

Government Review of Waste Policy 2011

– what it means for Local Authorities

Why waste matters

Waste collection is a key frontline service which affects quality of life, and waste sent to landfill is a major contributor to UK methane emissions.

That's why the government is reviewing and improving its policies on waste. This leaflet gives an overview of these policies and what they mean for local authorities.

A zero waste economy

Although local authorities in England have made big strides in reducing and recycling waste, they still handle over 12 million of the 44 million tonnes of waste sent to landfill every year. The government wants to move beyond a throwaway society towards a zero waste economy, where we work to prevent waste, then reuse and recycle – and throw away only as a last resort.

Engaging with customers

All local authorities should seek the views of their customers when designing and delivering waste services. They should provide opportunities for people who want to do more than the minimum and tell them what happens to their waste.

We are encouraging local authorities to sign up to two Recycling and Waste Services Commitments, one for householders and one for businesses. The commitments will give councils a tool to frame discussions with householders, business customers and contractors.

We understand that householders have a reasonable expectation that waste collection services should be

weekly, particularly for smelly waste. We will be working with local councils to increase the frequency and quality of rubbish collections and make it easier to recycle, and to tackle measures which encourage councils specifically to cut the scope of collections.

Rewarding good waste management

The government would like to see a shift from enforcement powers that may infringe civil liberties towards reward and encouragement. For example, we're removing the criminal sanction and £1,000 fine for householders who present their waste in the wrong way and replacing them with more appropriate, smaller fines. But we will ensure that you continue to have the powers you need to tackle serious waste crime.

To promote reward and recognition, we have commissioned research to understand the best ways of rewarding people. We have also launched a scheme to fund innovative reward and recognition schemes.

Reducing the burden on local authorities

The government is committed to removing some of the barriers to good service delivery.

We have removed targets – to free local authorities to focus on providing services in the most sustainable way for their local area. We are also looking to reduce the quantity of information that councils have to report and cut the amount of waste management legislation. For example, we are ending the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme.

Supporting local authorities

The government will help local authorities form partnerships to procure and provide services more effectively. We are also working with iESE and WRAP to improve local authority procurement skills. And with our support, WRAP is also promoting good practice in recycling in public areas and exploring ways to deliver improved reuse and recycling facilities.

We will also promote the use of a carbon metric reporting tool to help councils report the environmental impacts of waste management in carbon terms. We are also supporting anaerobic digestion.

Did you know?

- The waste management industry employs between 120,000 and 150,000 people.
- Anaerobic digestion could produce enough electricity to supply nearly a million households.

Find out more

There's more information about waste on these websites:

Defra - www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste

WRAP - www.wrap.org.uk

Environment Agency - www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/waste