

# Waste Stakeholder Group (WSG)

## Meeting 5 Minutes

### A Focus on Sustainable Products and Materials

Tuesday 2 September 2008, Goodenough College, London 10.20am – 4.00pm

#### **Present**

Caroline Arnold	Chair and non-executive Waste Strategy Board
Jiggy Lloyd	Non-executive Waste Strategy Board
John Turner	Advisory Committee on Packaging
Jonathan Thomas	BERR
Grahame Dovey	BERR
Howard Bluck	British Metals Recycling Association
Sarah Plant	British Plastic Federation
Steve Lee	Chartered Institute of Waste Management
Karl Scholfield	Community Composting Network/Community Recycling Network/Furniture Recycling Network
Matthew Farrow	Confederation of British Industry
Martin Oldman	Confederation of Paper Industries
Julia Barrett	County Surveyors
Daniel Sage	Edmonsbury Council
David Bliss	Environment Agency
Vanessa Fandrich	EEF
Jonathan Davies	Environmental Industries Commission
Justin French-Brooks	Environmental Services Association
Michael Warhurst	Friends of the Earth
Rowena Limb	Government Office East Midlands
Julie Hill	Green Alliance
Lee Marshall	Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC)
Tony Ripley	Local Government Association
Paul Borrett	National Association of Waste Disposal Officers
Melvin Caton	SEEDA
Alan Wheeler	Textile Recycling Association
Ross Barry	Textile Recycling Association
Claudia Kuss-Tenzer	Waste Watch
On-Yee Tai	Private Public Partnership Forum (PPPF)
Jean Sheppard	Women's Institute (WI)
Patrick Mahon	WRAP
Gerrard Fisher	WRAP

#### **Defra**

Daniel Instone	Head of Waste Strategy
Bob Ryder	Deputy Head, Sustainable Products and Materials
Yolanda Rizzi	Sustainable Products and Materials

Alice Baverstock	Products Strategy and Roadmaps
Dorothy Maxwell	Clothing Roadmap
Sean Ryan	Voluntary agreements to promote waste electrical equipment
Peter Baxendell	Waste Strategy
Sandy Shattock	Secretariat
Ingrid Doves	Secretariat
Nick Potter	Secretariat

## 1.0 Introductions and Overview of the Meeting

### 1.1 Welcome to participants, apologies for absence

1. Caroline Arnold welcomed the group to the fifth Waste Stakeholder Group meeting. She explained that the format to the previous meeting, in May, had been greeted with positive enthusiasm and as such today's meeting would follow a similar format.
2. The main purpose of the meeting is to formulate a response to the Government's recently published Progress Report on Sustainable Products and Materials (SPM) <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/index.htm> which includes several question, and a deadline of 30 September for replies. The feedback and advice arising from the day's discussion will also take forward work within the Sustainable Products and Materials (SPM) team. In addition to this meeting Defra will be holding a further stakeholder event to discuss the responses received to questions posed in the report. The feedback and outcomes of this meeting will help shape that event.
3. To make the discussions, at this meeting, more manageable as well as move from the theoretical into the practical, the day is split into two different product groups – textiles and electronic equipment.
4. The WSG will not focus on the food and drink group for discussion at this meeting, as the issues arising from food and drink are largely about waste prevention rather than product redesign and material recycling. Transport was also rejected for discussion at this meeting as this area mainly comes under the responsibility of BERR. At the end of the day we hope to draw out the commonalities between the two product groups and also highlight where there are key differences and why.
5. Apologies were received from Neil Thornton (Defra), Debbie Huntington (BERR), Jane Milne (British Retail Consortium), Anne-Gaelle Collot (Chemical Industries Association), Caroline Lee-Smith (Furniture Re-use Network), Jeremy Jacobs (Composting Association), Jane Thornback (Construction Products Association), Elizabeth Cowen (Dept. Communities and Local Government), Nyree Connell (Federation of Small Businesses), David Bellamy (Food and Drink Federation), Steve Burdis (LGA & NAWDO), Jill Johnstone (National Consumer Council), Graham Beazley-Long (Public Private Partnership Forum) and David Wilson (WRRAG).

## 2.0 **Scene setting:** Presentations and commentary to stimulate debate

### 2.1 **Presentation 1** - Sustainable Products and Materials: setting the context

6. Yolanda Rizzi (Defra) set the context for sustainable materials against the overall scope and remit of the sustainable products and materials team. The slides [WSG02SEPT08] had been sent prior to the meeting to provide background information as well as to act as a stimulus for discussion at the meeting.

7. The main points presented were;

- a. Impacts occur at each lifecycle stage from use of resources through production, distribution and retail, consumer use and waste. Changing lifestyles and growing consumption bring even greater pressures and there is also a need to tackle the environmental impacts overseas from growing consumption of imported products.
- b. SCP policies focus on high impact products and services, they take account of a range of lifecycle environmental impacts, including overseas impacts from imported products and they drive solutions which achieve environmental and economic benefits through improving resource efficiency.
- c. The roadmap process helps to identify a product's big impact areas to enable interventions to be targeted. For example, the milk roadmap was taken forward by the UK Dairy Industry Forum and has recently been published. In the case of energy consumption, the milk roadmap showed the highest impact was, surprisingly to some, at the primary production stage.
- d. SCP's aim is for business/consumers to act to increase resource efficiency and for this to influence the entire supply chain.
- e. More work needs to be done on how we can reduce the environmental and sustainability impacts of materials throughout the product lifecycle, including but not limited to, impacts in the waste stream or arising from recovery.
- f. How do materials fit into this? SCP looks at the whole package and not just waste. Consideration is given to the lifecycle impacts of different materials, including in their extraction, production and use phases, as well as at end of life. This could mean using materials that are less resource intensive, have enhanced properties, require lower energy consumption during use, are less hazardous and are made of recycled materials or are more easily recyclable.
- g. The SPM Progress Report is a summary of what has been done and ideas for what could be done in the future. It is based on a 3 step approach:
  - i. Step 1- Vision  
What the future might look like. The supply chains to be connected, understanding the implications of the environmental impacts and routinely working together to reduce adverse impacts.
  - ii. Step 2 – Assessment  
Good evidence and practical assessment methods are crucial to improving sustainability. We need to think about embedded impacts as well as the most obvious direct impacts. How can Government and others work together for effective gathering, transfer and communication of product evidence? The ability to compare or rate products is an essential basis for all interventions (standards, information, taxes, labels, procurement criteria, etc). What, if any, new or amended product standards or benchmarks would be useful?

iii. Step 3 – Improvement strategy

Products vary in how sustainable they are. The aim of the strategy is to take action across the full range so as to cut out the least sustainable products and drive the existing market towards greater sustainability. This could entail a variety of different actions, including providing support for business innovation.

## 2.2 Presentation 2 – Clothing Road Map

8. Dorothy Maxwell (Defra) conducted a presentation on the clothing road map. The roadmap is lead by Defra in collaboration with UK clothing/fashion industry stakeholders aimed at improving the sustainability performance of clothes across its supply chain. All environmental and social impacts are considered to include a key focus on waste and resources. The key roadmap steps are establishing the evidence on the environmental & social impacts of clothing, where most effective improvement interventions can be made, bearing in mind a large proportion of the most significant impacts occur outside the UK, and then moving forward with practical actions. The slides [WSG03SEPT08] was sent prior to the meeting.
9. The main points presented were;
  - a. Growing consumption means that £23bn is spent on clothing in the UK each year. Fast fashion makes up a fifth of this market.
  - b. The clothing roadmap looks at the social and ethical side, encouraging transparency, accountability and effective supply chain management.
  - c. There is a huge international sector, with 90% of the clothing sector imported into the UK market and the Global market is valued at £500 billion.
  - d. As part of constructing the clothing roadmap the SCP team have met with stakeholders and identified areas that will move things to the next level with actions on sustainable design, opportunities for increasing reuse and recycling and increasing awareness, traceability and trade.
  - e. One action is a Defra commissioned project “Maximising Reuse and Recycling of End of Life UK Clothing” running Sept 08 – March 09 which aims to clarify the current state of play and establish the business case/issues associated with increasing clothing reuse and recycling.
  - f. UK end of life clothing waste is approx 1.5-2 million tonnes/annum. 12- 14% is collected for reuse and recycling, with the majority being reused with on the home market (via charity shops) or being exported with the remainder down cycled to lesser value items.
  - g. There are significant opportunities to divert from landfill. Issues to consider are collection/sorting infrastructure, economic pros and cons, markets for existing niche downcycled products (mattress filling, permaculture, industrial wipes; automotive components) and upcycled ones (polyester garments into polyester garments etc.), easy targets for end of life recovery e.g. corporate clothing, public sector and school uniforms.
10. If you would like to be kept informed and added to the clothing stakeholder database or are interested in being on the Steering Group that will inform the “Maximising Reuse and Recycling of End of Life UK Clothing” project please email [Dorothy.maxwell@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Dorothy.maxwell@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

### 3.0 Summary of WSG Discussions on textiles

*The following part of the minutes, record stakeholder discussions and does not necessarily reflect Defra's position.*

**3.1 Discussion topic 1 & 2 –** *What are the key elements in the vision for textiles? What does the vision mean for waste management? What are the key problems for managing waste textiles and where do they arise on the supply chain? What do we need in place to achieve the vision? What is in place already that needs changing? What action is needed from suppliers, retailers, consumers, the third sector and waste managers? How can government promote this action?*

#### Problems/Issues

11. The greatest impact in the textile roadmap is in the production of raw materials. Having a closed loop will reduce the need to produce more raw materials, therefore like aluminium, recycling of textiles reduces the impact of extraction and production. However, with the majority of clothing made overseas, how can the UK Government impose costs or regulate and create a level playing field?
12. The decrease in the cost of clothing and increase in “fast fashion” sends a signal to consumers that clothes are a disposable commodity and as such textiles are currently the fastest growing waste stream. The disposal nature of clothing is a trend that is set to continue and it is price incentives that dictates consumer behaviour and not necessarily the moral impact. Consumers need to be made aware of the true cost of clothing through better labelled products.
13. Huge economic drive is required to conserve ‘throw away’ clothes. Could we set environmental standards for textiles? Standards could include a minimum percentage of recycled fibres or all products put into the market must be capable of being X% recycled.
14. The roadmap does not include a reversion to a longer life approach for textiles. Would retailers be interested in moving backwards towards quality clothes with fewer fashion “seasons”?
15. With fast fashion trends, the quality of clothing tends to be of a lower quality and as such has less value for recycling. This leads to less potential for closed loop or upcycling of textiles. There is potential to develop more markets for recycled textiles and we need to expand the markets for poor quality goods rather than disposing in landfill. Consumers are keen to recycle and more options need to be available for individuals e.g. kerb side collection, back to point of purchase, charity shops and textile banks.
16. With the complexity of upcycling perhaps we need to focus on downcycling this could be an opportunity for a quick win. By changing consumer expectations about how a product should look e.g. bleached white sanitary towels- there could be potential to increase markets for downcycling as well as improve consumer understanding of the impact of the product.

17. How do we finance the collection of textiles at the end of life stage? The ideal would be kerb side collection for textiles.
- Should this be funded by “producer responsibility” system? This currently does not work well for WEEE as the responsibility ends up falling on the organisations that are least ‘responsible’ for producing the product i.e. the waste organisations.
  - Tax on textiles to landfills? Or credits for diverting? It will be easier to identify diverting textiles away from landfill.
  - Should the responsibilities rest with Local Authorities (LA)? This could be done via service level agreements and WRAP could disseminate best practice in recycling textiles.

## Solutions

18. A summary of the discussions on the tables identified that textiles, due to complex fibres and the short life of products, was a complicated subject and Defra is taking the right approach by breaking down the supply chain into segments and intervening at different points in the textile roadmap.

## PEOPLE/PUBLIC

19. **Role as a consumer** - need to take responsibility over choice of products and minimise fast fashion. Education and communication would help people change their behaviour and influence their purchasing, which in turn would influence producers. **As a willing participant** - compared to many other household waste streams the public are more willing to find a home for clothing – but they need to know how. Make people aware of end of life recycling/re-use options.
20. **LA's have a key role** - as a conduit to re-use and recycling by providing effective collection networks/signposting to re-use/recycling opportunities.

## PRODUCER

21. How do we finance the collection of textiles at the end of life stage? The ideal would be kerb side collection for textiles.
- Design** - need to consider ability to tie in materials issues, including durability and fibre issues, as well as recycling viability of materials in the design stage.
  - Costs** - identify mechanisms for ensuring that the true environmental costs including end of life is built into the product price
  - Producer Responsibility** - ensure that products are 1) capable of being recycled and 2) all contain an element of recycled material, need to promote and advertise positive messages e.g. fleece 90% recycled.
  - Retail Return Systems** - place responsibility on the retailer sector to take back products at end of life.

## GOVERNMENT ROLE

22. The Government need to raise the profile of recycling and reuse industries and improve public understanding of how they work, where the products go and how they help the environment.

23. They should consider levying voluntary agreements on producers and then backing this up by legislation, as well as ensuring waste permitting does not get in the way of recycling collection.

## **WASTE MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY**

24. The waste management industry need to build on existing systems and work with the supply chain to increase the value of recycled textile waste – government help is required to bring these groups together.

### **3.3 Chair's summary of the morning's discussions: reflections on vision and problem**

25. The Defra roadmap approach was welcomed, by the stakeholders as an useful tool to enable the textiles challenge to be broken down into smaller components that can be more easily tackled.

26. There was a continued call by the group for better data and evidence to help define the issues and inform solutions. But it was accepted that it is difficult to collect the data as there is a lot of clothing in all of our wardrobes at home which could be a major benefit in the recycled and re-use supply chain, but is not accounted for.

27. The recycling rate of 14% was lower than expected and some of the group felt that there is still a lot more that could be done. It was recognised by the group that a key challenge is that a significant proportion of discarded textiles are being provided to the charity sector/reuse market and this may be to the detriment of the potential recycling of textiles market as the scale of materials are not available to make this viable. Whilst re-use is the preferable option - it is important to consider the overall potential of reuse and recycling together to ensure the maximum overall benefit is achieved.

28. Current recycling is limited generally to low grade materials such as wipes that result in only once recycled use as part of it forming part of an ongoing chain.

29. The true environmental costs are not factored into the market price of clothing and more information should be provided to consumers that demonstrate the costs of their garments.

#### **4.0 Presentation 3: Products and Materials: Green Alliance View**

30. Julie Hill (Green Alliance) presented on Green Alliance's view on Products and Materials as well as the Progress Report on Sustainable Products and Materials . The slides [WSG04SEPT08] had been sent prior to the meeting for information.

31. The main points presented were;

- a. Green Alliance is trying to “design out waste” by looking for ways to decouple economic growth from material consumption, increasing resource efficiency (more for less), deployment of concepts such as “cradle to cradle” and closed loops as well as designing products that can be reused as well as recycled.

- b. Green Alliance approves of the SPM report vision of a world populated by more efficient and cyclical products, with minimised use of new resources and where all parts of the supply chain play apart. However, there are some important questions to answer before we can get near to this vision. What are the indicators of success of a good product policy – will it be judged by changes to individual products, changes in the number of products or quantities of materials in the system or overall environmental impact? Or a bit of each? How do we decide the priorities other than carbon?
- c. The main questions are around who will drive this forward. Why are standards seen as exclusively an EU responsibility, is there nothing we can do independently in the UK? If we are relying on Europe to generate standards, is the UK going to play a leading and creative role or will it see to block progress? If we want innovation from business, it will probably need Government to facilitate it through regulation or pricing.

## 5.0 **Scene setting:** Presentations and commentary to stimulate debate on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive.

### 5.1 **Presentation 4 – Overview of WEEE**

32. Debbie Huntington (BERR) planned to present an overview of WEE, unfortunately she was unable to attend the meeting. Caroline Arnold highlighted the main points, on her behalf, a WEEE background paper [WSG05SEPT08] was sent out prior to the meeting to act as a stimulus for discussion at the meeting.

33. The main points presented were;

- a. First compliance period has reached its conclusion
  - i. Producer compliance schemes submitted Declarations of Compliance showing the separate collection of 184,000 tonnes of household WEEE
  - ii. Non-household WEEE was less than 10,000
- b. BERR are currently reviewing regulations and supporting infrastructure in light of the experience of the first compliance period and are hoping to publish the results in Autumn
- c. Key future challenges
  - i. Maximise separate collection of WEEE
  - ii. Spread the message to householders and businesses. BERR are currently working on a communications/awareness raising strategy.
- d. WEEE Advisory Board (established as a NDPB earlier in the year)
  - i. Feeding into the review
  - ii. Focusing on infrastructure requirements, raising the standards, examining good practice and data/evidence

### 5.2 **Presentation 5 – WEEE Plastics Recycling**

34. Gerard Fisher (WRAP) presented on WEEE Plastics Recycling. The presentation slides [WSG06SEPT08] had been sent prior to the meeting for information.

35. The main points presented were;

- a. The aim of the closed loop recycling demonstration was to demonstrate the use of recycled UK WEEE plastics in the manufacture of components for new EEE products. In particular WRAP wanted to demonstrate this in use with a major original equipment manufacturer or brand.
- b. With LCD televisions there have been successful moulding trials for an internal piece for flat panel display. This is more than high impact polystyrene (HIP), but further testing is required.
- c. Indesit are producing an external rear cover for a washing machine that focuses on function. It is cheaper than using virgin material as well as lighter.
- d. In comparison to closed loop recycling of WEEE plastics in 2006, 2008 has shown technical evidence of success, the economics are clearer, supply risk is manageable, technical performance – in moulding, fabrication are in use and there is consumer appetite for recycled content.
- e. Closed-loop recycling is possible. WEEE recyclers should separate plastics as a high-quality product and the potential to UK companies is that they would be selling a product, not a waste. Consumers will tolerate and may welcome recycled content.

## 6.0 Summary of WSG Discussions on WEEE

*The following part of the minutes, record stakeholder discussions and does not necessarily reflect Defra's position.*

- 6.1 **Discussion topic 3 & 4** – *What are the key elements in the vision for textiles? What does the vision mean for waste management? What are the key problems for managing waste textiles and where do they arise on the supply chain? What do we need in place to achieve the vision? What is in place already that needs changing? What action is needed from suppliers, retailers, consumers, the third sector and waste managers? How can government promote this action?*

### REFLECTIONS ON VISION AND PROBLEM

36. There is more potential for closed loop recycling compared with textiles, especially with the fast pace of technological change. But the WEEE system is immature and needs time to bed in. It is too complicated with 37 compliance schemes. The trading system causes problems for LAs and is confusing to the public, this makes communications difficult.
37. Lack of clear requirements e.g. you must not dispose of this in your bin. The public are confused on benefits and charging needs to be avoided.
38. There is a lack of WEEE processing facilities – but this is improving. Recycling is difficult as products have to be broken down into useable components. With the lower cost of new products and technology getting smaller consumers are less likely to repair and make do.
39. Products have improved so much that new energy rating levels are required to enable consumers to make informed decisions when purchasing new goods. The ratings could be given in terms of money saved compared with buying a less efficient product.

## Solutions

### PEOPLE/PUBLIC

40. **No public charging** to help increase participation and reduce negative perception. There needs to be **regular communication/information** disseminated about what can be recycled and how. This could be done through WRAP or LA communication.

### PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

41. Producers to support reuse through retailers **and individual producer responsibility** is a key way forward that needs serious consideration but it will take time. Make products that have transferable warranties – this will increase the second hand market value.
42. **Durability of products** – producers need to sell their products on the basis that it will last 10 years rather than costs being so low that the products could be classed as disposable and in the event of a breakdown it is more cost effective to buy a new product rather than pay repair costs.
43. **Change consumer approach** - Move back to the rental approach to give appliances a longer life and enable consumers to keep up with technology.
44. **Work with the designers** – designers need to learn more about sustainability and work with the waste management sectors in a joint approach to transfer knowledge and give each group a better understanding of waste requirements and product design.

### WASTE MANAGEMENT INDUSTRY

45. Should be the role of the waste management sector to collect the products and reprocess it. They should also generate NEW markets for the recycled/reused products.

### GOVERNMENT ROLE

46. Government need to regulate to stimulate innovation. It is not clear if WEEE is currently placing enough responsibility on the producer and the approach may need to be strengthened.

## 7.0 Next steps and round up

47. Alice Baverstock (Defra) thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting. This was the second meeting following up the progress report on SPM, the first being the Technology Strategy Board (July). The next meetings will be Green Alliance Designing out Waste project group, Business Sounding Board, NGO group and the Sustainable

Development Commission. The feedback and outcomes of the WSG meeting will help shape those events.

48. Defra is currently considering its future approach. There is a huge agenda and we need to prioritise actions and share responsibilities. The SPM team want to gather information on what other organisations are doing to enable us all to move forward in a joint approach.
49. The SPM stakeholder event is planned in Autumn to discuss the next phase of work. If you would like to be part of that event or respond to the questions posed in the progress report on SPM please do so by 30 September to [products.policy@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:products.policy@defra.gsi.gov.uk).