAFLOW USER GROUP WORKSHOP
10th SEPTEMBER 2008

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Purpose & Structure of the User Group meeting

This was the seventh meeting of the WasteDataFlow (WDF) User Group (UG). Waste managers from local authorities and representatives of local authority groups discussed the issues of the WDF municipal waste management tool. Defra was represented at the meeting as were the Environment Agency and the contractors managing the delivery of the WDF system (Enviros). A full list of attendees can be found in appendix A.

This meeting covered the 2007/8 LATS scheme year, feedback on validation for 2007/8, and the development programme for 2008/9.

LATS 20078

(Peter Marris, EA)

Peter presented an overview of the LATs 2007/8 scheme year and the main areas of work that the LATS team had been involved with.

MRFs

The MRF project by the EA had collected information about reject rates from all local authorities that use a MRF for sorting of their collected waste. This had identified a range of rejects rates, from 0 to over 25%. A reject rate of zero is highly unlikely and therefore the EA will be questioning any return with a zero rate for 2008/9. The EA wrote to all WDAs regarding this. The extent to which this has promulgated to WCAs is variable.

Action: Peter to put the letter on EA website so that all authorities can see it. Peter to send PDF/Word format of letter to WDF helpdesk and it can also then go on the WDF website.

Action: WDAs in two-tier areas to direct their WCAs as appropriate.

There was some discussion over reporting of final destinations, as required in Questions 19 and 35. Some waste contractors are claiming commercial confidentiality about final destination and refuse to release this information to LAs. The EA and Defra had met with representatives of the waste industry regarding this around 1-2 years previously and had established that where the destination is intra-UK, commercial in confidence does not apply and final destinations should be released to LAs.

There can be some practical difficulties in obtaining information where several authorities use the same MRF and several (often changing) reprocessors are being used. Some authorities are managing to get this information, whilst others felt that the final destination could be reported as the MRF - and so practice is variable across the country. It was noted that political and press

pressures are more likely to go in the direction of requiring more/better information on the final destinations of recyclate.
Better guidance could be provided by EA/Defra on this area and Jane agreed this should be pursued.

Action: EA/Defra to consider issues of final destination reporting and develop guidance.

Definition of municipal waste
(Michael Sigsworth)

Following consultation it is proposed to change the definition of municipal waste in the WET Act 2003 to reflect existing guidance. The current proposal is to change the definition to reflect 'waste collected by and on behalf of authorities', as well as addressing an exclusion for separately collected construction and demolition wastes.
There was a discussion about the practical impacts of excluding (some) C&D waste from MSW. The aspiration is to make the legislative change by the end of the year, although it was noted that co-ordinating the practical change with the start of the next scheme year may be most appropriate

Validation
(Victoria Hook)

Vicki provided an overview of the reporting and validation of returns for 2007/8. She requested feedback on the helpline, validation process, level 35 roll backs and areas for improvements.

Authorities felt that when Enviros query the data with authorities their questions are clear and concise. This is an improvement on previous periods. There was discussion on Level 35 roll-backs as not all requests are authorised. There will be a range of considerations made around a L35 roll-down request, including the deadlines for requests, the level of the error and whether it can be adjusted for in subsequent returns and the overall impact this has on key performance indicators (e.g. BVPI/NIs and LATS). Ultimately, a line has to be drawn somewhere after which authorities cannot change data.

When validating the data, Enviros were previously comparing each quarter with the last quarter. This has now changed so that data is compared to the corresponding quarter from the last year. This has the advantage of reflecting seasonal variation but will not capture where changes have been made to collection systems.

Development

(Gary Armstrong)

Gary presented an overview of the development programme which is taking place now and will deliver significant items this financial year, particularly up to Christmas.
The following discussion points were noted:

XML upload

Users with Office 2000 (or earlier) cannot use the XML upload system. The group was unsure as to how widespread this problem was.

Action: Enviros to canvass users to see how many users have been prevented from using the upload system due to having Office 2000.

Action: Enviros to check through the upload guidance as the terminology is slightly different to that used on the spreadsheet**. This has been done.**

Question 19/35

The current layout of the question 19 and 35 data entry pages ask the user to pick a facility and then enter data for that facility. The new layout will give the user a choice of whether they enter data by facility or material with a summary table at the bottom of the page so that the user can check the data. This change was welcomed by authorities.

Materials List

The list of recycling materials is also to be refreshed from its current 31 materials.

Suggestions from the group for new materials to add to the list are:

Fire extinguishers
Bikes
Tetrapaks
Tyres
Yellow pages
Plastic bags
Plastic bottles
Soil
Compost like output
Vegetable oil
Gas bottles
Videos and CDs
Bric-a-brac
Composite wood
WEEE – by 5 categories (+ removal of duplication with existing categories)

It was commented that if a more detailed list is provided (e.g. by identifying sub categories of plastic such as plastic bottles or bags), then guidance would need to make clear that it is not compulsory for users to use all of these groups (e.g. all the plastic data can go into 'plastic' and doesn't have to be split into plastic bags, plastic bottles and so on).

This list would be added to the ideas being generated by other User Groups in the UK and would go to the UK Operational Group for further consideration and decision on the final revised list.

Action: UK Operational Group to review suggestions

The revised list will be longer than the existing list. The group agreed that each authority being able to define their own list of recycling materials would be useful (in the same way as they define a facility list). The authority can then change their list if they stop collecting a material, start collecting another one etc. This would prevent the user from having to scroll down pages listing all materials.
The Other categories would not be able to be selected to the LA specific lists. The question would support expanding the LA specific list to the full list with, it was agreed, the Other categories at the bottom.

Summary reports screen

The reports screen is being refreshed with some changes to it. The user will now be able to produce reports by month, search for data using authority name (or part of), region, population figures etc, build family groups (groups of authorities they're interested in comparing their data to). Users will also be able to produce reports by facility and by question (the existing CVS functionality will move into the reports screen).

Selection Lists

The functionality for searching for facilities will be improved to make this easier and to allow searching by licence number, address etc. Some development has already been released in this area – the 'Select' button against the facility drop-down in Qu19/35 and 51-65 brings up a pop up of the selection list with details for each facility shown.

Training

The feedback from the web based training has been excellent. The courses available in the last year have been New user, Reporting, BVPIs/NIs and LATS. There was discussion around what other courses might be useful to users and validation training and a regular updates course were suggested.

Action: UG members to get ideas from their users as to what training would be useful and send to WDF Helpdesk.

A request was made that trainees have the opportunity to post questions to Enviros prior to the training. This was seen as a good idea and that if anyone wanted to do this to send the question to the WDF helpdesk.

The group wasn't generally aware of the FAQs from the Government Office meetings that are on the WDF website. A request was made that there be links from the question pages on WDF to any relevant FAQs about that question.

Action: Enviros to consider updating the '?' help to include hyperlinks to guidance documents.

AOB

There was some discussion around the treatment of LATS allowances in the Revenue Out-turn accounts and hence BV87. CIPFA advice had been to record the change in value as a loss on the revenue account.

There were several items for discussion raised by the Local Authorities through their reps. In many cases these were specific to the LA's circumstances, data or experiences. Enquiries of this type were passed back to the helpdesk or validation team to respond to.

Next meeting: early March 2009.