



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# Household recycling in the UK

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1. Overview of recycling in the UK
2. Legislation
3. A circular economy
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# Summary

## Waste and recycling legislation

The majority of waste legislation derives from the European Union, which is implemented in the UK largely through statutory instruments. Within the UK many aspects of EU waste legislation and policy implementation are devolved. For example, each of the four devolved nations has the ability to manage its own municipal waste and set its own recycling targets. Some aspects of waste management policy are managed at a UK level, but in close cooperation with the devolved administrations – for example, the UK Government leads on tax measures to encourage recycling.

## Recycling targets

The UK is currently required to meet an existing EU target of recycling a minimum of 50% (by weight) of its household waste by 2020. Recycling rates have increased markedly since 2000 but concerns have been raised in recent years that household recycling rates have started to plateau.

Wales is the only nation within the UK to have already met the 50% requirement, reporting a household recycling rate of 64% in 2016/17. England, Scotland and Northern Ireland all have household recycling rates between 44-46%. In 2016, the UK as a whole reported a household recycling rate of 44.6%.

Defra's policy for England is an ambition of zero avoidable waste by 2050 and zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042. A new resources and waste strategy, expected later in 2018, will set further policy in this area. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland also have zero waste policies, but each has diverged in terms of specific targets and approaches. Wales is the only administration in the UK to have introduced statutory targets for municipal waste recycling which must be met by local authorities.

## EU Circular Economy Package

An EU Circular Economy Package was formally agreed by the European Council on 22 May 2018. The package includes sets a recycling target for municipal waste of 65% by 2035. By 2035 the amount of municipal waste landfilled must be reduced to 10% or less of the total amount of municipal waste generated. There are also new recycling targets for specific types of packaging waste.

"Action on Plastics" was identified as a priority in the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan. Following on from this a [European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy](#) was adopted by the European Commission on 16 January, 2018, which sets an ambition that "all plastic packaging on the EU market will be recyclable by 2030, the consumption of single-use plastics will be reduced and the intentional use of microplastics will be restricted."

The implications of this package for the UK will depend on the speed at which the strategy progresses through the European institutions and the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. The UK Government also has its own non-EU related policies for reducing plastics consumption.

## Barriers to recycling

A number of barriers to increasing the recycling rate have been identified, including:

- Losing value in households: in 2015 only 42% of England's household waste was segregated at source as recyclables, which was significantly lower than levels achieved in the best performing European countries.

## 5 Household recycling in the UK

- Poor material capture: local authorities only provide a limited proportion of households with collection systems for the major recyclables.
- Housing mix and multi-occupancy dwellings: recycling rates are falling in areas where there is an increase in multi-occupancy dwellings. Rates also tend to be lower where there are challenges with social deprivation, urban classifications, education, language and residential stability.
- Weaker policy levers: high performers in the EU use stronger incentives such as 'pay-as-you-throw' schemes where householders are charged for having non-recyclable waste collected; and landfill/incineration restrictions for some materials.

In order to help increase household recycling rates, in September 2016, WRAP published a voluntary [framework for greater consistency in household recycling](#) and the first [National Recycling Guidelines](#) were published by WRAP in October 2016.

### **Brexit**

Most commentators agree that EU law has been instrumental in increasing recycling rates in the UK. Until a final Brexit agreement is reached with the EU, much of what will happen to the waste management regime following Brexit is the subject of speculation. The Government has stated that it remains "committed to making the most of our resources, to reducing waste and to increasing reuse and recycling." Some stakeholders see Brexit as an opportunity to rethink how recycling targets could be reimaged.

While the [European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2018](#) will copy across waste and recycling targets, the role that EU institutions play in monitoring and enforcing these targets will be lost. There has been considerable debate over the loss of the role of EU institutions in monitoring and enforcing environmental law following Brexit and over the future of EU environmental principles. In response to concerns raised, the Government held a consultation on [environmental principles and governance](#) from May-August 2018. It proposed the creation of a new statutory independent environmental watchdog to hold government to account on its environmental obligations; and options for establishing environmental principles in the UK. A draft Environmental Principles and Governance Bill is due to be published by the end of the year to begin the legal process of putting this in place.

A Library briefing paper, [Brexit and the Environment](#), provides more context and further information about these issues in relation to waste and the environment more generally .



# 1. Overview of recycling in the UK

## 1.1 UK trends: household recycling

### Measuring progress against the EU 2020 50% recycling target

The Waste Framework Directive [Commission Decision 2011/753/EU](#) allows a choice of four options and calculation methods for recycling targets. The UK currently applies the target to the third option: “the preparation for reuse and the recycling of household waste”.

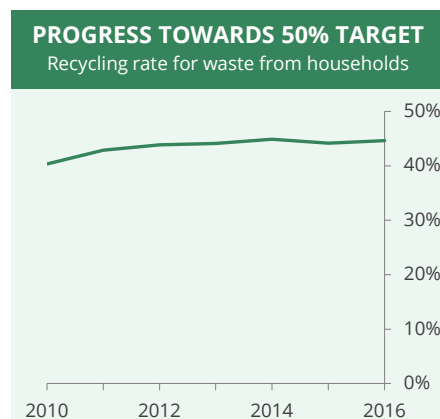
#### Calculation method 3:

Recycling rate of household waste in % =

Recycled amount of household waste ÷

Total household waste amounts excluding certain waste categories<sup>1</sup>

In 2016 the UK recycling rate for waste from households was **44.6%**. This is the measure used to report UK-wide household recycling against the EU target for 2020 of 50%. This rate has been reported/calculated since 2010 when it was **40.4%**. Trends are shown opposite. There has been relatively little change in the recycling rate in recent years. The amount of household waste not recycled was 15.1 million tonnes in 2016, up from a low of 14.4 Million tonnes in 2013.<sup>1</sup>



## 1.2 Recycling rates within the UK

There is no standard way to measure household recycling rates which means that making direct comparisons (within the UK or across the EU) can be misleading. Each local authority across the UK must enter data in accordance with the relevant national guidance, as set out on [WasteDataFlow](#).

In order to provide a harmonised UK indicator with a comparable calculation in each of the four national authorities, Defra introduced the “waste from households” calculation in May 2014. This approach aims to provide a harmonised UK indicator with a comparable calculation in each of the four national authorities and to provide a consistent approach to report recycling rates at a UK level on a calendar year basis.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Defra, [UK Statistics on Waste](#), 18 February 2018

<sup>2</sup> Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2013-14](#), 18 November 2014 [accessed 18 August 2015]

## 7 Household recycling in the UK

The table opposite gives figures for each of the home countries. Wales had the highest rate in 2016 at almost 57% and has been above 50% since 2012. Scotland had the lowest level at just under 43%, but has seen a faster rate of improvement since 2010 than in England or Northern Ireland.

National authorities in the UK have previously had a varied approach to measuring household recycling rates. For example, before May 2014, English data measured all local authority collected waste (i.e. including waste types not considered to have come directly from households, such as street bins, street sweepings, parks and grounds waste and compost like output) and was reported on a financial year basis. Scottish data also measured all local authority collected waste up until 2012/13; Wales still measures all local authority collected waste.

### England

Progress on recycling under the broader 'household waste' measure used in England is illustrated opposite. The rate reached **43.7%** in 2016/17, up from **11.2%** at the start of the last decade, but has shown little improvement over the past five years.<sup>3</sup>

### Wales

The Welsh Government reports recycling rates based on the amount prepared for reuse/recycling/composting as a percentage of total waste. The Household rate has increased from **50.5%** in 2012-13 to **61.4%** in 2016-17. The 2016-17 figure increases to **63.8%** if it includes all local authority collected waste (ie. including non-household waste).<sup>4</sup> The chart below FROM THE Welsh Government shows the recycling rate back to 2000/01. The increase in the overall recycling rate has been very consistent across the whole period.

### VARIATION IN RECYCLING IN THE UK

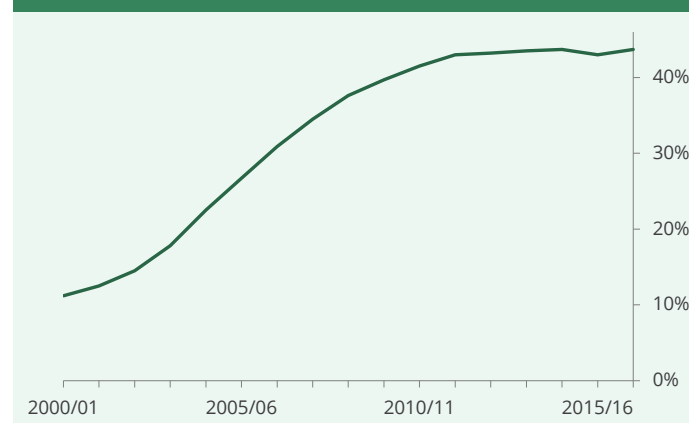
Recycling rate for waste from households

	England	Scotland	Wales	NI	UK
2010	41.2%	32.5%	44.0%	37.8%	<b>40.4%</b>
2011	43.3%	37.1%	49.0%	40.0%	<b>42.9%</b>
2012	44.1%	38.2%	52.1%	40.7%	<b>43.9%</b>
2013	44.2%	39.6%	52.5%	41.5%	<b>44.1%</b>
2014	44.8%	41.0%	54.8%	42.5%	<b>44.9%</b>
2015	43.9%	42.0%	55.5%	42.0%	<b>44.2%</b>
2016	44.2%	42.8%	56.7%	43.0%	<b>44.6%</b>

Source: UK statistics on waste data table 1.1, DEFRA, 22 February 2018

### IMPROVEMENT IN RECYCLING STALLS AFTER 2011

household recycling rate in England

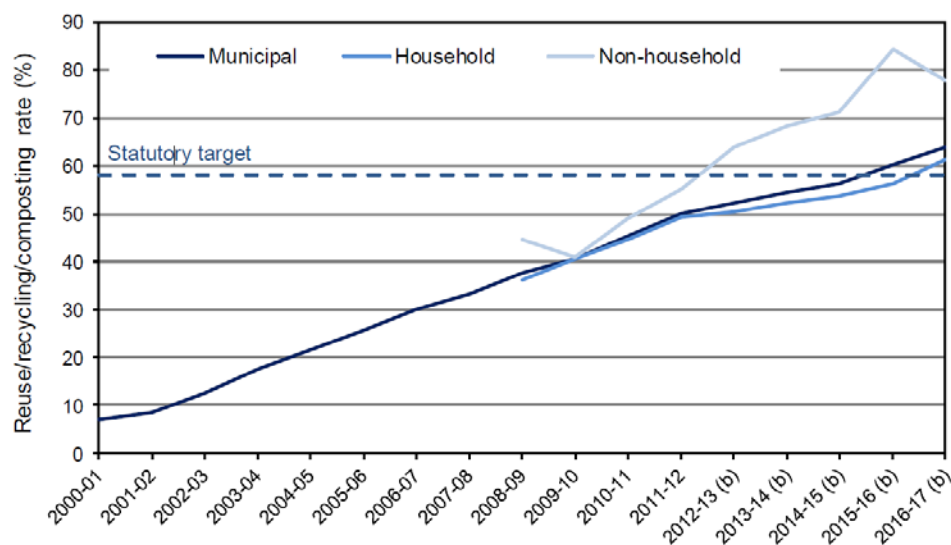


<sup>3</sup> Defra, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2016-17](#), 5 December 2017

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government, [Local Authority municipal waste management 2016/17](#), 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018

## RECYCLED, REUSED AND COMPOSTING MUNICIPAL WASTE IN WALES

Rates by waste type

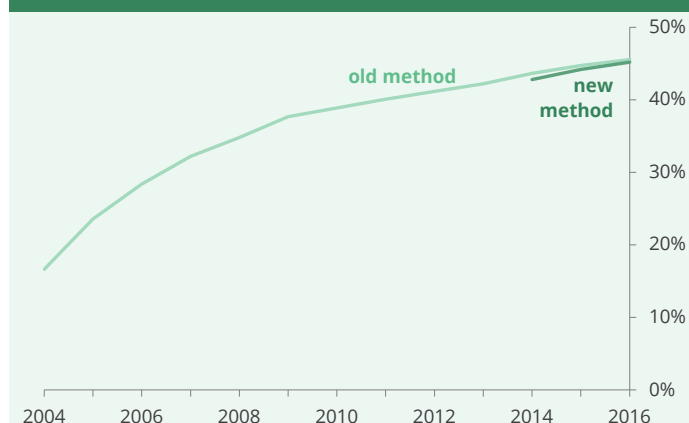


## Scotland

The latest household recycling data for Scotland is for 2016. When the proportion of waste recycled or prepared for reuse was **45.2%**. A new calculation method was introduced in 2014 so consistent trends on this measure are limited. The rate in 2014 was **42.8%**. Household rates under the old methodology increased from **17%** in 2004 to **46%** in 2016. Progress has slowed somewhat since 2010 as shown opposite.<sup>5 6</sup>

### STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN RECYCLING FROM 2009

household recycling rate in Scotland

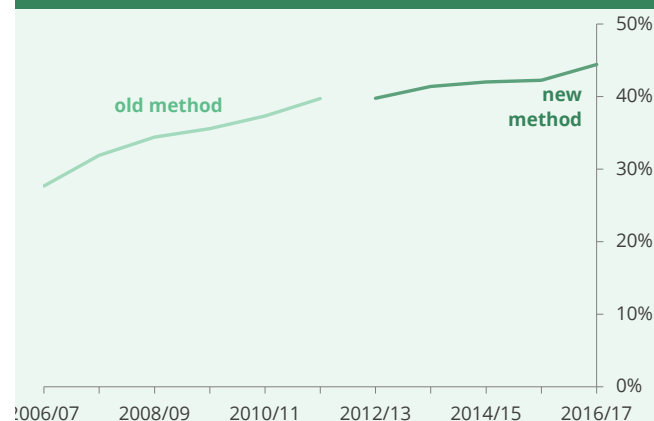


## Northern Ireland

In 2016/17 Northern Ireland's household recycling/reuse/composting rate was **44.4%**. This rate has increased steadily from 2012/13. Earlier figures use a different definition that excludes reuse. This series showed an improvement in recycling rates from 27.7% in 2006/07 to 39.7% in 2011/12.<sup>7</sup> Trends in the two measures are given in the following chart.

### RECYCLING UP IN 2016/17

household recycling rate in Northern Ireland



<sup>5</sup> SEPA, [Household waste – summary data 2016](#), [accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018]

<sup>6</sup> Scotland's Environment, [Household waste tool](#)

<sup>7</sup> Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics, [Annual Report 2016/17](#), 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017



## 2. Legislation

The majority of waste legislation derives from the European Union, which is implemented in the UK largely through statutory instruments.<sup>8</sup> The aim is provide environmental protections as well as creating markets and encouraging resource efficiency.

Within the UK many aspects of EU waste legislation and implementation are devolved. For example, each of the four devolved nations has the ability to manage its own municipal waste and set its own recycling targets. Some aspects of waste management policy are managed at a UK level, but in close cooperation with the devolved administrations – for example, the UK Government leads on tax measures to encourage recycling. While environment policy is generally devolved, policy on the shipment of waste falls within the export and import reservation.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.1 EU Waste Framework Directive

Current UK recycling policy is predominantly driven by the EU Waste Framework Directive ([2008/98/EC](#)) which provides the framework under which waste management policy is implemented throughout the EU. It also provides for ‘daughter Directives’ which deal with particular types of waste.

Although the Waste Framework Directive applies to the UK as a whole, waste is a devolved matter so the requirements are transposed into law in each UK national authority separately:

- In England and Wales the requirements are transposed through the [Waste \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2011](#).
- In Scotland the requirements are included in the Zero Waste Management Plan for Scotland, including by transposition through [the Waste \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#).<sup>10</sup>
- In Northern Ireland the requirements are transposed through the [Waste Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#).<sup>11</sup>

### Waste management hierarchy

An overarching requirement of the EU Waste Framework Directive is that the UK applies the waste management hierarchy. This sets out the order of priority to apply to products and waste and shows that prevention and re-use options should be considered before recycling.<sup>12</sup> This is in line with moving towards the aims of a circular economy. The waste hierarchy is depicted by Defra as follows:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> HM Government, [Environmental Services Sector Report](#) submitted to the Exiting the European Union Committee, published 21 December 2017, para 77

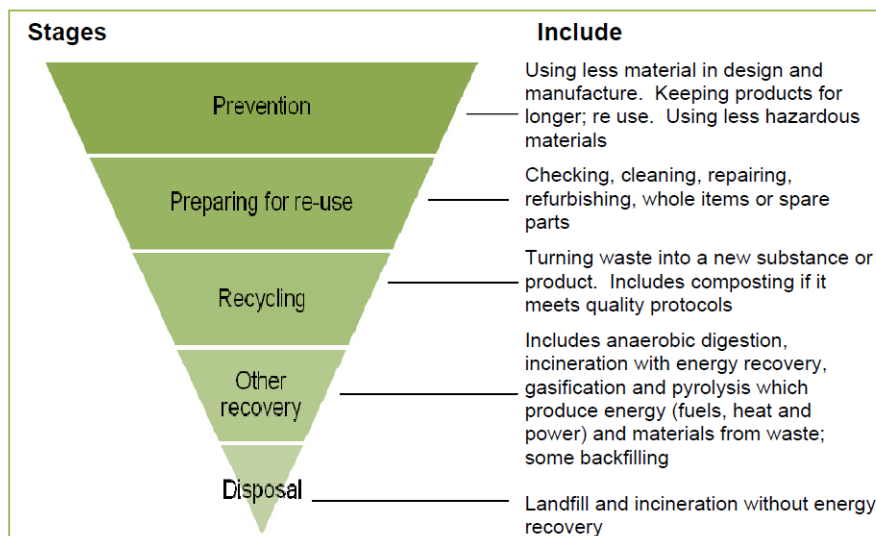
<sup>9</sup> HM Government, [Environmental Services Sector Report](#) submitted to the Exiting the European Union Committee, published 21 December 2017, p35

<sup>10</sup> See SPICe briefing on the [Waste \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#), 16 March 2012

<sup>11</sup> See [Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy](#), October 2013

<sup>12</sup> EU Waste Framework Directive, Article 4

<sup>13</sup> Defra, [Guidance on applying the Waste Hierarchy](#), June 2011



## Prevention

The EU Waste Framework Directive ([2008/98/EC](#)) required Member States to have established waste prevention programmes not later than 12 December 2013, and to review such programmes at least every 6 years.

Defra published a waste prevention strategy, [Prevention is better than cure: the role of waste prevention in moving to a more resource efficient, circular economy](#), in December 2013 which sets out the Waste Prevention Programme for England in accordance with the requirements of the EU Waste Framework Directive ([2008/98/EC](#)).

Waste prevention focuses on actions taken before something becomes waste that reduces:

- the quantity of waste produced;
- the adverse impacts of waste produced on the environment and human health; or
- the content of harmful substances in materials and products.

## Re-use

The Waste Framework Directive defines 'Reuse' as

any operation by which products or components that are not waste are used again for the same purposes for which they were conceived.

Reuse occurs at the end of a product's 'first life' through a free exchange, a direct sale or via collection or disposal at a local household waste recycling centre in order to be used in a 'second life'. Direct exchange between individuals or via a third party (for example, through a charity shop or eBay) falls within the definition of reuse. Examples of items commonly reused include: furniture, clothing, books, electrical items, CDs and DVDs.

The Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP), has developed an online tool to show the benefits of increasing reuse. It is available on the WRAP website [here](#). On its [Partnerships are key to success in re-use](#) page WRAP lists the following as benefits of reuse:

### Re-use helps the environment

With fewer raw materials needed for the production of new goods, fewer products are sent to landfill. In 2012 alone 1.5 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e\* were saved by re-use in the UK.

### Re-use helps the third sector

Charities, social enterprises and other third sector organisations benefit from re-use by an estimated £430 million\* annually.

### Re-use helps create jobs

In 2012 alone 11,000 FTE (full time equivalent) jobs\* were supported by re-use organisations. Volunteers in the sector accounted for a further 15,700 FTE jobs\*. Many subsequently gained employment, saving the taxpayer £93 million\* in welfare payments, so it's good news for everyone.

### Re-use helps us all

By keeping goods in circulation for longer, and by offering more affordable products, UK households benefitted by an estimated £6 billion\* from the re-use sector. There's value in your unwanted items – pass them on.

\*Estimated figure. Reference: WRAP (2015) Benefits of Reuse calculator.

## Recycling

The definition of recycling is set out in the EU Waste Framework Directive as:

any recovery operation by which waste materials are reprocessed into products, materials or substances whether for the original or other purposes. It includes the reprocessing of organic material but does not include energy recovery and the reprocessing into materials that are to be used as fuels or for backfilling operations.<sup>14</sup>

Separate to the Directive, under section 29(7) of the [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#), the Secretary of State may make regulations that set out what constitutes the treatment of waste for purposes related to waste on land.

### Household waste

The Directive sets specific recycling targets and requires that Member States take the necessary measures designed to achieve the following targets in relation to household waste:

by 2020 the preparing for re-use and the recycling of waste materials such as at least paper, metal, plastic and glass from households and possibly from other origins as far as these waste streams are similar to waste from households, shall be increased to a **minimum of overall 50% by weight**.<sup>15</sup>

The UK is required to recycle at least 50% of household waste (by weight) by 2020.

'Preparing for reuse' is defined in the EU Waste Framework Directive as:

checking, cleaning or repairing operations by which products or components of products that have become waste are prepared so that they can be reused without any other pre-processing.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Article 3(17)

<sup>15</sup> Article 11(2)(a)

<sup>16</sup> Article 3(16)

Pursuant to section 45 of the [Environmental Protection Act 1990 \(as amended\)](#), it is the legal duty of each waste collection authority to collect most household waste in their area and they may also make arrangements to collect commercial and industrial waste from premises if so requested. The waste collection authority takes the lead in recycling operations by being required to make a recycling plan for the waste they collect,<sup>17</sup> and being required to separate certain waste for recycling from the waste disposal stream.

### Collection systems

The Directive requires Member States to take measures to promote high quality recycling and to set up separate collections of waste where technically, environmentally and economically practicable and appropriate to meet the necessary quality standards for the relevant recycling sectors.<sup>18</sup>

From 1 January 2015, the [Waste \(England and Wales\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2012](#) have required public and private waste collectors to set up separate collections of waste for paper, plastic, metal and glass where necessary to ensure recovery operations and where technically, environmentally and economically practicable (TEEP). The [Explanatory Memorandum](#) to the Regulations confirms that “where such collection is not so necessary or not so practicable the duties relating to separate collection do not apply, and collection may accordingly be by other means”. This means that, in practice, collections of mixed types of recycled waste may still exist but they are not viewed as a form of separate collection.<sup>19</sup>

The duty applies to commercial, industrial and household waste and has been put in place to ensure improvement in the quality of recyclate material produced by materials recovery facilities (MRFs). MRFs separate and prepare for onward reprocessing recyclable materials collected by local authorities.

### Construction and demolition waste

The Directive also requires that Member States take the necessary measures designed to achieve the following targets in relation to construction and demolition waste:

by 2020, the preparing for re-use, recycling and other material recovery, including backfilling operations using waste to substitute other materials, of non-hazardous construction and demolition waste excluding naturally occurring material defined in category 17 05 04 in the list of waste shall be increased to a **minimum of 70 % by weight**.<sup>20</sup>

The UK is required to recycle at least 70% of construction and demolition waste (by weight) by 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended), section 49

<sup>18</sup> See European Commission [guidance](#) (paragraphs 4.3.4 and 4.4) for more information on the TEEP test [accessed 7 September 2015]

<sup>19</sup> The UK Government initially took the view that commingled recycling waste collections constituted a form of separate collections. However, following judicial review, Defra and the Welsh Government accepted that this did not properly implement the requirements of the Waste Framework Directive and the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 were amended by the Waste (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Article 11(2)(b)

Construction and demolition materials include the debris generated during the construction, renovation, and demolition of buildings, roads, and bridges and often contain bulky, heavy materials. Such materials include concrete, wood, metals, plastic, insulation, ceramic materials, glass and salvaged building components.

### **What happens if the UK fails to meet the recycling targets?**

The European Directive requirements are legally binding on all Member States. Fines for non-compliance are not automatic but follow a set process that is described in detail in a House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: [How the EU fines Member States](#).<sup>21</sup>

The UK remains bound by all EU requirements until a date of formal exit from the EU. While the *European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018* will copy across specific waste related legislation, the enforcement and monitoring roles provided by EU institutions are unlikely to continue past the date of exit. The UK Government has published proposals for consultation on [Environmental Principles and Governance after EU Exit](#). For further information on this see section 6 below and Library briefing paper, [Brexit and the Environment](#), 8 August 2018.

## **2.2 EU Packaging Directive**

In addition to the recycling targets set out in the EU Waste Framework Directive, the UK has a separate statutory producer responsibility regime for packaging, covering the whole of the supply chain from the raw material to the finished packaging. Packaging is any material used to hold, protect, handle, deliver or present goods.

The EU Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste ([94/62/EC](#)) is implemented in Great Britain by the [Producer Responsibility Obligations \(Packaging Waste\) Regulation 2007](#) (as amended) and the [Packaging \(Essential Requirements\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#).

The regime places a legal obligation on businesses over a certain size which make or use packaging to ensure that a proportion of the packaging they place on the market is recovered and recycled. Relevant businesses discharge their responsibilities by collecting evidence of waste packaging recycling and recovery equivalent to the weight of their obligations from accredited reprocessors and exporters. Packaging Recovery Notes (PRNs) or Packaging Export Recovery Notes (PERNs) are issued by accredited businesses and provide the evidence for compliance.

Full details on the current rules on packaging producer responsibilities is provided on the GOV.UK website [Packaging waste: producer responsibilities](#), and is not reproduced in this note.

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<sup>21</sup> Library Briefing, [How the EU fines Member States](#), SN/IA/3958



## Performance against packaging targets

The UK met all of the minimum recycling/recovery targets in 2016 as illustrated in the table opposite. **45%** of plastic packaging was recycled or recovered<sup>22</sup> in 2016, less than the rates for paper/card, glass and metal, but double the minimum target.

PERFORMANCE v TARGET: PACKAGING RECYCLED		
% of waste recycled or recovered. UK 2016 provisional data		
	Performance	Target
Metal	69%	50%
Paper and cardboard	82%	60%
Glass	67%	60%
Plastic	45%	23%
Wood	31%	15%
<b>Total recycling</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>Total recycling and recovery</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>60%</b>

Source: [UK statistics on waste - February 2018 update](#)

## Plastic packaging

The rate of plastic packaging recycled or recovered has increased from **25%** in 2012. The estimated volume of plastic packaging waste has remained broadly stable since 2013.

The latest international comparisons are for 2015 when the UK recycling/recovery rate of **39.4%** was slightly below the EU average of **40.3%**. The UK figure was higher than that in France (25.5%) but below rates in other large EU countries including Germany (48.8%), Spain (44.0%) and Italy (41.1%).<sup>23</sup>

## 2.3 EU Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive

Separate EU policies exist for waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). The first Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment ([2002/96/EC](#)) required manufactures to recover and recycle electrical and electronic equipment. The UK implemented the original WEEE Directive through the [Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2006](#) which came into force in January 2007.

In August 2012, a new recast WEEE Directive ([2012/19/EU](#)) entered into force and the UK implemented the recast WEEE Directive through the [Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013](#) which came into force in January 2014. Government [guidance notes](#) on the 2013 Regulations are also available. The 2012 Directive set the following targets:

...a collection target of 45% of electronic equipment sold that will apply from 2016 and, as a second step from 2019, a target of 65% of equipment sold, or 85% of WEEE generated. Member States will be able to choose which one of these two equivalent ways to measure the target they wish to report. The new collection targets agreed will ensure that around 10 million tons, or roughly 20kg per capita, will be separately collected from 2019 onwards.<sup>24</sup>

The purpose of the WEEE Directive is to address the environmental impacts of WEEE, and to encourage its separate collection (i.e. *separate*

<sup>22</sup> Energy from waste

<sup>23</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/environment/waste/database>

<sup>24</sup> European Commission website, [Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment \(WEEE\)](#), [downloaded on 11 September 2018]

from the municipal waste stream), and its subsequent treatment, reuse, recovery, recycling and environmentally sound disposal. The WEEE Directive seeks to improve the environmental performance of all operators involved in the life cycle of EEE, especially those dealing with WEEE. Accordingly, it sets certain requirements relating to the separate collection of WEEE, standards for its treatment at permitted facilities and, requires collection and recovery targets to be met by Member States. It makes producers responsible for financing most of these activities. Distributors, who are mainly retailers of EEE, must provide facilities for the free take back of WEEE by their customers.<sup>25</sup>

From 1 January 2014, photovoltaic panels came into the scope of WEEE Regulations for the first time. From 15 August 2018 the scope was widened to include all EEE unless specifically exempted or excluded.

Full details of the current rules on dealing with WEEE in the UK, including rules for manufacturers, importers and exporters can be found on the [GOV.UK website](#).

### UK WEEE

Statistics on the amount of EEE placed on the market and WEEE collected in the UK under the WEEE Regulations is available on the [GOV.uk website](#), last updated 29 August 2018.

While the UK has met previous WEEE targets, an article from LetsRecycle.com speculated that the UK may struggle to meet future, more challenging WEEE targets:

Figures published to date suggest that the 2016 45% target was comfortably met, with 1,160,000 tonnes of WEEE recorded as having been recycled in the UK against a target level of 733,000 tonnes. However, with the target potentially set to rise to as much as 1.2 million tonnes by 2019, this is likely to become more challenging.<sup>26</sup>

On 7 September 2015 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills announced a £775,000 fund for local councils to boost the rates of collection, re-use and recycling of unwanted electrical items. The funding has been made available by retailers, suppliers and manufacturers of electrical equipment as part of the [Distributor Take-back Scheme](#) and the [WEEE Compliance Fee](#). The then Business Minister Anna Soubry said:

We have around £1bn worth of electrical equipment in our homes which we no longer use but which still has real value. This business-led fund can help drive up levels of collection, re-use and recycling of unwanted electrical equipment. The fund will also help divert electrical waste from landfill and reduce waste by promoting the re-use of electrical appliances.<sup>27</sup>

By August 2015, 70 organisations from across the UK electricals sector had signed up to the voluntary [Electrical and Electronic Equipment](#)

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<sup>25</sup> Explanatory memorandum to the [Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#), No. 102, para 7.1

<sup>26</sup> "UK may struggle to meet 20% WEEE target hike" [LetsRecycle.com](#), 22 January 2018

<sup>27</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills press release, [£775,000 boost for re-use and recycling of old electricals](#), 7 September 2015

[Sustainability Action Plan](#) (esap) which seeks to catalyse sector action. It aims to take specific actions across five different themes, including gaining greater value from re-use and recycling; and understanding and influencing consumer behaviour on product durability and reparability. More information is available on [WRAP's webpage for esap 2025](#).

### 3. A circular economy

A circular economy means re-using, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products and regarding waste as something that can be turned into a resource. It maximises the value of resources in order to benefit both the economy and the environment. This is in contrast to a linear “take-make-consume-dispose” model which assumes that resources are abundant, available and cheap to dispose.

The not-for-profit-organisation, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) estimated that in 2010, the UK economy was 22% ‘circular’. This figure has not been updated more recently. It estimated that by 2030, the UK economy’s circularity could increase to 27% whilst also benefitting from a reduction in materials consumption of 30 million tonnes a year.<sup>28</sup>

For further information about the circular economy concept see POSTnote, [Designing a Circular Economy](#), number 536, September 2016.

#### 3.1 EU Circular Economy Package

On 2 December 2015, the European Commission adopted a new [Circular Economy Package](#) to stimulate Europe’s transition towards a circular economy. The Package consisted of:

- an EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy
- a timetable setting out when the actions will be completed (set out in an Annex to the Action Plan); and
- adoption of a number of interconnected legislative proposals which relate to waste legislation, including a:
  - Proposed Directive on Waste
  - Proposed Directive on Packaging Waste
  - Proposed Directive on Landfill
  - Proposed Directive on Electrical and Electronic Waste

The website Euractiv summarised how some of the recycling targets within the package changed over the course of its passage through the EU institutions:

The specifics agreed by Parliament and Council include a new 65% binding target for recycling of household waste by 2035, mirroring the Commission’s proposal, but lower and slower than what the Parliament had called for (70% by 2030).

On recycling of packaging materials, member states lowered the Parliament’s ambition: 70% of packaging waste should be prepared for reuse and recycling (vs. 75%).

Member states also agreed to cap landfilling of waste to 10% by 2035, giving themselves five more years to adapt than in the

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<sup>28</sup> House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, [Growing a circular economy: Ending the throwaway society](#), Third Report of Session 2014-15, HC 214, 24 July 2014, para 8 [accessed 18 August 2015]

Commission's original proposal, and ten more years (by 2040) to countries whom in 2013 still landfilled more than 60% of their waste – Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Romania, and Slovakia, according to Eurostat data.<sup>29</sup>

The EU Circular Economy Package was formally agreed by the European Council on 22 May 2018, the final stage that it needed to pass.<sup>30</sup> The package includes targets for recycling of municipal waste and of packaging waste, as follows:<sup>31</sup>

**Recycling targets for municipal waste:**

By 2025	By 2030	By 2035
55%	60%	65%

**New recycling targets for packaging waste:**

	By 2025	By 2030
All packaging	65%	70%
Plastic	50%	55%
Wood	25%	30%
Ferrous metals	70%	80%
Aluminium	50%	60%
Glass	70%	75%
Paper and cardboard	75%	85%

For further information and links to the new Directives see EU Commission press release, "[Circular Economy: New rules will make EU the global front-runner in waste management and recycling](#)" 22 May 2018.

At the earlier stages of the proposed package, in 2016, the UK Government expressed some concern that the targets proposed were "too high to be achievable".<sup>32</sup> The Government later confirmed however, that it would vote in favour of the final package. This was set out in response to a PQ on 16 May 2018, along with its views on transposition of the package:

We expect the final Circular Economy Package to be adopted shortly. The Government has confirmed that the UK will vote in favour of the final package. The Government is currently developing its approach to transposition and will set this out in the Resource and Waste Strategy later this year."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> "EU legislators strike early morning deal on waste" [Euractiv](#), 18 December 2017

<sup>30</sup> EU Commission press release, "[Circular Economy: New rules will make EU the global front-runner in waste management and recycling](#)" 22 May 2018

<sup>31</sup> EU Commission press release, "[Circular Economy: New rules will make EU the global front-runner in waste management and recycling](#)" 22 May 2018

<sup>32</sup> Environmental Audit Committee correspondence, [Letter from Dr Thérèse Coffey](#), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to the Chair, 21 September 2016

<sup>33</sup> Recycling: EU Law: Written question - [HL7501](#), answered on 16 May 2018



## A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy

Action on Plastics was identified as a priority in the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan and so a [European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy](#) was adopted by the European Commission on 16 January, 2018. A press release to accompany its adoption set out the ambition that “all plastic packaging on the EU market will be recyclable by 2030, the consumption of single-use plastics will be reduced and the intentional use of microplastics will be restricted.”<sup>34</sup>

The EU strategy examines ways to stimulate secondary markets for recycled plastic, alongside possible legislative and fiscal measures to make all plastic packaging recyclable by 2030. A full list of measures proposed in the Strategy and their proposed timelines are provided in [Annexes](#) to the Plastics Strategy. These are also summarised in the Commission’s brochure, [A European Strategy for plastics in a circular economy](#).

As part of the Strategy, in May 2018, the Commission published a [Proposal for a Directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment & Annex](#). The new rules will introduce [bold retained from press release source]:

- **Plastic ban in certain products:** Where alternatives are readily available and affordable, single-use plastic products will be banned from the market. The ban will apply to **plastic cotton buds, cutlery, plates, straws, drink stirrers and sticks for balloons** which will all have to be made exclusively from more sustainable materials instead. Single-use **drinks containers** made with plastic will only be allowed on the market if their caps and lids remain attached;
- **Consumption reduction targets:** Member States will have to reduce the use of plastic **food containers and drinks cups**. They can do so by setting national reduction targets, making alternative products available at the point of sale, or ensuring that single-use plastic products cannot be provided free of charge;
- **Obligations for producers:** Producers will help cover the costs of waste management and clean-up, as well as awareness raising measures for **food containers, packets and wrappers (such as for crisps and sweets), drinks containers and cups, tobacco products with filters (such as cigarette butts), wet wipes, balloons, and lightweight plastic bags**. The industry will also be given incentives to develop less polluting alternatives for these products;
- **Collection targets:** Member States will be obliged to collect 90% of single-use **plastic drinks bottles** by 2025, for example through deposit refund schemes;
- **Labelling Requirements:** Certain products will require a clear and standardised labelling which indicates how waste

<sup>34</sup> EU Commission, [Plastic Waste: a European strategy to protect the planet, defend our citizens and empower our industries](#), 16 January 2018

should be disposed, the negative environmental impact of the product, and the presence of plastics in the products. This will apply to ***sanitary towels, wet wipes and balloons***;

- **Awareness-raising measures:** Member States will be obliged to raise consumers' awareness about the negative impact of littering of single-use plastics and fishing gear as well as about the available re-use systems and waste management options for all these products.<sup>35</sup>

The Commission's proposals will now go to the European Parliament and Council for formal adoption. The Commission has urged the other institutions to treat this as a priority, and to “deliver tangible results for Europeans before the elections in May 2019.”<sup>36</sup>

The implications of this for the UK will depend on the speed at which the strategy progresses through the European institutions and the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. As set out in section 4 below, the UK Government has its own policies for increasing recycling and reducing plastic consumption.

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<sup>35</sup> European Commission Press Release, [Single-use plastics: New EU rules to reduce marine litter](#), 28 May 2018

<sup>36</sup> European Commission Press Release, [Single-use plastics: New EU rules to reduce marine litter](#), 28 May 2018

## 4. Recycling policy across the UK

### 4.1 England

Responsibility for different areas of waste policy is held across multiple Government departments, including Defra, MHCLG, BEIS and HM Treasury.

#### Coalition Government 2010-2015

The Government's approach to waste policy is set out in the [Government Review of Waste Policy in England 2011](#), published by Defra and setting out "a number of changes to policies and practices across the waste community to deliver long-term change". It sets out 13 commitments to "set us on the path towards a zero waste economy." A zero waste economy is slightly different from a circular economy: although, in theory, no waste is generated in each case. A [progress report](#) was published in 2012 which listed the various actions and timeframes which the Government was working towards.

In December 2013 Defra published its [Waste Management Plan for England](#), and the then previous Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management, Dan Rogerson MP, wrote a [letter](#) to all stakeholders announcing that from April 2014 Defra would "step back" in areas where businesses are better placed to act and there is no clear market failure.

#### Conservative Governments 2015 onwards

The waste policy continued under the Conservative governments. On 10 September 2015, a [written answer](#) confirmed that Defra does not plan to set local authority targets for recycling household waste.

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department plans to implement the target to recycle 50 per cent of household waste by 2020 set in the EU Waste Framework Directive at a waste disposal authority or waste collection authority level (Tim Loughton)

Answered by: Rory Stewart

Defra has no plans to set recycling targets at a waste disposal or waste collection authority level. These targets are set at the UK level.<sup>37</sup>

#### Litter Strategy

In April 2017 the UK Government published its [Litter Strategy for England](#). In relation to recycling it set out the ambition to become "one of the most resource efficient countries in the world":

Over the next 25 years, we want to become one of the most resource efficient countries in the world; reducing waste, tackling litter and maximising the value we get from our natural and material resource assets; protecting our environment and strengthening our economy in the long-term. Building on the progress we have already made, we will work to achieve even greater levels of recycling, improve the utilisation of our food and

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<sup>37</sup> PQ [9229](#) [on Domestic Waste: Recycling] 7 September 2015

bio-waste to stimulate a strong bioeconomy and incentivise activities such as reuse, repair and remanufacturing – to increase the efficiency and productivity of resource use in our economy and genuinely move us towards a circular economy.<sup>38</sup>

The Strategy also set out policy in respect of waste collection and plans to make it easier for households to recycle waste:

We continue to work with local authorities and key stakeholders to improve the quality of waste collection services and to make it easier to recycle.

In September 2016 a Framework for Consistency in household recycling was launched with support from WRAP, local authority and industry stakeholders. WRAP will be working with local authorities over the next year to demonstrate where consistency can help to deliver improvements in services and also with industry stakeholders to improve communications with householders and to encourage the use of more recyclable materials. This will help make recycling easier for householders and could deliver benefits across waste management.

We have made great progress in boosting recycling rates for plastic bottles, with their collection for recycling increasing dramatically, from less than 13,000 tonnes in 2000 to over 330,000 tonnes in 2015, and with almost all local authorities now collecting plastic bottles as part of their general waste collection services. We will continue to work with industry and WRAP to build on this progress.<sup>39</sup>

A commitment was also made in the Strategy to “establish a working group to look at different voluntary and/or regulatory options and measures to improve recycling and reuse of packaging, and to reduce the incidence of commonly littered items.”

Another initiative from the Strategy for the establishment of a working group to consider the advantages and disadvantages of different types of deposit and reward and return schemes for drinks containers. On 2 October 2017 the government [invited views](#) on how reward and return schemes for drinks containers could work in England by issuing a call for evidence.

On 28 March the Government [confirmed](#) it will introduce a deposit return scheme in England for single use drinks containers (including plastic, glass and metal), subject to consultation later in 2018. The consultation (not yet published) will look at the details of how such a scheme would work. Alongside this announcement the Government published the report of the Voluntary & Economics Incentives Working Group: [Voluntary and economic incentives to reduce littering of drinks containers and promote recycling](#).

## 25 Year Environment Plan

In January 2018 the Government published, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), which stated the Government’s ambition to “minimise waste, reuse materials as much as we can and

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<sup>38</sup> Defra, [Litter Strategy for England](#), April 2018, p19

<sup>39</sup> Defra, [Litter Strategy for England](#), April 2018, p20

manage materials at the end of their life to minimise the impact on the environment.”<sup>40</sup> The actions set out to help achieve this were set out as:

- Working towards our ambition of zero avoidable waste by 2050 .
- Working to a target of eliminating avoidable plastic waste by end of 2042.
- Meeting all existing waste targets – including those on landfill, reuse and recycling – and developing ambitious new future targets and milestones.
- Seeking to eliminate waste crime and illegal waste sites over the lifetime of this Plan, prioritising those of highest risk. Delivering a substantial reduction in litter and littering behaviour.
- Significantly reducing and where possible preventing all kinds of marine plastic pollution – in particular material that came originally from land.<sup>41</sup>

The 25 Year Plan also set out the Government’s commitment to “supporting comprehensive and frequent waste and recycling collections which protect local amenity and ensure that products are recycled as much as possible, returning high quality materials back to the economy.”<sup>42</sup>

As part of the ambition to achieve zero avoidable plastic waste by end of 2042, the 25 Year Plan sets out a number of actions aimed at improving plastics recycling rates. These include:

- Working with industry to rationalise packaging formats and materials formats to make sure that more plastics can be easily recycled and the quality of collected recycled plastics is improved.
- Reforming our Producer Responsibility systems (including packaging waste regulations) to incentivise producers to take greater responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products. This will include exploring extending producer responsibility requirements to plastic products not currently covered by our existing regimes to create a better market for recycled plastic.  
(...)
- 3. At the end of use stage, we will make it easier for people to recycle by:
  - Continuing to support the industry led on-pack recycling labelling system and encourage all brands and retailers to use this systems to provide information to householders.
  - Continuing to implement the Litter Strategy to reduce plastic litter and littering behaviour.

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<sup>40</sup> HM Government, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), January 2018, p29

<sup>41</sup> HM Government, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), January 2018, p29

<sup>42</sup> HM Government, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), January 2018, p84



- Implementing voluntary and regulatory interventions that can cut the amount of commonly littered items, and improve recycling and packaging reuse. This includes considering advice from the Voluntary & Economic Incentives Working group (set up under the Litter Strategy), which is currently looking at measures to reduce littering and promote recycling of drinks containers.

(...)

- Through the Framework for Greater Consistency, WRAP is working with industry and local authorities to ensure that a consistent set of materials are collected by all local authorities. We want to accelerate this shift to consistency in the materials collected.
- Working with the waste management industry and re-processors to significantly increase the proportion of plastic packaging that is collected and recycled.<sup>43</sup>

The 25 Year Plan also outlines how increased recycling of food waste is a “key priority”:

Recycling food waste is also a key priority. We will work towards no food waste entering landfill by 2030. Many local authorities have introduced separate collection of food waste and we will work to support an increase in numbers so that the amount of food waste sent to landfill continues to decline.<sup>44</sup>

### **Forthcoming Resources and Waste Strategy**

The 25 Year Plan confirmed that later in 2018 the Government would published a new Resources and Waste strategy:

...aimed at making the UK a world leader in resource efficiency. It will set out our approach to reducing waste, promoting markets for secondary materials, incentivising producers to design better products and how we can better manage materials at the end of life by targeting environmental impacts.<sup>45</sup>

The strategy is expected to be published later this year.<sup>46</sup>

In oral evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee in April 2018, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs indicated that the Resources and Waste Strategy was likely to be published in September 2018.<sup>47</sup>

### **Proposed ban on single use plastic**

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Summit in April 2018 the Government announced its intention to ban the sale of plastic straws, drink stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds in England.<sup>48</sup> The

<sup>43</sup> HM Government, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), January 2018, p87-88

<sup>44</sup> HM Government, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), January 2018, p90

<sup>45</sup> HM Government, [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment](#), January 2018, p85

<sup>46</sup> [Waste Management: Written question – 170273](#), answered on 10 September 2018

<sup>47</sup> Environmental Audit Committee, [Oral evidence: 25-Year Environment Plan](#), HC 803, Wednesday 18 April 2018, Q60

<sup>48</sup> HM Government press release, [UK Government rallies Commonwealth to unite on marine waste](#), 18 April 2018

Government has said that in order to eliminate these items from use, it will work with industry to develop alternatives and to ensure there is sufficient time to adapt. Proposals about how the ban of these products might work in practice are expected to be put forward for consultation later this year.<sup>49</sup>

## 4.2 Wales

The Welsh Government's 2010 document [Towards Zero Waste](#) (TZW) is the overarching waste strategy document for Wales. It is supported by a suite of sector plans and other documents, which together with TZW, comprise the statutory waste management plan for Wales. Wales is the only administration in the UK to have introduced statutory local authority recovery targets for waste recycling.

Wales is the only administration in the UK to have introduced statutory local authority recovery targets for waste recycling.

The Welsh Government initially targeted the wastes collected by local authorities because of the high level of Government control over this waste stream. The Welsh Government has many policies in its waste strategy aiming towards increasing the quantities of waste recycled and the quality of the secondary materials produced as a result. Welsh policies are geared towards improving the use of secondary raw materials within industry in Wales and to move towards a circular economy where all waste materials are used rather than disposed.

TZW set the following targets for municipal waste collected by local authorities in Wales:

- a minimum of 70% of waste being reused, recycled or composted by 2024/25
- a maximum of 30% energy being created from waste by 2024/25
- a maximum of 5% of waste being landfilled by 2024/25
- Wales to achieve zero waste by 2050.

The recycling targets became law in Wales in April 2012 under the [Waste \(Wales\) Measure 2010](#).

The [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) became law in Wales on 21 March 2016. The Act covers a number of areas, including changes to waste management. It includes measure related to segregation of recyclable materials by businesses and the public sector; separate collection services; and a ban on recyclable materials being burnt for energy for waste. More information is available in the Welsh Government's [Factsheet \(Waste\)](#).

The Welsh Government published [Towards Zero Waste Sector Plan and Waste Prevention Programme Actions Summary Report June 2010 – March 2016](#), which summarised progress against commitments in its statutory waste management plan for Wales, until March 2016. This report highlighted that:

We have made good progress against our targets for reducing waste arisings, improving the rate of recycling, reuse, composting and recovery and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill.

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<sup>49</sup> HM Government press release, [UK Government rallies Commonwealth to unite on marine waste](#), 18 April 2018

Particular achievements include:

- Supporting Local Authorities to make service changes to meet higher recycling targets, through our Collaborative Change Programme. As a result Wales leads the UK in recycling municipal waste by a significant margin, achieving 60.2 per cent in 2015/16, an improvement of 19.7 percentage points since 2009/10. (...) <sup>50</sup>

The Welsh Government website sets out forthcoming plans for a “refresh” of the TZW strategy, to be consulted on in July 2018:

We will consult on a refresh of the TZW strategy in July 2018 to ensure it complements the aims set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Our objective is to continue progressing towards our One Planet Goal of reducing the impact of waste in Wales to within our environmental limits by ensuring our plans and programmes will continue to plan and manage Wales’ natural resources proactively, sustainably and in a joined-up way, ensuring present needs are met without compromising the needs of future generations. <sup>51</sup>

A consultation on a new strategy does not yet appear to have been published.

## 4.3 Scotland

The Scottish Government launched Scotland’s first [Zero Waste Plan](#) in June 2010, which sets out the Scottish Government’s vision for a zero waste society. The plan set out a number of new measures including introducing a 70% recycling target for *all* waste (regardless of its source) by 2025. The [Zero Waste Plan](#) also includes interim targets for ‘waste from households’ at 50% by 2013; and 60% by 2020.

As part of the Zero Waste Plan, the [Waste \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#) came into effect in January 2014, which made it mandatory for food businesses to separate out food waste for collection by 2014 (if producing greater than 50kg per week) or 2016 (if producing greater than 5kg per week). It also compelled local authorities to provide separate food waste collections in all non-rural areas by 2016.

The Scottish Government published its circular economy strategy for Scotland [Making Things Last](#) on 23 February 2016. On recycling, it states:

We want recycling to be routine in every business and household; with more consistent local services; more packaging designed for recyclability, and every household having access to a food waste service. We are working to improve recycling rates, collaborating with the waste and packaging industries; reviewing the exemption from the requirement for food waste collections in rural areas; and learning from experiences abroad, including deposit return schemes. We also want to see higher quality recycle, and will

Scotland published its first national circular economy strategy in February 2016

<sup>50</sup> Welsh Government, [Towards Zero Waste Sector Plan and Waste Prevention Programme Actions Summary Report June 2010 – March 2016](#), p5

<sup>51</sup> Welsh Government website, [Towards Zero Waste](#), updated 12 July 2017 [downloaded on 24 April 2018]

examine how best to minimise contamination in household and commercial recycling to maximise both quality and value.

16 of the 32 local councils in Scotland signed up to a voluntary [Charter for Household Recycling in Scotland](#) in July 2016. One of its key objectives is to establish a common collection regime for paper, card, glass, plastics, metals, food and other recyclates across Scotland, with the aim of making it easier for people to recycle at home. The Charter is supported by a [Code of Practice](#) which was developed in collaboration with local councils. Local authorities who sign the Charter can access funding from Zero Waste Scotland to help with the provision of new services.<sup>52</sup>

### **Deposit return scheme for plastic bottles**

The Scottish Government asked Zero Waste Scotland to explore the feasibility of a deposit return scheme. In May 2015, it published a feasibility study (carried out by environmental consultancy, Eunomia), examining the benefits and challenges of a deposit return system in Scotland. It also issued a call for evidence on the issue from stakeholders. The relevant documents are [available online](#) from the Zero Waste Scotland website.

The Scottish Government confirmed in its [2017-18 Programme for Government](#) that it would develop a deposit return scheme:

We will also develop a deposit return scheme designed to increase recycling rates and reduce littering and implement it across Scotland. This represents a step change in our level of ambition and over the next year we will build on detailed work already being carried out by Zero Waste Scotland, ahead of roll-out across Scotland. We will ensure the scheme is tailored to meet Scotland's specific needs and we will work closely with the business community during its design and implementation. The question of whether this scheme should extend to small retailers – who have specific difficulties that would need to be overcome – will be addressed as part of this process.<sup>53</sup>

In September 2017 The Guardian reported that the Scottish Government had asked Zero Waste Scotland to model a deposit return system to help it assess impacts and benefits.<sup>54</sup>

A Scottish Government consultation, [A Deposit Return Scheme for Scotland](#), was published on 27 June 2018. It consults on the options for distinct elements of a deposit return scheme on beverage containers. It closes for comments on 25 September 2018. The Ministerial Foreword to the consultation document sets out how it would inform discussions with other UK nations on introducing such a scheme:

We welcome the fact that England is following our lead in this. We recognise that there could be benefits from co-operation across the nations of the UK on the design of deposit return schemes. I have therefore written to my counterparts in the other administrations to initiate a dialogue to ensure that we approach

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<sup>52</sup> Scottish Government, [Get waste sorted](#), 25 July 2016 [accessed 21 October 2016]

<sup>53</sup> Scottish Government, [A Nation With Ambition: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2017-18](#), September 2017, p41

<sup>54</sup> "Scotland plans deposit return scheme for bottles and cans" [The Guardian](#), 5 September 2017

this in a way that benefits communities everywhere in the UK. The responses to this paper will allow us to take part in these discussions with a more complete understanding of what we want for a deposit return scheme in Scotland.<sup>55</sup>

## 4.4 Northern Ireland

The waste prevention programme for Northern Ireland, [The Road to Zero Waste](#), October 2014, sets out a number of actions to be taken in Northern Ireland, including the Rethink Waste Capital Fund to assist councils to increase levels of recycling.

The [Delivering Resource Efficiency - Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy](#), 2013, included sections on re-use and recycling.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs published [The Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland – The Road to Zero Waste](#), in September 2014, which sets out a renewed focus on waste prevention (including re-use), preparing for re-use and recycling in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

Following consultation in 2013, [Food Waste Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) were introduced which placed a duty on certain food businesses to present food waste for separate collection from 1 April 2016.

Further information about policy on recycling in Northern Ireland is available from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' webpage on [Waste prevention and recycling](#).

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<sup>55</sup> Scottish Government, [A Deposit Return Scheme for Scotland](#), June 2018, p4



## 5. Increasing the household recycling rate

A typical recycling supply chain for household waste begins in the home, progressing via bin collection by the local authority to sorting in a local materials recovery facility (known as a MRF) and then onto the reprocessor (for example, a paper mill). There are a number of challenges faced along the supply chain and a variety of approaches being taken at a local level which are aimed at improving household recycling rates.

### 5.1 Local authority performance

Local councils in England have been instrumental in increasing the amount of household waste recycled. However, [Defra statistics](#) from 2016/17 show that at individual Local Authority level, household waste recycling rates varied almost four-fold, from a low of 14% to a high of 65%. Some of the best and worst performing local authorities are summarised in a Defra statistical publication as follows:

Recycling rates across England ranged between 14% to 65% in 2016/17.

- Newham London Borough Council had the lowest 'household waste' recycling rate in England in 2016/17 at 14 per cent. Only 17 per cent of Newham's total recycled waste from households is green/organic waste.
- Westminster City Council and Lewisham Borough Council both had a 'household waste' recycling rate of 17 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. The proportion of recycled waste accounted for by green/organic waste in Westminster was only 0.2% of the total, whilst in Lewisham it accounted for 13 per cent of the recycled household waste total.
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council had the highest 'household waste' recycling rate at 65 per cent, with just over 49 per cent of their recycling comprising of green/organic waste. South Oxfordshire District Council and Rochford District Council both achieved 64 per cent 'household waste' recycling rates.
- The top 3 performing local authorities in terms of household waste recycling in 2016/17 and 2015/16 are South Oxfordshire District Council, East Riding of Yorkshire and Rochford District Council. Over the last 5 years, South Oxfordshire District Council and Rochford District Council have had an average recycling rate of 66 and 65 per cent respectively, while East Riding of Yorkshire, the top performing council this year has averaged 60 per cent over the 5 years. The proportion of organic/green waste within the household recycling total for these authorities was 52 per cent for South Oxfordshire, 49 per cent for East Riding and 59 per cent for Rochford.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Statistics on waste managed by local authorities in England in 2016/17](#), 5 December 2017, p13-14

Annual results tables on local authority collected waste are available on Gov.uk: [ENV18 – Local authority collected waste](#).

Eunomia (an independent environmental consultancy) has a Local Authority Recycling Carbon Index which measures the environmental performance of councils' recycling services: [Recycling Carbon Index Tool](#).

## 5.2 Barriers to increasing the recycling rate

A Report commissioned by SUEZ [At this rate...exploring England's recycling challenges](#), 15 September 2015 and based on a study by SLR Consulting found that the vast majority of recyclable material losses still occur at the first stage in the supply chain—in the home. It identified the following factors as holding back England's household waste recycling rates:

- **Losing value in households:** only 42% of England's household waste is segregated at source as recyclables, which is significantly lower than levels achieved in the best performing European countries. Recycling rates are particularly low for food (less than 10% recycled), plastics (less than 15% recycled) and textiles (less than 16% recycled).
- **Poor material capture:** local authorities only provide a limited proportion of households with collection systems for the major recyclables.
- **Housing mix and multi-occupancy dwellings:** recycling rates are falling in areas where there is an increase in multi-occupancy dwellings. Rates also tend to be lower where there are challenges with social deprivation, urban classifications, education, language and residential stability.
- **Garden waste distorting comparisons:** arguably garden waste being included in recycling rates distorts recycling league tables.
- **Weaker policy levers:** high performers in the EU use stronger incentives such as 'pay-as-you-throw' schemes where householders are charged for having non-recyclable waste collected; and landfill/incineration restrictions for some materials.<sup>57</sup>

The [report](#) also sets out a number of recommendations and interventions which it identifies as being needed to raise household recycling rates, which have not been reproduced in this Paper.

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee highlighted the following as common challenges faced by local authorities with low recycling rates, in its October 2014 report, [Waste management in England](#):

- transient populations in inner city urban areas;
- high-density housing with little space for recycling receptacles;
- lack of householder engagement and understanding;
- insufficient infrastructure and recycling facilities;
- problems with accessing output markets; and

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<sup>57</sup> SUEZ [At this rate...exploring England's recycling challenges](#) 15 September 2015

- budget cuts.<sup>58</sup>

## 5.3 Local authority approaches

Local authority approaches to increasing recycling rates vary depending on the challenges faced at a local level. The approach taken by a specific local authority can usually be found on their website. A sample of common approaches in England is provided below.

### Rewards and recognition

Rewards and recognition can be used as a way of motivating recycling. Rewards and recognition can include: cash rewards; rebates on council tax; improvements to the local community (e.g. planting trees); providing vouchers which can be swapped for goods at local stores.

Examples of local authorities using rewards and recognition to increase recycling rates include:

- Wokingham Borough Council introducing a direct cash reward scheme in April 2012 which led to an initial increase of 28% in the tonnage of recycling collected.<sup>59</sup>
- In June 2017 Kingston Council launched a new recycling rewards scheme aimed at residents living in purpose built flats. Residents will be able to win monthly cash prizes and help decide which local charities win a share of a £4,750 donation fund in exchange for taking part in online modules and recycling.<sup>60</sup>
- [Bracknell Forest Council](#) offers points to residents who recycle properly which can then be exchanged for rewards (including leisure, library, green rewards such as water butts or cash donations to local good causes).
- In [Bath](#), from 29 June 2015 to 19 March 2016, every time a resident puts waste food out for recycling, they could win a £50 voucher.

Defra launched a [reward and recognition fund](#) in partnership with SERCO in 2011 as a pilot to test innovative ideas to encourage positive behaviour. Funding was provided to 28 projects (including recycling). An evaluation of the scheme was published in May 2016, [Waste reward and recognition fund: evaluation report](#). The evaluation concluded that across the schemes, improvements in recycling and reuse tended to be linked to better services, communications and promotion rather than being attributable directly to the scheme's reward element.

A Eunomia report, [Investigating the Impact of Recycling Incentive Schemes](#) published in February 2014 found that value for money was unproven for the then reward schemes (outside those covered by Defra's reward and recognition fund), and in some cases could actually cost more than the evaluated benefits they delivered.

<sup>58</sup> Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, [Waste management in England](#), Fourth Report of Session 2014-15, HC 241, 22 October 2014, para 29

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Kingston Council, [Kingston Council launches new recycling rewards scheme](#), 27 June 2017

## Separate garden and food waste collections

Separate food and garden waste collections are often suggested as an answer to increasing recorded recycling rates.

### Garden waste

The 2015 Suez [At this rate...exploring England's recycling challenges](#) report states that "if garden waste recycling was excluded from performance calculations and total household waste arisings, the recycling rate for England would have been about 33%."<sup>61</sup> It goes on to say that:

Arguably, the inclusion of garden waste distorts performance statistics when comparing local authorities across England, favouring local authorities which have properties with relatively large gardens and collections for garden waste in place. Nonetheless, garden waste recycling can still be used, justifiably, to contribute towards overall national performance figures.<sup>62</sup>

### Food waste

WRAP reported earlier in 2018 that in the UK the total amount of household food waste (HHFW) is 7.1 million tonnes.<sup>63</sup> The WRAP January 2017 report, [Household Food Waste in the UK, 2015](#), summarised that:

- The estimated amount of HHFW in the UK for 2015 was 7.3 million tonnes, compared to 7.0 million tonnes in 2012, an apparent increase of 4.4%. On a per person basis, the apparent increase was 2.2% Neither of these increases was statistically significant.
- The amount of avoidable (i.e. the food that could have been eaten) HHFW in 2015 was 4.4 million tonnes, compared to 4.2 million tonnes in 2012 (an apparent increase of 5.1%, or 2.8% on a per person basis). Again, neither of these increases was statistically significant.
- Food with a retail value of around £13 billion was thrown away rather than being eaten in 2015. This avoidable HHFW was associated with 19 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, which is equivalent to the emissions generated by 1 in 4 cars on UK roads.

Food waste has one of the lowest capture rates in England (about 10% recycled), yet councils that collect food waste have been found to have higher recycling rates.<sup>64</sup>

The Local Government Association's paper on [Meeting EU recycling targets](#) (May 2015) stated that nearly half of councils in England offer a food waste collection together with garden waste, but also expressed concern that "given reducing local authority budgets it is unlikely that

<sup>61</sup> SUEZ [At this rate...exploring England's recycling challenges](#) 15 September 2015, p14 [accessed 17 September 2015]

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> WRAP, [The Courtauld 2025 baseline and restated household food waste figures](#), 22 May 2018

<sup>64</sup> WRAP [Analysis of recycling performance and waste arisings in the UK 2013/13](#) [accessed 17 September 2015]

enough councils will either be able to maintain or add collection of food waste unless it becomes more cost effective to do so".<sup>65</sup>

Local authorities can struggle with the costs associated with implementing separate food waste collections and participation rates by householders can be low.

For more information on food waste policy refer to the Library Briefing Paper on [Food Waste](#).

There is also growing public interest in how much food is wasted and redistributed to those who need it. Relevant information is set out in the Library Briefing Paper on [Food Banks and Food Poverty](#).

### Communication campaigns

Householders play a key role in recycling rates but in general have no direct financial incentive to do so.

The Suez [At this rate...exploring England's recycling challenges](#) report explains the importance of communications:

it is crucial to ensure householders fully understand collection arrangements in order to optimise material yields from recycling services. Frequent, targeted communications on schemes offered will ensure that new residents will be able to use schemes and also maximise segregation by long-term residents.<sup>66</sup>

Since 2004, WRAP has carried out national communication campaigns such as Recycle Now and Love Food Hate Waste, to encourage household recycling. WRAP provides guidance for local authorities to help to improve recycling performance through effective communications with residents, [Resources for local authority communications](#).

## 5.4 Waste and Resources Action Programme: resources and campaigns

[WRAP](#) (the Waste and Resources Action Programme) is an independent, not-for-profit company. It registered as a charity in December 2014. WRAP helps people recycle more and waste less, both at home and at work, and offers economic as well as environmental benefits. WRAP works across the UK with a wide range of partners, from major UK businesses, trade bodies and local authorities through to individuals looking for practical advice.

WRAP has in-depth experience of running national recycling campaigns that encourage consumers to take action. Its [Recycle Now](#) brand is used by over 90% of local authorities in England, as well as major brands, retailers and community groups.

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<sup>65</sup> Local Government Association, [Meeting EU recycling targets](#), May 2015, para 3.3 [accessed 17 September 2015]

<sup>66</sup> SUEZ [At this rate...exploring England's recycling challenges](#) 15 September 2015, p37 [accessed 17 September 2015]

## A framework for greater consistency in household recycling

In September 2016, WRAP published a voluntary [framework for greater consistency in household recycling](#).<sup>67</sup> Its aim is stated as:

By 2025 packaging is designed to be recyclable, where practical and environmentally beneficial, and is labelled clearly to indicate whether it can be recycled or not. Every household in England can recycle a common set of dry recyclable materials and food waste, collected in one of three different ways.<sup>68</sup>

The framework was developed by an advisory group consisting of members across the waste sector.<sup>69</sup> The framework identifies the following elements of greater consistency:

1. All households to be able to recycle the same core set of materials (paper, card, plastic bottles, plastic pots, tubs and trays, glass and metal packaging, cartons and food waste).
2. Fewer collection and sorting systems.
3. A common container colour system.

A number of initiatives and working groups have been identified and set up to achieve an action plan to move towards the overall aim of the framework.

## National recycling guidelines

WRAP produces [recycling guidelines](#) which have been agreed with the recycling industry and set out what can and can't be recycled.

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<sup>67</sup> WRAP, [A framework for greater consistency in household recycling in England](#), 13 September 2016 [accessed 21 October 2016]

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> WRAP, [A framework for greater consistency in household recycling in England](#), 13 September 2016 [accessed 21 October 2016] See pg. 5 for a full list of advisory group members.

## 6. Brexit

Until a final Brexit agreement is reached with the EU, much of what will happen to the waste management regime following Brexit is the subject of speculation. The Government has stated that it remains “committed to making the most of our resources, to reducing waste and to increasing reuse and recycling.”<sup>70</sup>

### 6.1 The impact of EU law on UK recycling

In the context of Brexit, several commentators have examined the role that EU regulation has had on recycling policy in the UK.

A report from the Environmental Industries Commission (EIC) and BP Collins Solicitors, [Brexit: Implications for Waste and Resources Legislation](#) summarises its view of the overall impact of “four decades of EU waste policy on the UK”:

1. A depoliticisation of waste policy: Until the early 2010s, there was a cross-party consensus on the drive to move away from landfill and boost recycling. However, this focus on broad compliance with the specific targets in the Directives was arguably a factor behind the lack of an overarching government agenda for managing waste as a resource across the whole supply chain.
4. Reduced landfilling: The Landfill Directive set absolute targets for sharply cutting volumes of waste sent to landfill. To meet these targets, successive governments introduced the Landfill Tax, Landfill Tax escalator and the LATS trading scheme to drive up the price of landfilling.
5. Recycling up from 10% to 40%: Faced with meeting challenging recycling targets from a low base and the impact of the landfill tax on local authority budgets, successive initiatives to encourage public participation in recycling were introduced, leading to a culture change.
6. Renaissance of Energy from Waste (EfW): Recycling could not increase quickly enough to meet the landfill diversion targets by itself, so a shift from landfilling to energy from waste plants also took place. Without an existing culture of EfW, some EfW proposals proved controversial among local communities. In addition, EU regulations allowing cross-border trade in treated waste, created a North European market in Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF).
7. Growth of ‘circular economy’ concept: while not purely an EU concept, the EU has encouraged eco-design and waste prevention concepts and has made proposals for circular economy approaches.<sup>71</sup>

A briefing from Friends of the Earth highlights a drive towards greater recycling levels:

<sup>70</sup> [Waste Management: EU Action: Written question - 109018](#), answered 31 October 2017

<sup>71</sup> Environmental Industries Commission (EIC) and BP Collins Solicitors, [Brexit: Implications for Waste and Resources Legislation](#), February 2017, p5



EU measures have totally changed what we do with our rubbish. The most important have been:

1. The Waste Framework Directive, which includes targets for recycling.
2. The Landfill Directive, which has ensured that we send less waste to landfill.
3. Directives on things like end-of-life vehicles, electronic goods, batteries and packaging have radically enhanced recycling rates.

All of this has led to a cultural shift in favour of recycling. It's just the normal thing to do with rubbish nowadays.

The improvement in the UK has been dramatic. We're not far off hitting an EU target of recycling half our household waste by 2020.<sup>72</sup>

An article by the UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA), [Implications of the UK leaving the European Union: Waste Management](#), April 2016 also noted the driver of EU for reducing landfill and increasing rates of recycling. It set out however, views that EU waste management laws had been a regulatory and compliance burden for SMEs:

A contrary view in the Balance of Competencies Review report, however, questioned the impact of regulatory burdens of EU waste management law on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The report cited the complexity of the European Waste Catalogue and the burden of waste carrier registration requirements and waste transfer notes as placing a high level of compliance burden on small firms which is disproportionate to the environmental risk they pose.<sup>73</sup>

In relation to Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) specifically, the UKELA article stated:

UK retailers have found the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive challenging. Targets for the collection of WEEE by Member States are both ambitious and prescriptive. The obligation to take back in Article 5(2)(b) causes retailers concern as to space required, cost, planning issues, health and safety, permitting complications and reverse logistics. Neither should it be overlooked that WEEE is regarded as waste and waste management legislation will apply to its carriage, storage and treatment.<sup>74</sup>

## 6.2 Environmental principles and governance

The [European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2018](#) was designed to provide legal continuity by copying over the entire body of EU law onto the UK's post-exit statute book. In broad terms, this means that all existing EU waste law will be converted into domestic law from exit day, including, for example, waste and recycling targets. All EU environmental laws, principles and relevant enforcement mechanisms will continue to apply

<sup>72</sup> "What has the EU done to reduce UK waste?" [Friends of the Earth](#), 19 April 2016

<sup>73</sup> UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA), [Implications of the UK leaving the European Union: Waste Management](#), April 2016, p1

<sup>74</sup> UK Environmental Law Association (UKELA), [Implications of the UK leaving the European Union: Waste Management](#), April 2016, p3

to the UK up until exit day (29 March 2019) and throughout the provisional implementation period to 31 December 2020 if the Withdrawal Agreement is agreed and ratified.

There has been considerable debate over the future of EU environmental principles, which would not be copied across under the provisions of the [European Union \(Withdrawal\) Act 2018](#) and the loss of the role of EU institutions in monitoring and enforcing environmental law following Brexit.

This concern, in the context of waste, was set out by [Greener UK](#), a coalition of 13 environmental organisations which came together in the wake of Brexit:

## 2. Waste rules, definitions and principles

**Risk:** As it stands, the Withdrawal Bill will not bring across some of the waste rules that prevent environmental hazards, including illegal waste burning, dumping in rivers and fly-tipping, because they are not directives. Existing regulations and accompanying EU case law – guided by principles including polluter pays and the precautionary principle – are highly complex and interdependent. They also continually evolve to incorporate technological progress, address new environmental risks and maintain regulatory equivalence to facilitate trade. Abandoning the rules would also increase opportunities for waste crime, which already costs the UK £1 billion a year, according to industry and the Environment Agency.

**Recommendation:** The Withdrawal Bill should bring across the entire framework for managing waste, including underlying principles, definitions and accompanying case law. As different national interpretations of waste regulations hamper cross border trade in secondary resources, the UK should also continue to co-operate with other EU countries to improve the system further.<sup>75</sup>

In response to concerns raised, the Government held a consultation on [Environmental principles and governance after EU Exit](#), from May-August 2018. It proposed the creation of a new statutory independent environmental watchdog to hold government to account on its environmental obligations; and options for establishing environmental principles in the UK. The consultation applied to England only. Scotland and Wales are both considering governance arrangements, with further announcements from Ministers expected in coming months.

Late-stage amendments to the *European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018* put a number of the consultation proposals on a statutory basis, including: the establishment of a statutory environmental watchdog with enforcement powers (including legal proceedings if necessary) against Government ministers; a list of environmental principles; and putting a duty on Government ministers to have regard to a policy statement relating to the application and interpretation of the listed environmental principles. The Act requires the Government to publish a draft Bill on this by 26 December 2018.

<sup>75</sup> Greener UK, [How Brexit will affect UK resource efficiency](#), November 2017

For further information about proposals on environmental governance and principles, see Library briefing paper, [Brexit and the Environment](#), 8 August 2018.

## 6.3 Government view

The Government's position on waste legislation on recycling following Brexit was set out in response to a PQ:

**Asked by Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether new EU waste and recycling legislation being negotiated at EU level will apply in the UK given the deadline for transposing that legislation falling after the UK plans to leave the EU.

**Answered by: Dr Thérèse Coffey**

Answered on: 31 October 2017

The UK will continue to have all of the rights, obligations and benefits that membership brings, up until the point we leave the EU. Where transposition deadlines fall after the UK has left the EU, the outcome will depend on UK-EU negotiations.

We want to be the first generation to leave the environment of England in a better state than we inherited it. We remain committed to making the most of our resources, to reducing waste and to increasing reuse and recycling.<sup>76</sup>

The Government has also highlighted that its forthcoming strategy on resources and waste will set out further its position on future policy following Brexit:

**Asked by Hywel Williams** (Arfon)

Asked on: 16 April 2018

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what arrangements he plans to make for continued UK involvement in the EU Circular Economy programme after the UK leaves the EU.

**Answered by: Dr Thérèse Coffey**

Answered on: 24 April 2018

The Government is developing a strategy on resources and waste, which includes the circular economy. This is not dependent on our membership of the EU. The aim of the strategy will be to make us a world leader in resource efficiency and resource productivity and increase competitiveness. It will set out how we will work towards our ambitions of doubling resource productivity and zero avoidable waste by 2050, maximising the value we extract from our resources and minimising waste and the negative environmental impacts associated.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> [Waste Management: EU Action: Written question – 109018](#), answered 31 October 2017

<sup>77</sup> [Recycling: EU Action: Written question – 135916](#), answered on 24 April 2018

## 6.4 Commentary on future implications

### Waste exports and imports

An article from Politico highlighted the views of waste management company Suez about how the future trading relationship with the EU could have implications for UK recycling:

The U.K. is one of the European Union's top waste exporters. It sends more than 3 million tons a year to other EU countries, accounting for over 10 percent of the U.K.'s waste that isn't reused or recycled. The mixed waste is sent abroad as refuse-derived fuel, trash that has been treated so that it can be burned for energy.

A hard break from the European Union risks creating a "potential disaster scenario," leaving the country stuck with large amounts of garbage that it does not have the capacity to process, waste management company Suez warned last month. A related issue is dealing with a mountain of materials that can be recycled, but that the U.K. can't process itself and also exports.

"Hard borders, import tariffs and a weakening sterling will make waste exports to Europe, which the U.K. continues to rely upon, financially unviable," said David Palmer-Jones, CEO of Suez recycling and recovery U.K.

If Brexit blocks the U.K.'s waste exports to the EU, or just makes them more expensive because of tariffs, that could hike environmental costs borne by businesses and increase the amount of trash put into landfills — the worst way to deal with waste from an environmental perspective.<sup>78</sup>

In 2017 the House of Lords EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee took evidence to examine the [potential impact of Brexit on the UK's trade in waste](#). Following these sessions the Committee wrote to Dr Thérèse Coffey, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, drawing attention to the challenges Brexit may pose for the UK's trade in waste. In particular, the Committee raised the concern expressed about future uncertainties which has left some waste businesses unable to plan their business or make investment decisions. The Committee urged the Government to publish its resources and waste strategy as soon as possible in order to provide certainty over the future policy direction.<sup>79</sup>

Dr Coffey responded to questions from the Lords Committee about the possibility of tariffs being imposed on the export of UK waste in the situation where there was a reversion to WTO trading rules. She expressed confidence that because the EU was an importer of waste, "the tariff would end up on them for importing our waste, which would not be in their interest" and that "If tariffs ended up being the outcome, it would increase the costs of materials for EU companies. I

<sup>78</sup> "Britain's EU Rubbish" [Politico](#), 31 August 2017

<sup>79</sup> House of Lords EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee, [Letter to Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, 17 January 2018](#)

expect that we will want to work together to make sure that that is not the outcome.”<sup>80</sup>

## Recycling targets

A briefing from CIWM, [Policy implications of Brexit for the UK resource & waste management sector](#), set out how a potential change following Brexit could include moving away from weight-based recycling targets to a different approach (such as an avoided energy or CO<sub>2</sub>e based metric), or doing away with recycling targets altogether and instead having targets based on economy-wide resource efficiency and per capita residual waste.<sup>81</sup>

## Devolved nation policy coordination

An article from the ENDS publication Waste Planning questioned how waste and recycling policy in the devolved nations would be coordinated without the oversight of the EU:

Significantly complicating any ‘UK picture’ is that waste policy is substantially devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with the UK government, in large part, only responsible for England. Whereas EU policy created an overarching framework for action in the different parts of the UK, once we leave the EU, interactions between the four nations become much more important.

The stakes are high. Both Scotland and Wales have used devolved powers to drive waste policy further than Westminster, with higher recycling rates in Wales, commitment to a plastic bottle deposit refund scheme in Scotland and a ‘zero waste mission’ in both.

But if Wales and Scotland are to attain their ambitious goals, firm action will be required in areas such as producer responsibility, packaging and product standards which are not devolved. How will future collaboration on policy be organised? And how might the pursuit of distinctive, possibly innovative, policies in specific parts of the UK be squared with concerns for a UK single market?<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> House of Lords’ Select Committee on the European Union Energy and Environment Sub-Committee, Corrected oral evidence: Impact of Brexit on the UK’s trade in waste Wednesday 10 January 2018, [Q17](#)

<sup>81</sup> CIWM, [Policy implications of Brexit for the UK resource & waste management sector](#), August 2017, p6-7

<sup>82</sup> “Waste policy in a post-Brexit UK” [ENDS Waste Planning](#), 2 December 2017

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