

# **Sustainable Waste Management**

## ***Summary impact report***

### **The report findings and recommendations**

1. The joint Accounts Commission / Auditor General for Scotland performance audit report, 'Sustainable Waste Management' was published on 20 September 2007.
2. The study report concluded that significant progress had been made in meeting recycling targets but that slow progress in developing facilities to treat waste that is not recycled (residual waste) meant there is a significant risk that EU Landfill Directive targets may not be met, in particular the 2013 target.
3. The report made 20 recommendations aimed at helping to improve municipal waste management in Scotland. Details of specific progress against these recommendations are listed in Appendix 1, and charted against our impact criteria.
4. This report distinguishes between immediate and continuing impacts, and also highlights a number of areas where longer term and ongoing impacts are anticipated.

### **Immediate impacts**

5. Upon publication, the report generated a great deal of media interest, including radio and television interviews with Accounts Commission Members and the study team, and many press articles. A piece on the report formed the main story on "Reporting Scotland" and became the topic of the BBC Radio Scotland morning phone-in programme on the day of publication.
6. Between publication and September 2008, the report had 3517 pdf downloads from our website .
7. The Scottish Government held a 'Waste summit' on the 3rd October 2007, inviting Scotland's local authorities, waste industry and environmental groups for talks on how to make further progress on dealing with the country's waste. The study report was quoted from extensively at the summit and the Scottish Government's subsequent decision to set up a waste 'think tank' was influenced by discussions on the report's recommendations at this event.

### **Changes in Government Policy**

8. There was a change in government between the field work for this study and publication of the report. On the 24th January 2008, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the

Environment, Richard Lochhead, outlined the broad principles of the Scottish Government's new 'zero waste' policy. This has had an effect on some of our recommendations, especially those calling for a standardised approach across the country. The Concordat between the Scottish Government and local authorities has meant a distinct shift towards greater flexibility for councils in making progress on the waste strategy and will potentially affect arrangements for waste management by ending "ring fenced" funding.

### **Parliamentary scrutiny**

9. The study report was first considered by the Scottish Parliament Audit Committee on Wednesday 26 September 2007. A decision was made to write to COSLA and the government's Accountable Officer with a number of queries. At that time the Scottish Government was still considering its waste policy (see above) so a final response was not available until 7 March 2008. The response was considered by the Audit Committee on the 26 March where the convenor concluded that "*Waste management is an issue that will be of increasing concern. Delivery poses huge challenges for local government and I am not sure that the response from the accountable officer details how they will meet them*". The Committee then decided to refer the issue to the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee.
10. At the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee planning awayday in Stirling on 17 June 2008 members agreed that there should be Committee consideration of issues relating to waste management in the coming session. They identified our study report as a starting point and to invite evidence from Audit Scotland at the appropriate time with a view to the Committee taking stock and considering whether to undertake further work.

### **Longer term impact**

11. In the context of the Concordat, further progress by councils may be reflected via the Single Outcome Agreements (SOA) between the Scottish Government and local authorities. Based on some initial analysis we have carried out, all of the local authorities included waste management in their 2008/09 SOA, with varying levels of detail.
  - The number of indicators used to monitor performance in waste management, ranges from five indicators in one case to one indicator in another.
  - Most, although not all, Single Outcome agreements have used the existing SPIs:
  - 30 SOAs use a measure of the tonnage of waste going to landfill (20 of these use biodegradable municipal waste – the EU Directive target) as a local indicator
  - 29 SOAs use the percentage of municipal waste recycled.
12. Each SOA has a 'required actions' section. In relation to waste management some agreements note 'no further action' while others include detailed lists of the actions required. A common theme appears to be a continuation of existing waste plans with a focus on

increasing recycling rates and working to encourage the active participation of the public. The SOAs also request that the Scottish Government give clear direction on its preferred approach to managing residual waste and to funding the infrastructure needed to meet obligations under the Landfill Allowance Scheme.

## Appendix 1 – Summary of report impact, and analysis by Audit Scotland’s framework for measuring impact

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT AND HELPING TO IMPROVE					
		Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
<b>General Impacts</b>					
Considerable media interest generated by the report’s publication		●			
Action taken by the Scottish Parliament Audit Committee and potential action by the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee		●			
<b>Impact of report’s recommendations (where known)</b>					
<b>Recommendations for the Scottish Government</b>					
The Scottish Government should monitor the progress of its waste reduction plan and report annually on the progress being made in halting waste growth.	The Scottish Government indicated in its response to the Audit Committee that an annual report on progress will be produced and published. In July 2008 the Scottish Government made a number of proposals on reducing waste and increase recycling including a fresh look at deposit and return schemes and to explore the greater role that businesses and public bodies can take.				●
The Scottish Government and its agencies should look at further opportunities to develop secure, sustainable long-term markets to accommodate the planned increases in recycling.	In the minister’s statement on the 24 March he indicated that £50million would be used to support work on markets for recycled products, waste education and awareness, community recycling, waste prevention and commercial and industrial waste.			●	
The Scottish Government should publish procurement timetables for all major waste projects.	The concordat has changed the basis of the relationship between the Government and councils. Responsibilities for delivery are set out in SOAs; it is now up to councils to publish timescales.		●		

The Scottish Government should examine ways of reducing the barriers to entry into the market to ensure that there is adequate competition for residual waste treatment contracts.	Impact not known at this stage.			●	
<b>Recommendations for councils</b>					
To measure progress with waste management initiatives councils should undertake regular waste analyses, particularly where new recycling or home composting services are being introduced.	Impact not known at this stage.				●
Councils across Scotland should work together to standardise the type of containers they use and adopt a common colour coding system across Scotland.	There has been no significant change in council recycling collection systems since the report was published.				●
Councils should ensure that current recycling systems offer best value by conducting option appraisals before extending recycling schemes. Option appraisals should include market testing as a way of demonstrating best value.	There is no evidence of any significant work in this area since the report.			●	
Councils should ensure that they know the final destination of recyclables sold to intermediaries.	Impact not known at this stage.	●			
Councils should examine the benefits of setting up consortia to market their recyclables.	There is no evidence of any significant work in this area since the report.			●	
<b>Recommendations for the Scottish Government and councils</b>					
The Scottish Government and councils should undertake research to assess the contribution that direct charging for waste management could make to increasing recycling and waste reduction.	The Scottish Government has rejected charging from domestic waste collection. The research project being undertaken in this area has been wound up.				●
The Scottish Government and councils should continue to support community recycling, strengthen the framework in which they operate and build capacity by providing long-term funding for successful groups. This could be achieved through service level agreements and by encouraging partnerships with councils and the private sector.	Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead announced that £7.5 million is to be invested in community recycling projects over the next three years in his announcement about the new zero waste policy.				●

<p>The Scottish Government and councils should work together with the Scottish Waste Awareness Group to develop a programme to encourage householders to use home composting.</p>	<p>Waste Aware Scotland has set up <i>Home Composting</i> to assist householders and is currently looking for 'Home Composting Heroes' in every Local Authority area in Scotland. Their Home Composting E-Zine is distributed to the 15,000 Scottish households who have agreed to be contacted via email when they bought discounted compost bins through the Composting at Home Programme.</p>			●	
<p>The Scottish Government and councils should undertake a technical evaluation of kerbside recycling systems to identify the most cost-effective systems to achieve the levels of recycling required to meet the Landfill Directive targets.</p>	<p>Remade (based in Glasgow Caledonian University) is continuing to work with councils in benchmarking collection systems.</p>			●	
<p>The Scottish Government should encourage councils to adopt a more consistent approach to recycling using a small number of 'best practice' schemes.</p>	<p>The concordat has changed the basis of the relationship between the Government and councils and this recommendation is no longer relevant. There has been no significant change in council recycling collection systems since the report was published</p>			●	
<p>The Scottish Government and councils should work together to reach a decision on the level of recycling and the residual waste treatment facilities required to achieve the 2010, 2013 and 2020 Landfill Directive targets. An action plan showing the key milestones in this process should be published as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>The response from the Government to the Audit Committee was "<i>The Government has radically changed its approach. It now expects local authorities to be in the lead in deciding priorities in their areas. It has also augmented the general resources available to councils through the creation of the Zero Waste Fund.</i>" In addition, the concordat has changed the basis of the relationship between the Government and councils this is particularly significant in the case of waste management as the Strategic Waste Fund is no longer ring fenced and council's responsibilities for delivery are set out in single outcome agreements.</p>		●		
<p>The Scottish Government and councils should review their staffing arrangements for delivering sustainable waste management to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p>	<p>The Recycling Delivery Project Team has been strengthened by secondments from SEPA, Partnerships UK and from REMADE Scotland. The Government response to the Audit Committee was that it would consider what, if any, strengthening of the team is necessary in light of Ministerial decisions on the way forward.</p>			●	

<p>The Scottish Government and councils should ensure that the national planning framework is used effectively to minimise planning delay in the provision of new facilities.</p>	<p>In his statement to the Parliament on the 24 January the minister said <i>"We will include our 25 per cent limit for energy-from-waste technologies in the national planning framework, at both national and regional level. We will also lay down conditions to reflect our view that energy-from-waste plants must deliver a high level of efficiency through combined heat and power or district heating"</i>. However no waste infrastructure projects were identified as potential national developments in consultation on the second National Planning Framework.</p>		●		
<p>The Scottish Government and councils should look at ways of encouraging informed public debate on the options for meeting Landfill Directive targets, including the requirement for facilities to treat residual waste.</p>	<p>Impact not known at present.</p>				●
<p>The Scottish Government should work in partnership with councils, SEPA and other agencies to ensure the effective procurement of residual waste facilities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• setting up a recognised pool of staff with procurement expertise to ensure that expertise gained in early projects can be usefully employed in later procurement exercises</li> <li>• ensure that the lessons learned from completed projects are passed on</li> <li>• coordinating the procurement of facilities for the treatment of residual waste</li> </ul>	<p>The response from the Government to the Audit Committee was <i>"The Scottish Government has no plans at present to establish a national team to help co-ordinate the procurement of waste infrastructure (as previously envisaged when major infrastructure projects were proposed) but it is currently consulting on the future role of the proposed Scottish Futures Trust and one possible strand of work would be to help local authorities with both the procurement and programme management of infrastructure projects."</i></p>			●	