



House of Commons  
Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs Committee

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**Waste management in  
England**

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**Fourth Report of Session 2014–15**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

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## Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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## Summary

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About 177 million tonnes of waste is thrown away every year in England. This is a poor use of resources and has detrimental economic and environmental impacts. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) wants to move towards a 'zero waste economy', yet since April 2014 the Department has "stepped back in areas where businesses are better placed to act and there is no clear market failure".

Sustainable waste and resource management should play a key role in achieving one of Defra's four key priorities to improve the environment. The Environmental Services Association has estimated that a more circular economy could help to generate 50,000 new jobs with £10 billion investment and boost the United Kingdom's gross domestic product by £3 billion. We recommend that, rather than stepping back from areas of waste management, Defra should take the lead role and responsibility for waste management policy and ensure that the value of waste as a resource is fully realised.

In 2012/13, about 43% of household waste was recycled in England but the annual rate of increase has started to slow. We are concerned that England will not play its role in meeting the European requirement for the United Kingdom to recycle at least 50% of its household waste by 2020 without significant Government intervention. This is particularly worrying in light of recent proposals from the European Commission to increase household recycling targets to 70% by 2030. Given current performance, meeting higher household recycling targets in England would be challenging, but we suggest that Defra aspires to achieve recycling rates at the maximum feasible level (with or without European targets). While there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to address this challenge, there is more scope for Defra to facilitate and encourage learning from best practice to help local authorities to gravitate towards the best possible recycling service in their area.

We are concerned about the limited availability of waste treatment capacity in England and the resulting popularity of exporting refuse derived fuel to Europe. Defra has a role to play in ensuring that the right amount of the right type of infrastructure is available and must provide the waste sector with clear guidance on how much waste treatment capacity is needed in England to gain an optimal balance between export and local treatment.

In relation to anaerobic digestion plants, we agree with Defra that the greatest benefit of this technology is in dealing with waste, not purpose-grown crops. Anaerobic digestion is the most preferable recovery option for food waste, yet about four million tonnes of food waste still gets sent to landfill each year. The Government must find ways of diverting more food waste out of the residual waste stream by methods which are economically and environmentally viable and suitable to local circumstances. More work is needed to address the numerous issues raised by the practicalities of separate food waste collections.

We urge Defra to ensure that only genuinely residual waste is sent to energy from waste plants such as incinerators, and we ask the Department to assess whether the current use of gate fees is sufficient to achieve this aim. We do not believe that high levels of recycling are

incompatible with the use of energy from waste plants, as long as only genuinely residual waste is sent for energy recovery. We also recommend that the Government encourages the use of heat outputs from incinerators to gain maximum efficiencies from the process.

Waste fires are a serious problem affecting local communities and waste operators. A number of significant incidents were brought to our attention during the course of this inquiry. We commend the work of the Environment Agency and the Chief Fire Officers' Association in relation to this concerning issue and expect Defra and DCLG to support the development of the fire code of practice by the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

# 1 Introduction

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1. About 177 million tonnes of waste is thrown away every year in England.<sup>1</sup> In 2012/13, about 22.6 million tonnes of this total volume was household waste, amounting to 423 kilograms of waste per person.<sup>2</sup> This equates to an average person throwing away five times their body weight in waste each year.<sup>3</sup> Discarding so much waste is a poor use of resources and has detrimental economic and environmental impacts. Green Alliance told us that household waste “is probably a ninth of the total availability of resources we could get back in this country”.<sup>4</sup>

2. The aim of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is to move towards a ‘zero waste economy’: a society where resources are fully valued, financially and environmentally. However, in November 2013, Dan Rogerson MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for water, forestry, rural affairs and resource management, wrote to interested parties to inform them of reductions in Defra’s activities in waste management following a re-prioritisation of Government work to make the best use of public funding.

3. Consequently, from April 2014, Defra has “stepped back in areas where businesses are better placed to act and there is no clear market failure.”<sup>5</sup> Defra has not given a definitive list of these areas, but the announcement indicated that the Department will decrease or withdraw its support for proactive energy-from-waste policy development; programmes of work on anaerobic digestion and food waste; and generic support for local authorities in relation to waste contracts and related areas.

## Our inquiry

4. This inquiry was triggered by Defra’s “stepping back” announcement in order to examine existing approaches to recycling and treatment of municipal waste in England, and to assess the impact that the reduction of Defra’s activities in municipal waste management could have. Written submissions and transcripts of five oral evidence sessions are published on our website.<sup>6</sup> We are grateful to all who provided evidence.

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1 Gov.uk, [Reducing and managing waste](#), 2 July 2014

2 Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2012/13](#), 7 November 2013

3 The average adult weight in the UK is 75.8kg, based on data from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, published in the journal BMC Public Health.

4 Q101 [Julie Hill]

5 Defra [\[WME 0072\]](#) Annex A

6 Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Waste Management in England inquiry page](#)

## 2 Role of Defra

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### Valuing waste as a resource

5. To set the wider context for this inquiry, many witnesses identified the benefits of moving towards a circular or “closed loop” economy in which resources are kept in circulation and valued to their full extent and the environmental impacts of resource use and disposal consequently reduced. The EU Commission estimates that better waste and resource management could contribute an additional 3% to gross domestic product (GDP) in Europe<sup>7</sup> and the Environmental Services Association (ESA) has estimated that a more circular economy could help to generate 50,000 new jobs with £10 billion investment and boost the United Kingdom’s GDP by £3 billion.<sup>8</sup> The Government considers that it is important to maintain a focus on *moving towards* a more circular economy, rather than on achieving or delivering it. Defra has made it clear that it expects businesses to drive the changes that are needed.<sup>9</sup>

**6. Valuing waste as a resource is increasingly important for the economy and the environment. One of Defra’s key priorities is to improve the environment. Sustainable waste and resource management should play a key role in achieving this aim.**

### Waste policy

7. Waste policy and regulation in England is guided by the waste hierarchy, which is both a guide to sustainable waste management and a legal requirement of the revised EU Waste Framework Directive.<sup>10</sup> The waste hierarchy indicates the following order of preference for the stages of waste management: to prevent; to reuse; to recycle; to recover; and to dispose. This is explained further in the following diagram.

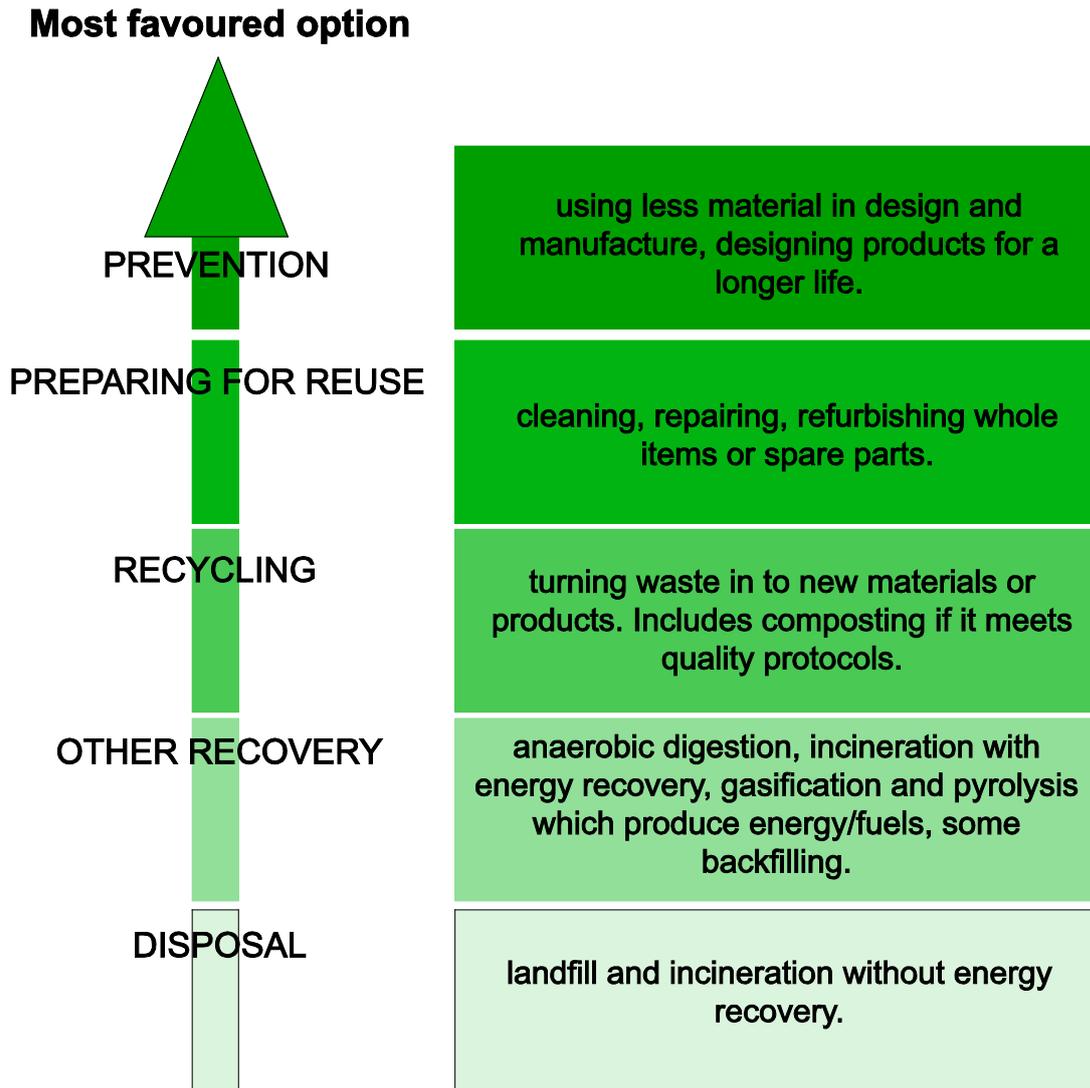
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7 Chartered Institution of Wastes Management [\[WME 0073\]](#) para 5

8 Environmental Services Association, [Going for Growth: A practical route to a Circular Economy](#), June 2013

9 Defra [\[WME 0072\]](#) para 2.3

10 The EU requirements of the Waste Framework Directive are transposed into law in England through the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011.



8. Waste policy, regulation and Government support have been major drivers of positive change in England over the last 20 years, illustrated by the introduction of the landfill tax, statutory recycling targets for English local authorities, programmes of funding support and the creation of the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) as the Government's main delivery body for the provision of advice on waste reduction, recycling and resource efficiency in England.

9. A compelling example of the strength of Government intervention in the waste management sector is the success of the landfill tax (currently £80/tonne of standard waste and £2.50/tonne of inert waste disposed at landfill).<sup>11</sup> The EU Landfill Directive requires the UK to reduce the biodegradable waste sent to landfill to 35% of the 1995 level by 2020. Landfill tax was introduced in 1996 and qualitative research shows that it has been a key influencing factor on the waste management industry and a driver for the fall in demand

<sup>11</sup> In Budget 2014, it was announced that both rates of landfill tax will increase in line with the RPI, rounded to the nearest 5 pence, from 1 April 2015.

for landfill and a rise in demand for alternatives.<sup>12</sup> About 130 landfill sites have closed since 2008 and the development of alternative waste treatment facilities, such as energy-from-waste plants, also diverts waste from landfill.<sup>13</sup> Local councils in England have reduced the amount of material landfilled by 71% per household between 2002/03 and 2012/13.<sup>14</sup> The UK met its 2010 and 2013 landfill diversion targets and Defra is confident that the UK is on track to meet the 2020 target.<sup>15</sup>

10. However, Defra wants the waste management sector to switch from being Government-led to being driven by businesses realising the economic and commercial opportunities that arise from resource efficiency and tackling environmental challenges. The Minister told us that recognising waste as a resource offers an opportunity for innovation and the development of new technologies and new businesses.<sup>16</sup> Businesses have a role to play in creating market demand for recycled products and packaging, as well as product design to reduce waste and enable repair, reuse and recycling. In relation to the lower end of the waste hierarchy, Green Alliance told us that the resource recovery part of industry is “way ahead of Government in this field [...] in terms of its vision and its desire for a long-term solution.”<sup>17</sup>

11. In order to support the contribution made by businesses, witnesses such as Keep Britain Tidy have called for an overarching framework of national policy and a central ambition to facilitate businesses in the long term.<sup>18</sup> Looking at whether the current policy framework helps businesses feel secure investing in new infrastructure, technologies, business models, and/or improved design of products, we found that Defra’s reviews of waste policy in 2010 and 2011 were widely seen by industry leaders as:

disappointing and lacking clarity, detail and leadership. The language of ambition on waste is still there, but it was not backed by policy levers that gave industry and local government much confidence in the future direction of waste policy.<sup>19</sup>

12. In this context, many witnesses expressed concern about Defra’s more recent announcement that it would “step back in areas where businesses are better placed to act and there is no clear market failure.”<sup>20</sup> SITA UK described Defra’s decision to reduce its activities in waste management as:

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12 Databuild Research and Solutions, [Qualitative research into drivers of diversion from landfill and innovation in the waste management industry](#) HM Revenue and Customs research report 316, April 2014

13 See: GPT Waste solution, [A decrease in waste volumes causes closure of landfill sites](#), January 2013

14 Local Government Association [\[WME 0078\]](#), para 4

15 Defra [\[WME 0072\]](#) para 6.3

16 Q216

17 Q100 [Julie Hill]

18 Keep Britain Tidy [\[WME 0057\]](#) para 4.1

19 Resource Association [\[WME 0068\]](#) para 5

20 Defra [\[WME 0072\]](#) Annex A

premature, not least because of the uncertainty as to whether England will meet all of its EU obligations by 2020, and because of the absence of a back-up plan held in reserve.<sup>21</sup>

13. Keep Britain Tidy are “deeply concerned” about Defra’s decision and point out that:

There still appear to be many market failures present in enabling the waste hierarchy to be followed in practice and businesses still require support and leadership from government to enable the economic, social and environmental benefits of reducing resource use and enabling a circular economy.<sup>22</sup>

14. When we put these concerns to Defra, the Minister responded that he was “disappointed if that is what they feel”<sup>23</sup> and emphasised that, despite Defra’s announcement last year, waste policy remained “an important area of work for Defra” and “a priority”.<sup>24</sup>

**15. The investment and innovative solutions that businesses bring to the waste management sector are invaluable, but this does not remove the need for a clear framework of Government policy, legislation and guidance within which such businesses can thrive.**

*16. We recommend that Ministers actively reassure interested parties that waste policy remains a priority. In order to address concerns in the sector, Defra should immediately clarify its definition and interpretation of “clear market failure”, explain how the market is monitored by the Government for signs of such failure, and confirm the criteria which must be met to identify areas where businesses are “better placed to act”.*

## Leadership and collaboration

17. In addition to Defra, responsibilities for waste policy are held by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and HM Treasury. Witnesses have criticised the lack of co-ordination and co-operation between Government departments and the lack of clear Government leadership in waste and resource management. CIWM refer to “poorly co-ordinated and sometimes antagonistic departmental policies and interventions”<sup>25</sup> and ESA talk of the sector being “subject to a myriad of overlapping and sometimes conflicting messages from the various government departments with differing responsibilities for waste”.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the London Waste and Recycling Board is critical of the fact that “there is a lack of an ambitious and coherent

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21 SITA UK [\[WME 005\]](#) para 3

22 Keep Britain Tidy [\[WME 0057\]](#) para 1.2

23 Q228

24 Q214

25 Chartered Institution of Wastes Management [\[WME 0073\]](#), para 8

26 Environmental Services Association [\[WME 0045\]](#) para 1

national policy on waste management that incentivises local authorities to reduce, re-use and recycle waste” which is “exacerbated” by conflicting messages coming from different government departments.<sup>27</sup>

18. The National Farmers’ Union (NFU) provided us with a specific example of a contradiction between departmental policies in terms of anaerobic digestion:

We feel the Government is trying to encourage anaerobic digestion, and small-scale on-farm anaerobic digestion, whereas some of the incentives, such as the feed-in tariffs, have been pulled back slightly by DECC.<sup>28</sup>

19. The United Kingdom Without Incineration Network (UKWIN) focused on inconsistencies in terms of incineration:

The pro-recycling message is being undermined by perverse financial incentives to incinerate and compost material that should not be...the Department for Communities and Local Government allows planning consent for incinerators that go against Government policies on climate change, energy efficiency and waste hierarchy.<sup>29</sup>

20. The National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO) recommended that the Government needs to ensure that policies arising from different departments are aligned and working together and had a preference for Defra to take a lead role rather than stepping back.<sup>30</sup>

**21. Co-ordination and consistency between all Government departments involved with waste policy is essential. Defra’s policies and guidance should not be undermined by contradictory messages from other Government departments.**

***22. We recommend that, rather than stepping back, Defra takes the lead role and responsibility for waste management policy as part of its departmental priority to improve the environment. This should include appointing a Minister with clear responsibility for co-ordinating across all Government departments and ensuring consistency of approach in terms of legislation, policy, incentives and communications.***

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27 London Waste and Recycling Board [\[WME 0007\]](#) para 5

28 Q159

29 Q94 [Shlomo Downen]

30 National Association of Waste Disposal Officers [\[WME 0011\]](#) para 9.1

## 3 Recycling rates in England

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### Current performance

23. The EU Waste Framework Directive states that the United Kingdom must recycle at least 50% of its household waste by 2020. England achieved a recycling rate of 43.2% in 2012/13 and has improved its recycling rate by more than three times since 2000.<sup>31</sup> However, in recent years, the rate of increase has started to slow and Defra statistics show that the rate of increase in the last year is insufficient to meet the 50% EU target by 2020.<sup>32</sup>

24. The Government is committed to meeting the EU target<sup>33</sup> but, based on the current trajectory of recycling rates, most witnesses were concerned that England will miss the target unless some significant additional Government interventions are made. As explained by Dr Liz Goodwin, CEO of WRAP:

There is a significant risk that we will not [reach the target by 2020] and that we need a concerted effort if we are going to do anything about that [...] certainly in the last three years or so, the growth has slowed down to the extent where it looks as though it has plateaued at the moment. Something needs to be done to address that, otherwise we will not meet the recycling rates.<sup>34</sup>

SITA UK told us that:

the evidence suggests that the current suite of Defra policies has run its course. Higher recycling targets will only be achieved by introducing a refreshed set of policies and policy instruments.<sup>35</sup>

**25. We are concerned that the 2020 EU target of 50% household recycling will not be met in England without clear Government leadership and renewed policy drivers and support from Defra.**

26. To put England's recycling rate in context, Wales achieved a recycling rate of 52% in 2012/13;<sup>36</sup> Scotland achieved 41.2% in 2012;<sup>37</sup> and Northern Ireland achieved 38.7% in 2012/13.<sup>38, 39</sup> It is difficult to make direct comparisons between countries as the methods of

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31 Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2012/13](#), 7 November 2013.

32 Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2012/13](#), 7 November 2013, page 2 Figure 1

33 Defra [\[WME 0072\]](#) para 3.2

34 Q327

35 SITA UK [\[WME 005\]](#) para 5

36 StatsWales, [Local Authority Municipal Waste Management 2012-13](#)

37 Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, [Household waste summary reports](#) (2012)

38 Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics, [Annual Report 2012/13](#)

39 In 2010, the average EU municipal recycling rate was 39%. Examples: Romania recycled 1% of municipal waste, Portugal recycled 19% of municipal waste, Denmark recycled 42% of municipal waste and Germany recycled 62% of municipal waste. See European Environment Agency, [Managing municipal solid waste](#), EEA Report No 2/2013

recording recycling rates are not consistent across the board<sup>40</sup> and it is notable that the present rate of increase in Scotland and Northern Ireland is higher than in England. Nonetheless, as Wales implemented an ambitious set of targets through its *Towards Zero Waste Strategy* in 2010 and has already met the 50% target, we focused on the Welsh approach to determine whether there are any lessons to learn.

27. Dr Andy Rees, Head of Waste Strategy Branch at the Welsh Government, told us that the main area of focus for the Welsh Government has been on setting statutory recycling targets which have “very much focused the minds of local authorities”.<sup>41</sup> In addition, the Welsh Government has developed a mix of interventions to meet the targets that it has set, including additional funding support to local authorities through the Sustainable Waste Management Grant (totalling £66 million this year), a twin-tracked communications campaign (national and local) and a series of programmes to support the changes that need to be made.

***28. We urge Defra to work alongside WRAP and industry to develop a comprehensive plan to be implemented in the event that England’s recycling rate continues to slow. We recommend that Defra learns from successful approaches in countries such as Wales and Ministers consider introducing refreshed policies and re-introducing requirements such as statutory recycling targets for local authorities alongside the requisite funding support.***

## Promoting best practice

29. Recycling rates in local authorities across England range between 12% and 67%.<sup>42</sup> The disparity stems from the numerous and differing challenges which they face and which are likely to vary depending on the particular local circumstances. As a generalisation, inner-city urban areas tend to have the lowest recycling rates<sup>43</sup> which is commonly attributed to transient populations, high-density housing with little space for recycling receptacles, and a lack of householder engagement and understanding.<sup>44</sup> Other common barriers faced by local authorities with low recycling rates include insufficient infrastructure and recycling facilities, challenges of costs and funding, and problems with accessing output markets.<sup>45</sup>

30. During our inquiry, we investigated a number of approaches aimed at improving household recycling rates in order to determine whether there are any overarching lessons to be learnt from strong performers. We discuss a sample of these below.

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40 For example, Scotland calculated its recycling rates as local authority collected municipal waste until 2010/11. However, since 2012 only household waste is included in the recycling rate calculation.

41 Q132

42 Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2012/13](#), 7 November 2013. In 2012/13, Ashford Borough Council had the lowest rate of recycling at 12% and Rochford District Council had the highest recycling rate at 67%.

43 Q10 and Q194

44 Local Government Association [[WME 0078](#)], para 4

45 Q9 [Jacob Hayler]

### **Separate food waste collections**

31. When we explored the reasons behind higher recycling rates, separate food and garden waste collections was often suggested as an answer. This is reflected in the proportion of green waste being recycled by the highest and lowest performing councils in 2012/13: being over 56% and 0% respectively.<sup>46</sup> Dr Rees told us that separate food waste collections have “probably added around five to six percentage points”<sup>47</sup> to the recycling rate in Wales. He explained:

In terms of the funding that we have provided to local authorities, the key difference that it has made is for them to provide separate collection of food waste...and as a result, 96% of our households in Wales have had a separate collection service for food waste put in place by their local authorities.<sup>48</sup>

32. However, we also received evidence against separate collections of food waste due to the high cost of implementation and low participation rates by householders leading to low volumes being collected.<sup>49</sup> Currently, about 45% of households have access to a food waste collection (with around half of those being food waste only and half being mixed with garden waste) but only 10% of food waste is collected.<sup>50</sup> In practice, local authorities can struggle with the costs created by separate food collections, as demonstrated by Tamworth and Lichfield local councils which have recently stopped separate food waste collection services in order to save a total of £400,000 per year.<sup>51</sup> Councillor Gary Porter, Vice Chair of the Local Government Association (LGA), argued that “it is for the local council, with their local population, to work out the best methods of collection in their area”.<sup>52</sup>

33. We agree with the overall explanation given by ESA:

In general terms, higher recycling rates require the expansion of existing services and the introduction of new ones (e.g. separate food waste collections). Different services may be more or less appropriate for differing local circumstances. ESA believes that responsibility for household waste and recycling collections rightly reside with the local authorities. There may however be some scope for increased service standardization between local authority areas.<sup>53</sup>

**34. On balance, we conclude that local authorities should remain responsible for addressing the specific challenges and barriers to increasing recycling rates that they face at a local level. However, there is scope for guidance and best practice to be shared**

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46 Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2012/13](#), 7 November 2013

47 Q135

48 Q134

49 See Babcock and Wilcox Volund [\[WME 004\]](#)

50 Q352

51 Let's Recycle, [Cost cutting sees councils drop food waste services](#), 17 July 2014

52 Q203

53 Environmental Services Association [\[WME 0045\]](#) para 10

at a national level in order to move towards a more standardised approach and to assist local authorities to improve their individual performance.

*35. Defra should facilitate and encourage learning from best practice actions to help local authorities gravitate towards the best possible service in their area. Working with the Local Government Association, we urge Defra to share information on successful approaches with local authorities to enable them to develop the most effective services for their particular local circumstances.*

### Communication

36. We were told that that only about 24% of householders are recycling correctly.<sup>54</sup> The householder plays a key role in helping to improve recycling rates but, in general, has no direct financial incentive to do so. On average, each household pays £3 per week for its waste and recycling services and most will be unaware of this relatively low cost breakdown as it is rolled up as part of council tax payments.<sup>55</sup> Keep Britain Tidy have found that:

Households have a critical and often forgotten role in municipal waste recycling. Our recent Recycling Inquiry in partnership with SITA UK found that although infrastructure and services have a large role to play, without clear, consistent and continual communication and information that motivates households to recycle more and better, there is a disconnection with the real underlying need and recycling commitment and capability is reduced.<sup>56</sup>

37. WRAP carried out the *Recycle Now* communication campaign at a national level to encourage recycling. This has been developed and managed by WRAP since 2004 and comprises direct consumer messaging and indirect communications through organisations, such as major retailers, local authorities and community groups, adopting and using the brand. Despite the success of this high-profile campaign, Defra has cut funding for WRAP from £53.5 million in 2010/11 to £17.9 million in 2014/15. An even greater proportional funding reduction has occurred for Keep Britain Tidy, from £4.8 million in 2010/11 to £0.5 million in 2014/15.<sup>57</sup>

38. Dr Goodwin reassured us that despite WRAP's budget cuts, work relating to food waste reductions and recycling continues. Nevertheless, as explained by Green Alliance:

WRAP has had a very big role in successful campaigns, but what we also understand is you have to keep repeating it. The messages and

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54 Q333

55 Environmental Services Association [WME 0045] para 16, based on data in the Department for Communities and Local Government, [Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing: 2012-13 Final Outturn, England](#) 18 February 2014

56 Keep Britain Tidy [WME 0057] para 4.2

57 Defra [WME 0074]

communications have to keep coming forward. As soon as they stop people are liable to slip back into previous habits.<sup>58</sup>

**39. Successful communication campaigns must be sustained to keep householders engaged. We commend the work of WRAP and Keep Britain Tidy and strongly believe that the research, advice, support and information provided by these organisations is invaluable.**

**40. *We are concerned that, despite the significant achievements of both organisations, Defra’s funding for WRAP and Keep Britain Tidy has reduced over recent years. We urge Defra to increase the funding if evidence suggests it necessary in the lead up to 2020.***

41. As well as high-profile national communication campaigns, specific local issues need to be addressed at a local level. We identified three common issues faced at an individual or householder level, each of which could be addressed with targeted communications:

- a) confusion about what can and cannot be recycled;
- b) a lack of confidence in the end destination of recyclables; and
- c) contamination of recyclables.

42. First, confusion is common because there is not a standardised approach to recycling across England. There are up to 400 different collection and recycling schemes in England which means that each time an individual moves areas, either permanently or temporarily (for example moving house or travelling from home to work or school each day) they need to learn and adapt to a new system.<sup>59</sup> Phil Barton, Chief Executive of Keep Britain Tidy, told us that “despite quite a lot of goodwill and basic values supporting the idea of recycling, there is a disconnect and people are confused”.<sup>60</sup>

43. Councillor Porter emphasised that simplicity of the collection regime and clear communication are important,<sup>61</sup> but need to be done on a local basis: “councils do know their people better than any national organisation; it is just the nature of the beast”.<sup>62</sup> Whilst acknowledging that there is no silver bullet to standardise schemes across the country, Dr Liz Goodwin did suggest that the 400 different schemes ought to be able to consolidate down to “five or six models of recycling schemes”.<sup>63</sup> This further substantiates our findings on separate food waste collections and our earlier recommendation to move towards more standardised best practice approaches, while acknowledging that services must be tailored to local circumstances.

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58 Q101 [Julie Hill]

59 Q334

60 Q6

61 Q189

62 Q190

63 Q334

44. Secondly, we are concerned that there seems to be a lack of public confidence in the end destination of the rubbish put in recycling bins: a remaining cynicism that separated recycling still goes to landfill.<sup>64</sup> A YouGov survey found that 73% of UK adults sampled said they did not know where materials go (in terms of plants or geography) and 32% said they would be much more likely or more likely to recycle if more information was available.<sup>65</sup> RPS Planning and Development assured us that there was more information that could usefully be provided to people so that they understood what the consequences of their actions were and what the benefits were.<sup>66</sup> Defra acknowledges this problem and, as such, is supportive of the Resource Association's *End Destination of Recycling Charter*.<sup>67</sup> The Charter is a voluntary scheme whereby local authorities and private companies involved in the recycling chain publish an annual Register of End Destination of Recyclates, with the aim of improving transparency in the recycling supply chain and enhancing public confidence in recycling.

45. Thirdly, the raw material sent to be recycled (known as recyclate) can be rejected from recycling plants if it is contaminated, which causes a lower actual recycling rate. Data for England show that 226,770 tonnes of contaminated recyclate was rejected out of a total 10,457,329 tonnes of recyclate collected in 2012/13. This is 59,973 tonnes more contaminated recyclate rejected than in 2008/09.<sup>68</sup> Contamination is caused by waste that cannot be recycled being put in recycling bins (e.g. food waste and certain types of plastic) or waste that could be recycled being too dirty or damaged to be processed. Defra is looking for local authorities to promote recycling through effective communications and making it easier for householders to do the right thing e.g. by making it easier to know which plastics can go in the recycling bin.<sup>69</sup>

**46. Householders have a key role to play in increasing recycling rates, but household engagement must be improved in order to tackle the common challenges of householder confusion, lack of confidence in the process, and contamination of recyclates. Recycling rates could be significantly improved by the provision of consistent, simple and concise information.**

**47. *Communication needs to be tailored to local circumstances but Defra should engage with local authorities and provide support at a national level, particularly in relation to common issues and problem areas. We recommend that Defra considers compulsory publication of an annual Register of End Destination of Recyclates by all local authorities and waste management companies involved in the recycling chain, in order to improve access to information and public confidence.***

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64 Q7 [Phil Barton] and Q247 [Dr Church]

65 Resource Association, [Where Does the Recycling Go?](#), June 2012

66 Q63

67 Q247 [Dr Colin Church]

68 Defra, [Response to Freedom of Information Request](#), 17 April 2014. 166,797 tonnes of contaminated recyclate was rejected out of 10,199,392 tonnes of recyclate collected in 2008/09.

69 Defra [\[WME 0072\]](#) para 3.5

## Rewards and recognition

48. Other ways to improve householder engagement are either to provide rewards and recognition for good recycling, or to make it compulsory for householders to recycle. The majority of our witnesses were not in favour of compulsory recycling, although it was noted that there is insufficient data available in England to determine the precise impact that this approach could have on England's overall recycling rates.<sup>70</sup> Significantly, many more witnesses noted the benefits that reward and recognition could bring. A Keep Britain Tidy survey found that about 90% of the public said that they would like to see some sort of reward coming back to the community to acknowledge good recycling.<sup>71</sup> This could be in the form of improvements to the local environment (playgrounds, parks or trees) or a rebate on an individual's council tax. The LGA emphasised individual cash incentive schemes and gave the example of Wokingham Borough Council seeing an initial increase of 28% in the tonnage of recycling collected after introducing a recycling rewards scheme in April 2012.<sup>72</sup>

49. In line with the overall endorsements for rewarding positive behaviour, Defra has launched the Reward and Recognition Fund in partnership with SERCO, as a pilot to test innovative ideas to encourage positive behaviour. Funding has been provided to 28 projects (including recycling) and a final analysis report will be published by Defra in 2015.

**50. *We support Defra's Reward and Recognition Scheme and expect Defra to use the results to identify and support best practice schemes to be used as prototypes for other local authorities to follow.***

## Ambition for the future

51. A recent European Commission Communication *Towards a circular economy: zero waste programme for Europe*<sup>73</sup> identifies EU waste policy and targets as key drivers for shifting to a circular economy. The Commission is proposing new targets on waste recycling, including 70% for municipal waste by 2030. Both Wales and Scotland already have national recycling targets of 70% by 2025, but England does not. The Minister stressed the importance of seeing the evidence base for any future European targets to ensure that they are achievable<sup>74</sup> and commented on the recent Communication as follows:

To move on to 70% in a further 10 years would certainly be challenging. That is not to say it is impossible, but it would certainly take a lot of different ways of doing things—different ways of incentivising and pushing that.<sup>75</sup>

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70 Chartered Institution of Wastes Management [[WME 0073](#)] para 35 and Local Government Association [[WME 0078](#)], para 1

71 Q7 [Phil Barton]

72 Local Government Association [[WME 0078](#)], para 1

73 European Commission, [Moving towards a circular economy](#)

74 Q223

75 Q249

52. Evidence we received acknowledged that increased recycling targets would be challenging and require some serious Government intervention in order to meet them. Steve Lee, CEO of CIWM, summarised his views as follows:

I am absolutely convinced that there is nothing special about the United Kingdom or England that means that we could not hit exactly the same sorts of recycling targets as other European member states.<sup>76</sup>

53. Also included in the proposals is a ban on the landfilling of recyclable waste (plastics, metals, glass, paper and cardboard and biodegradable waste) with the objective to move towards virtual elimination of landfilling municipal waste by 2030.<sup>77</sup> Whilst the UK is on track to meet its current EU landfill diversion targets by 2020, about 8.5 million tonnes (or 34%) of local authority managed waste still went to landfill in 2012/13.<sup>78</sup>

***54. In accordance with the waste hierarchy, we encourage a move towards banning the landfilling of all recyclable waste by 2025 as landfill should only be used for wastes for which there is no better recovery option. However, any such proposals must be signalled well in advance, with appropriate support and alternative infrastructure put in place to guard against disproportionate cost burdens.***

***55. Meeting a 70% recycling target in England for all household waste by 2030 would be challenging but Defra should aspire to achieve recycling rates at the maximum feasible level, with or without European targets.***

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76 Q10

77 European Commission, [Questions and answers on the Commission Communication "Towards a Circular Economy" and the Waste Targets Review](#), 2 July 2014

78 Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2012/13](#), 7 November 2013

## 4 Residual waste treatment

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### Exporting waste for energy recovery

56. Importing and exporting waste for recovery is generally permitted, depending on country controls, waste type and destination. Refuse derived fuel (RDF) is low grade fuel processed specifically for consumption in energy-from-waste facilities. There has been a marked increase in exports of RDF from England to Europe since 2010 (when there was virtually nil).<sup>79</sup> In 2013, England and Wales exported a total volume of 1,157,895 tonnes of RDF, primarily to the Netherlands (69.6%) and Germany (12%).<sup>80</sup>

57. This relatively new practice seems to have sprung up in reaction to a lack of available energy-from-waste infrastructure in England. David Palmer-Jones, CEO of SITA UK, explained that the export of RDF is:

probably more of a temporary market, and it is because we are diverting more away from landfill without the infrastructure available...there is absolutely a position for that over a period of time, as we make this adjustment in terms of infrastructure investment.<sup>81</sup>

58. CIWM share this view about availability of infrastructure capacity and explain that:

the rapid development of the energy-from-waste export market from England suggests that inadequate energy recovery capacity exists...Long term reliance on exports of waste for energy recovery open up the risks of that capacity not being available to English markets—possibly at short notice—and denies the use of waste derived fuels in England as part of a diverse and secure energy supply mix.<sup>82</sup>

59. Many witnesses called for more infrastructure capacity to treat waste in England. Different technologies are needed to treat different types of waste, but all share the common trait of needing a significant amount of investment and relatively long lead-in times. The National Association of Waste Disposal Officers warned that “without an overview of the number and location of the various processing options, the risk of creating over-capacity in some methodologies, which would in turn threaten the viability of others, will be a risk”.<sup>83</sup> Dr Liz Goodwin at WRAP looked to Defra to play a role in ensuring that the right amount of the right type infrastructure is available:

Defra has a role to play in understanding the waste flows and the materials flows in the economy, and thinking about what makes sense to be exported,

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79 Defra [\[WME 0072\]](#) para 4.7

80 SITA UK [\[WME 0075\]](#) para 6 and 7

81 Q75

82 Chartered Institution of Wastes Management [\[WME 0073\]](#) para 52

83 National Association of Waste Disposal Officers [\[WME 0011\]](#) para 5.1.1

what should be reprocessed in the UK and how we help ensure that infrastructure is present in the UK.<sup>84</sup>

**60. *We recommend that Defra analyses data on waste flows and waste flow forecasts in order to provide the waste sector with clear guidance on how much energy-from-waste infrastructure capacity is needed in England to gain an optimal balance between export and local treatment.***

61. Some witnesses were also concerned that the practice of exporting RDF does not adhere to the principles of the waste hierarchy and can have adverse impacts on the economy due to the loss of resources and loss of potential investment in infrastructure, employment and associated community benefits in England.<sup>85</sup> The export of RDF also impacts on energy security and Defra acknowledges additional concerns around minimally treated RDF which contains significant quantities of recyclable materials being produced for export.<sup>86</sup>

62. In response to the various concerns surrounding the practice of exporting RDF, Defra issued a call for evidence in March 2014 to determine whether there is a case for Government action to ensure that export of RDF is the best treatment option in terms of the environment. Defra is still analysing the feedback.<sup>87</sup>

**63. *We commend Defra for issuing a call for evidence on the practice of exporting RDF and we look forward to Defra's response in due course.***

**64. *We recommend that, in its response to this Report, Defra include an assessment of the economic impact of building the infrastructure needed to treat the RDF currently exported compared with the economic impact of the current practice of exporting RDF from England to other countries in Europe.***

## Anaerobic digestion

65. In the anaerobic digestion (AD) process, food waste and other wet biowaste (e.g. manures, slurries and sludges) is broken down by micro-organisms in enclosed containers in the near absence of oxygen. Defra has scientific evidence, based on life-cycle analysis, which shows that anaerobic digestion is environmentally better than composting and other recovery options for food.<sup>88</sup> This is an example of an acceptable departure from the waste hierarchy where a clearly better environmental outcome can be shown.

66. Defra worked with industry to develop the *Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan 2011*, with an aim of overcoming the barriers to the deployment of AD. There are currently 145 operational AD plants in the UK with an installed electrical capacity over

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84 Q308

85 See Q76 [Dan Cooke]

86 Defra [WME 0072] para 4.7

87 Defra, [Refuse-derived fuel market in England: call for evidence](#), 12 March 2014

88 Defra [WME 0072] para 1.5

150MW. Of these 145 plants, 44% treat agricultural waste such as farm manures and slurries, 38% treat food waste from municipal and commercial sources, while the remaining 18% process industrial waste such as brewery effluent.<sup>89</sup> The Anaerobic Digestion and Biogas Association notes that there is still significant potential for the AD industry to expand as only 7% of all waste is currently processed through AD.<sup>90</sup>

67. Evidence we received predominantly praised the effectiveness of Defra's *Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan 2011* and welcomed the clear central Government commitment it demonstrated, although some witnesses pointed to DECC's renewable energy incentives as much more of a driver towards building new AD plants.<sup>91</sup>

68. Despite its growing deployment, AD operators still face a number of challenges, including access to regular and appropriate waste feedstock over the life of the AD plant. Some witnesses, including Dr Goodwin at WRAP, endorsed separate food waste collections, to get the food out of landfill and to use it to generate energy and biogas through the anaerobic digestion process.<sup>92</sup> Currently about four million tonnes of food waste still gets sent to landfill but, as discussed in paragraph 32 above, separate food collection services for domestic households have varying levels of success and can be disproportionately costly. We also received evidence that it is very difficult to separate food waste out at the right quality, quantity and in the right place to feed an AD plant.<sup>93</sup> Mechline Developments Ltd were particularly concerned about separate food waste collections for onward use as AD feedstock and identified a range of associated risks, including contamination levels; carbon emissions from the consequential higher road traffic; and reducing the incentive to minimise food waste and redistribute edible food.<sup>94</sup>

69. In certain circumstances, purpose-grown crops or biomass such as maize, grass silage or whole-crop cereals are used as a feedstock for anaerobic digesters. Defra's *Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan 2011* explains that:

it is not the Government's policy to encourage solely purpose-grown crop-based AD systems, particularly when these are grown to the exclusion of food producing crops, or where growth of these crops might adversely affect biodiversity or deter optimal use of waste materials.<sup>95</sup>

**70. We agree with Defra that the greatest benefit of anaerobic digestion is in dealing with waste feedstock, not purpose-grown crops. However, sourcing appropriate waste feedstock on a consistent basis remains a significant challenge for AD operators and more work is needed to address the issues surrounding separate food waste collections.**

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89 Anaerobic Digestion and Biogas Association [\[WME 0060\]](#) para 5

90 *Ibid.*, para 6

91 See Q24; Resource Association [\[WME 0068\]](#) para 15; Eunomia Research & Consulting [\[WME 0055\]](#) para 32

92 Q354

93 WRAP, [Love food hate waste](#); Q352 and Q21

94 Mechline Developments Ltd [\[WME 0079\]](#) paras 4, 5, 7 and 8

95 Defra, [Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan](#), para 55

**71. *The Government must find ways of diverting more food waste out of the residual waste stream by methods which are economically and environmentally viable and suitable to local circumstances. Where food waste is separately collected it should be treated at local AD plants whenever possible to address the problem of sourcing waste feedstock.***

72. Anaerobic digestion produces biogas and digestate. Biogas can be used to generate renewable heat and power, which helps to reduce the use of fossil fuel and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Digestate is rich in nutrients, so it is a valuable bio-fertiliser which can be used instead of fossil fuel-intensive fertilisers. The nutrient composition of the digestate depends on the feedstock but must comply with the PAS 110 standard to meet with national requirements in Britain. Meeting this standard requires source segregation of food waste. However, CIWM highlighted that despite the requirements, the markets for digestate were not always secure as demand was seasonal and the nutrients in digestate were needed in different ratios and quantities in different soils. This can be compounded by a lack of confidence by some important agricultural customers in the digestate, due to the lack of information available about its long-term effects.<sup>96</sup> As further explained by Defra:

digestates derived from purpose-grown crops, food wastes and other inputs are often regarded as novel by the market, which is wary of accepting them until evidence of their quality and benefits can be provided.<sup>97</sup>

**73. *In order to improve the confidence of agricultural customers and improve the stability of the market for digestate, we recommend that further research is undertaken to determine the long-term effects of AD digestate on the quality and composition of soil and crops.***

## **Incineration with energy recovery**

74. Incineration with energy recovery is generally placed higher up the waste hierarchy than landfill in terms of environmental performance and is considered by Defra to be the best waste management option for most genuinely residual waste.<sup>98</sup> It is a waste treatment process where organic substances contained in waste materials are burnt and converted into ash, flue gas and heat. The incineration bottom ash goes to landfill or can be reused as construction aggregate material; the flue gases must be cleaned of gaseous and particulate pollutants before being dispersed into the atmosphere; and the heat can be used as heat and/or to generate power.

75. Incinerators with energy recovery are typically cited to have electric efficiencies of up to approximately 27%<sup>99</sup> but can be much more efficient if the heat energy is used for local district heating or nearby industrial processes. Steve Lee, CEO of CIWM, referred to the

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96 Chartered Institution of Wastes Management [WME 0073] para 57

97 Defra, [Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan](#), paragraph 66

98 Defra [WME 0072] para 6.5

99 Defra, [Incineration of Municipal Solid Waste](#), February 2013, p13

inclusion of heat recovery as the “secret difference between being 25% or 26% efficient and 75% to 80% efficient”.<sup>100</sup> However, in most instances, electricity alone is recovered from incineration as it can be easily distributed and sold via the national grid. Dr Colin Church, Director of Resource, Atmosphere and Sustainability at Defra told us that there are currently 42 incinerator plants in England and all those that Defra supports have the capacity to use heat; but only a very small number—“a handful”—use it.<sup>101</sup>

**76. *The Government should encourage the use of heat outputs from incinerators for local district heating for buildings and/or for industrial processes to gain maximum efficiencies from incineration processes. Defra should explore the barriers to using heat recovery and collaborate with DECC and DCLG to ensure that Government policies, planning permissions, permits and incentives are all aligned to enable higher efficiencies for incineration plants.***

77. The use of incinerators for waste treatment can be controversial due to worries over health and environmental risk from the pollutants that can be released into the atmosphere (most significantly, dioxin and furans) and concerns that availability of incinerator capacity could have a negative impact on recycling rates. UKWIN told us that recycling is harmed by incineration for various reasons, including the presence of incineration capacity and government subsidies for incineration discouraging investment in recycling, the long-term lock-in of money and feedstock to existing and proposed incineration capacity, and the fact that the true costs of incineration are not reflected in the price of treatment.<sup>102</sup> UKWIN also provided us with data showing an apparent correlation between high rates of incineration and low rates of recycling.<sup>103</sup>

78. In response to the concerns about harmful emissions and environmental impact, witnesses including ESA and CIWM assured us that this is one of the most tightly regulated industrial process in Europe.<sup>104</sup> Public Health England’s position is that modern, well-managed incinerators make only a small contribution to local concentrations of air pollutants and that the risks to human health from these plants are likely to be very small and not detectable.<sup>105</sup>

79. Concerns about the possible negative impact on recycling rates tend to focus on the typically long-term contracts entered into by local authorities for the supply of waste feedstock to the incinerator. Once the incinerator infrastructure exists it needs to be fed with waste so local authorities commonly agree to supply a minimum or fixed tonnage of waste to the incinerator (or pay a fine). This is referred to as “put or pay”. The commercial risk of higher recycling rates and changing waste legislation or policy (i.e. banning incineration of food waste) is therefore also taken by the local authority. Some witnesses,

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100 Q33

101 Q278

102 UKWIN [\[WME 0025\]](#) para 2

103 UKWIN [\[WME 0025\]](#) para 6.40. For example, based on 2012/13 data, Westminster City Council incinerate 82.46% and recycle 13.15% of collected waste.

104 Q31 and Q34

105 Public Health England Position Statement, [Impact on health of emissions to air from municipal waste incinerators](#)

such as Zero Waste England and UKWIN, argued that “put or pay” leads to a perverse incentive for local authorities to withdraw recycling schemes to ensure that they can comply with their contractual obligations for waste supply to incinerators. Similarly, Oxfordshire County Council told us that they have no minimum tonnage contracted with the energy-from-waste facility they use which enables the council to reduce and recycle as much waste as possible. Consequently, its recycling rates are around 60%.<sup>106</sup>

80. Conversely, the Resource Association believe that:

high levels of recycling are not incompatible with the use of thermal treatment for some municipal waste alongside the near elimination of landfill as an option, but we should be wary of the problem of over-capacity in incineration now being faced by some European colleagues.<sup>107</sup>

This view is reinforced by evidence showing that the four top performing EU countries with over 50% recycling rates also operate some of the highest levels of energy-from-waste capacity.<sup>108</sup>

81. When we asked the Minister how the Government ensures that only genuinely residual waste is sent to incinerators, he told us that the key pressure is gate fees—i.e. the charge that must be paid to dispose of waste in an incineration facility. However, we are concerned about the effectiveness of this singular mechanism following evidence we received about “put or pay” contracts and negative impacts on recycling rates.

**82. In most cases, the environmental benefits of recycling household waste are higher than sending it to energy-from-waste technologies such as incineration. However, we do not think that high levels of recycling are incompatible with the use of incineration for genuinely residual waste.**

*83. We urge Defra to ensure that waste sent to energy-from-waste plants such as incinerators is only genuinely residual waste. We ask Defra to assess whether the use of gate fees is sufficient to achieve this aim and to confirm whether additional interventions, such as regulatory requirements to remove dry recyclables or higher gate fees have been fully considered.*

## Waste fires

84. During 2012 and 2013, 595 incidents of fire were reported at privately operated waste management sites. This represents an average of one fire for every 18 such sites.<sup>109</sup> Waste fires can burn for days and have significant impacts, including:

- polluting the environment;

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<sup>106</sup> Oxfordshire County Council [WME 0013] para 3.1

<sup>107</sup> Resource Association [WME 0068] Executive summary

<sup>108</sup> SITA UK [WME 0075] para 2; Veolia [WME 0050] para 5.3

<sup>109</sup> HC Deb, 8 April 2014, [Col 211W](#) [Commons written answer]

- harm, cost and inconvenience caused to local communities;
- public health issues;
- firefighter safety; and
- straining the resources of local authorities, the fire service and the Environment Agency.

In addition, it is often valuable recyclates which burn causing significant financial loss to the owner of the site.

85. The Environment Agency regulates waste management facilities, including monitoring and enforcement issues, and licensing and monitoring transport of waste. The operator of a waste management site holds a permit issued by the Environment Agency, setting out the measures that must be taken to minimise pollution and harm to health, including carrying out risk assessments and putting in place an accident plan to reduce fire risk. In response to the numerous occurrences of waste fires, the Environment Agency issued fire safety guidance for waste and recycling site operators in October 2013.<sup>110</sup> The guidance addresses fire prevention as the key for operators of waste sites. It recommends keeping sources of ignition at least six metres away from stacks of combustible material and introducing a regular maintenance and inspection programme. Storage times is another area identified as a risk. The guidance sets a six-month limit on how long RDF and smaller fractions of waste (known as ‘fines’) can be stockpiled.

86. More recently, the Chief Fire Officers’ Association addressed the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Fire Safety and Guidance to inform members of both Houses of the collaborative work being undertaken with the Environment Agency and the waste sector to develop a fire code of practice; to share data and information; and to revise national operational guidance on fighting fires.

87. The Minister acknowledged that there are issues around the resources of fire and rescue services, as well as the fact that some operators are not complying with the conditions of their permits. He also confirmed that Defra has secured an extra £5 million to deal with waste crime (including waste fires) and was working with the Environment Agency to work out how to make the best use of that money.<sup>111</sup> In order to tackle the problem of waste fires, he explained that “it is important that we get tough on the operators that are not living up to their permits”.<sup>112</sup>

**88. We commend the work of the Environment Agency assisting operators with the problem of waste fires and we support the work being undertaken by the Chief Fire Officers’ Association in relation to this serious issue.**

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110 Environment Agency Technical Guidance Note ([TGN7.01](#))

111 Q290

112 Q289

***89. We expect Defra and DCLG to take action to address the frequent occurrence of fires at waste management sites and to support the development of the fire code of practice by the Chief Fire Officers' Association. Defra must ensure that additional resources are deployed in the best way possible to monitor and enforce the conditions of the requisite permits.***

## Conclusions and recommendations

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### Role of Defra

1. Valuing waste as a resource is increasingly important for the economy and the environment. One of Defra's key priorities is to improve the environment. Sustainable waste and resource management should play a key role in achieving this aim. (Paragraph 6)
2. The investment and innovative solutions that businesses bring to the waste management sector are invaluable, but this does not remove the need for a clear framework of Government policy, legislation and guidance within which such businesses can thrive. (Paragraph 15)
3. *We recommend that Ministers actively reassure interested parties that waste policy remains a priority. In order to address concerns in the sector, Defra should immediately clarify its definition and interpretation of "clear market failure", explain how the market is monitored by the Government for signs of such failure, and confirm the criteria which must be met to identify areas where businesses are "better placed to act".* (Paragraph 16)
4. Co-ordination and consistency between all Government departments involved with waste policy is essential. Defra's policies and guidance should not be undermined by contradictory messages from other Government departments. (Paragraph 21)
5. *We recommend that, rather than stepping back, Defra takes the lead role and responsibility for waste management policy as part of its departmental priority to improve the environment. This should include appointing a Minister with clear responsibility for co-ordinating across all governmental departments and ensuring consistency of approach in terms of legislation, policy, incentives and communications.* (Paragraph 22)

### Recycling rates in England

6. We are concerned that the 2020 EU target of 50% household recycling will not be met in England without clear Government leadership and renewed policy drivers and support from Defra. (Paragraph 25)
7. *We urge Defra to work alongside WRAP and industry to develop a comprehensive plan to be implemented in the event that England's recycling rate continues to slow. We recommend that Defra learns from successful approaches in countries such as Wales and Ministers consider introducing refreshed policies and re-introducing requirements such as statutory recycling targets for local authorities alongside the requisite funding support.* (Paragraph 28)
8. On balance, we conclude that local authorities should remain responsible for addressing the specific challenges and barriers to increasing recycling rates that they face at a local level. However, there is scope for guidance and best practice to be shared at a national level in order to move towards a more standardised approach

and to assist local authorities to improve their individual performance. (Paragraph 34)

9. *Defra should facilitate and encourage learning from best practice actions to help local authorities gravitate towards the best possible service in their area. Working with the Local Government Association, we urge Defra to share information on successful approaches with local authorities to enable them to develop the most effective services for their particular local circumstances.* (Paragraph 35)
10. Successful communication campaigns must be sustained to keep householders engaged. We commend the work of WRAP and Keep Britain Tidy and strongly believe that the research, advice, support and information provided by these organisations is invaluable. (Paragraph 39)
11. *We are concerned that, despite the significant achievements of both organisations, Defra's funding for WRAP and Keep Britain Tidy has reduced over recent years. We urge Defra to increase the funding if evidence suggests it necessary in the lead up to 2020.* (Paragraph 40)
12. Householders have a key role to play in increasing recycling rates, but household engagement must be improved in order to tackle the common challenges of householder confusion, lack of confidence in the process, and contamination of recyclates. Recycling rates could be significantly improved by the provision of consistent, simple and concise information. (Paragraph 46)
13. *Communication needs to be tailored to local circumstances but Defra should engage with local authorities and provide support at a national level, particularly in relation to common issues and problem areas. We recommend that Defra considers compulsory publication of an annual Register of End Destination of Recyclates by all local authorities and waste management companies involved in the recycling chain, in order to improve access to information and public confidence.* (Paragraph 47)
14. *We support Defra's Reward and Recognition Scheme and expect Defra to use the results to identify and support best practice schemes to be used as prototypes for other local authorities to follow.* (Paragraph 50)
15. *In accordance with the waste hierarchy, we encourage a move towards banning the landfilling of all recyclable waste by 2025 as landfill should only be used for wastes for which there is no better recovery option. However, any such proposals must be signalled well in advance, with appropriate support and alternative infrastructure put in place to guard against disproportionate cost burdens.* (Paragraph 54)
16. *Meeting a 70% recycling target in England for all household waste by 2030 would be challenging but Defra should aspire to achieve recycling rates at the maximum feasible level, with or without European targets.* (Paragraph 55)

### Residual waste treatment

17. *We recommend that Defra analyses data on waste flows and waste flow forecasts in order to provide the waste sector with clear guidance on how much energy-from-waste*

*infrastructure capacity is needed in England to gain an optimal balance between export and local treatment. (Paragraph 60)*

18. We commend Defra for issuing a call for evidence on the practice of exporting RDF and we look forward to Defra's response in due course. (Paragraph 63)
19. *We recommend that, in its response to this Report, Defra include an assessment of the economic impact of building the infrastructure needed to treat the RDF currently exported compared with the economic impact of the current practice of exporting RDF from England to other countries in Europe. (Paragraph 64)*
20. We agree with Defra that the greatest benefit of anaerobic digestion is in dealing with waste feedstock, not purpose-grown crops. However, sourcing appropriate waste feedstock on a consistent basis remains a significant challenge for AD operators and more work is needed to address the issues surrounding separate food waste collections. (Paragraph 70)
21. *The Government must find ways of diverting more food waste out of the residual waste stream by methods which are economically and environmentally viable and suitable to local circumstances. Where food waste is separately collected it should be treated at local AD plants whenever possible to address the problem of sourcing waste feedstock. (Paragraph 71)*
22. *In order to improve the confidence of agricultural customers and improve the stability of the market for digestate, we recommend that further research is undertaken to determine the long-term effects of AD digestate on the quality and composition of soil and crops. (Paragraph 73)*
23. *The Government should encourage the use of heat outputs from incinerators for local district heating for buildings and/or for industrial processes to gain maximum efficiencies from incineration processes. Defra should explore the barriers to using heat recovery and collaborate with DECC and DCLG to ensure that Government policies, planning permissions, permits and incentives are all aligned to enable higher efficiencies for incineration plants. (Paragraph 76)*
24. In most cases, the environmental benefits of recycling household waste are higher than sending it to energy-from-waste technologies such as incineration. However, we do not think that high levels of recycling are incompatible with the use of incineration for genuinely residual waste. (Paragraph 82)
25. *We urge Defra to ensure that waste sent to energy-from-waste plants such as incinerators is only genuinely residual waste. We ask Defra to assess whether the use of gate fees is sufficient to achieve this aim and to confirm whether additional interventions, such as regulatory requirements to remove dry recyclables or higher gate fees have been fully considered. (Paragraph 83)*
26. We commend the work of the Environment Agency assisting operators with the problem of waste fires and we support the work being undertaken by the Chief Fire Officers' Association in relation to this serious issue. (Paragraph 88)

27. *We expect Defra and DCLG to take action to address the frequent occurrence of fires at waste management sites and to support the development of the fire code of practice by the Chief Fire Officers' Association. Defra must ensure that additional resources are deployed in the best way possible to monitor and enforce the conditions of the requisite permits. (Paragraph 89)*

# Formal Minutes

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**Wednesday 15 October 2014**

Members present:  
Miss Anne McIntosh, in the Chair

Richard Drax	Neil Parish
Jim Fitzpatrick	Mr Mark Spencer
Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck	Roger Williams
Sheryll Murray	

Draft Report (*Waste management in England*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 88 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 89 read, amended, and agreed to.

Summary read, amended, and agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair do make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No.134 amend if necessary.

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[Adjourned till Wednesday 22 October at 2.30 pm

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at [Waste management in England - UK Parliament](#).

### Wednesday 11 June 2014

*Question number*

**Steve Lee**, Chief Executive Officer, Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, **Jacob Hayler**, Economist, Environmental Services Association, and **Phil Barton**, Chief Executive, Keep Britain Tidy

[Q1-54](#)

### Wednesday 25 June 2014

**David Palmer-Jones**, Chief Executive, SITA UK, **Jonathan Short**, Founder and Deputy Chairman, ECO Plastics Ltd, and **Dan Cooke**, Director, Viridor

[Q55-92](#)

**Daniel Smyth**, Senior Director, RPS Planning and Development, **Shlomo Downen**, Secretary and National Coordinator, UK Without Incineration Network, and **Julie Hill**, Associate and former Director, Green Alliance

[Q93-123](#)

### Wednesday 2 July 2014

**Dr Andy Rees**, Head of Waste Strategy Branch, Welsh Government

[Q124-152](#)

**Minette Batters**, Deputy President, National Farmers Union, and **Anna Simpson**, Environment Policy Adviser, National Farmers Union

[Q153-178](#)

**Councillor Gary Porter**, Vice Chair, Local Government Association and Leader of South Holland District Council

[Q179-212](#)

### Tuesday 8 July 2014

**Dan Rogerson MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management, and **Dr Colin Church**, Director, Resource, Atmosphere and Sustainability, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

[Q213-295](#)

### Wednesday 9 July 2014

**Dr Liz Goodwin**, Chief Executive Officer, Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP)

[Q296-365](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry web page at [Waste management in England - UK Parliament](#). WME numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Ace UK ([WME0065](#))
- 2 Amdea The Association Of Manufacturers Of Domestic Appliances ([WME0026](#))
- 3 Augean Plc ([WME0069](#))
- 4 Babcock & Wilcox Volund ([WME0004](#))
- 5 Biocentre Technology Ltd ([WME0059](#))
- 6 British Beer & Pub Association ([WME0044](#))
- 7 British Glass ([WME0035](#))
- 8 British Metal Recycling Association ([WME0041](#))
- 9 British Retail Consortium ([WME0053](#))
- 10 British Soft Drinks Association ([WME0036](#))
- 11 Carillion ([WME0046](#))
- 12 Cemex UK Operations ([WME0058](#))
- 13 Ciwem ([WME0043](#))
- 14 Ciwm ([WME0073](#))
- 15 Coca-Cola Enterprises ([WME0001](#))
- 16 Confederation Of Paper Industries ([WME0061](#))
- 17 Cornwall Waste Forum St.Dennis Branch ([WME0002](#))
- 18 Defra ([WME0074](#))
- 19 Department For Environment, Food And Rural Affairs (Defra) ([WME0072](#))
- 20 Derby And South Derbyshire Friends Of The Earth ([WME0031](#))
- 21 Ds Smith ([WME0021](#))
- 22 Eco Plastics ([WME0070](#))
- 23 Enval Limited ([WME0019](#))
- 24 Environmental Services Association ([WME0045](#))
- 25 Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd ([WME0055](#))
- 26 Food And Drink Federation ([WME0042](#))
- 27 Greater London Authority ([WME0032](#))
- 28 Green Alliance ([WME0024](#))
- 29 Incpen ([WME0003](#))
- 30 Institution of Civil Engineers ([WME0038](#))
- 31 Keep Britain Tidy ([WME0057](#))
- 32 Larac ([WME0047](#))
- 33 Leicestershire Waste Partnership ([WME0012](#))
- 34 Lga ([WME0078](#))
- 35 LGA ([WME0020](#))
- 36 London Councils ([WME0018](#))
- 37 London Waste And Recycling Board ([WME0007](#))
- 38 Louise Brookes ([WME0014](#))
- 39 Mechline Developments ([WME0079](#))

- 40 Mechline Developments Ltd ([WME0034](#))
- 41 Merseyside Recycling And Waste Authority (On Behalf Of Merseyside And Halton Waste Partnership) ([WME0052](#))
- 42 Mineral Products Association ([WME0051](#))
- 43 Nappy Alliance ([WME0010](#))
- 44 National Association Of Waste Disposal Officers (Nawdo) ([WME0011](#))
- 45 National Farmers Union ([WME0062](#))
- 46 Natural Environment Research Council ([WME0008](#))
- 47 New Earth Solutions Group Ltd/ Neat Technology Group Ltd ([WME0030](#))
- 48 North London Waste Authority (Nlwa) ([WME0066](#))
- 49 North Yorkshire County Council ([WME0017](#))
- 50 Novamont Spa ([WME0049](#))
- 51 Oxfordshire County Council ([WME0013](#))
- 52 Peter Jones ([WME0006](#))
- 53 Professor Nicky Gregson ([WME0063](#))
- 54 Remarkable Engagement On Behalf Of Fcc Environment ([WME0056](#))
- 55 Renewable Energy Association (Rea) ([WME0048](#))
- 56 Resource Association ([WME0068](#))
- 57 Rps Planning & Development ([WME0028](#))
- 58 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith MP ([WME0071](#))
- 59 Sita UK ([WME0005](#))
- 60 Sita UK ([WME0075](#))
- 61 Suffolk Waste Partnership ([WME0039](#))
- 62 Textile Recycling Association ([WME0037](#))
- 63 The Anaerobic Digestion & Biogas Association ([WME0060](#))
- 64 UK Environmental Law Association ([WME0033](#))
- 65 United Kingdom Without Incineration Network (Ukwin) ([WME0025](#))
- 66 Veolia Environmental Services UK Plc ([WME0050](#))
- 67 Viridor ([WME0054](#))
- 68 Wood Panel Industries Federation ([WME0022](#))
- 69 Wrap ([WME0064](#))
- 70 Wrap ([WME0076](#))
- 71 Wyre Forest Friends Of The Earth ([WME0015](#))
- 72 Zero Waste England Ltd ([WME0016](#))

# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at [Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee - UK Parliament](#).

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

## Session 2014–15

First Report	Winter Floods	HC 240
Second Report	Food security	HC 243
Third Report	Appointment hearing of the Chair of Environment Agency	HC 545

## Session 2013–14

First Report	Draft Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Bill	HC 95 (HC 637)
Second Report	Vaccination against bovine TB	HC 258 (HC 705)
Third Report	Managing Flood Risk	HC 330 (HC 706)
Fourth Report	Wild Animals in Circuses	HC 553 (HC 746)
Fifth Report	Food Contamination	HC 141 (HC 707)
Sixth Report	Rural Communities	HC 602 (HC 764)
Seventh Report	CAP implementation 2014–2020	HC 745 (HC 1088)
Eighth Report	Appointment of Chairman of Natural England	HC 890
Ninth Report	Departmental Annual Report 2012–13	HC 741 (HC 1283)
Tenth Report	Tree health and plant biosecurity	HC 469 (HC (Session 2014–15) 242)
Eleventh Report	Primates as pets	HC 984 (HC (Session 2014–15) 656)

## Session 2012–13

First Report	Greening the Common Agricultural Policy	HC 170 (HC 654)
Second Report	The Water White Paper	HC 374 (HC 602)
Third Report	Pre-appointment hearing: Chair of the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat)	HC 471-I & -II
Fourth Report	Natural Environment White Paper	HC 492 (HC 653)
Fifth Report	Desinewed Meat	HC 120 (Cm 8462)
Sixth Report	Draft Water Bill	HC 674 (Cm 8643)
Seventh Report	Dog Control and Welfare	HC 575 (HC 1092)
Eighth Report	Contamination of Beef Products	HC 946 (HC 1085)

## Session 2010–12

First Report	Future Flood and Water Management Legislation	HC 522 (HC 922)
Second Report	The Marine Policy Statement	HC 635

Third Report	Farming in the Uplands	HC 556 (HC 953)
Fourth Report	The draft National Policy statement (NPS) on Waste Water	HC 736
Fifth Report	The Common Agricultural Policy after 2013	HC 671 (HC 1356)
Sixth Report	Implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy: Domestic Fisheries Management	HC 858 (HC 1485)
Seventh Report	Pre-appointment hearing: Chair of Gangmasters Licensing Authority	HC 1400-I & -II
Eighth Report	EU proposals for the dairy sector and the future of the dairy industry	HC 952 (HC 1548)
Ninth Report	The Welfare of Laying Hens Directive—Implications for the egg industry	HC 830 (HC 1664)
Tenth Report	The outcome of the independent Farming Regulation Task Force	HC 1266 (HC 1669)
Eleventh Report	The draft National Policy Statement for Hazardous Waste	HC 1465 (HC (Session 2012–13) 540)
Twelfth Report	EU proposals for reform of the Common Fisheries Policy	HC 1563-I & -II (HC (Session 2012–13) 108)
First Special Report	The National Forest: Government response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2009–10	HC 400
Second Special Report	Dairy Farmers of Britain: Government response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2009–10	HC 401