



**WWF** *for a living planet*

**WWF Scotland**

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## Parliamentary briefing – Zero Waste Scotland May 2010

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### Introduction

Our current patterns of resource use are unsustainable. Globally if we all consumed resources at the rate we do in Scotland we would need three planets to supply the resources and absorb the waste.

Scotland produces 20 million tonnes of 'waste' each year, 17 million tonnes of commercial, industrial, construction and demolition waste and 3 million tonnes of household waste. The majority of this currently ends up in landfill. This pattern constitutes a huge one way flow of valuable raw materials and is a significant contributor to our climate emissions as a result of both landfill methane and huge quantities of energy consumed in extracting, processing and transporting new materials. Much of this 'waste' could be avoided with greater efforts to minimise the amount of waste materials we produce and maximise re-use and recycling of these valuable raw materials.

The Government is due to publish Scotland's Zero Waste Plan shortly and WWF believe that this plan has a critical role to play in helping to transform Scotland's attitude to resource use.

### Recommendations to realise a zero waste Scotland:

- **Commit to reduce the amount of waste generated in Scotland from household, commercial, industrial and construction sectors.**
- **Adopt a 60% recycling and composting target by 2013 and a 70% by 2020 for Scotland's household waste and introduce a target to recycle and compost 70% of Scotland's commercial waste by 2020 – in line with the EU Waste Framework Directive requirement.**
- **Support the introduction of landfill and incineration bans for unsorted waste and for recyclable waste streams.**
- **Introduce 'pay as you throw' for residual non-recycled or composted waste.**
- **Establish a network of anaerobic digestion facilities to process organic waste.**
- **Avoid large scale energy from waste facilities which risk undermining efforts to reduce waste volumes and jeopardise achieving high levels of recycling.**

### Waste prevention

The average household is responsible for producing 1.2 tonnes of waste each year, with each person responsible for producing 583 kg per year. The original National Waste Strategy (1999) proposed a target to reduce household waste arisings by 1% per year and in 2003 the Government dropped this to a target to stabilise the growth of household waste by 2010. No



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comprehensive programme or targets have been established to reduce waste arising from the commercial, industrial and construction sectors despite these making up the bulk of Scotland's waste.

Many countries have established ambitious programmes to tackle waste arisings. The Welsh Assembly Government has adopted targets for residual household waste production reducing from 295 kg/per person/per year in 2013 to 150 kg by 2025. Scotland must set targets to reduce waste arisings from household, commercial, industrial and construction sectors.

### **Recycling**

Scotland has made progress in household waste recycling and is now achieving a recycling and composting rate of 33%, however elsewhere in Europe many countries are already achieving rates of between 60 and 70% and many local authorities in England are recycling and composting over 50% of household waste with some achieving in excess of 60%.

Currently just one third of Scotland's commercial and industrial waste is recycled and less than half of Scotland's construction and demolition waste is recycled.

### **Transposition of the EU Waste Framework Directive**

The EU Waste Framework Directive creates a new route map for waste and resource use policy in Europe. The Directive set targets to recycle 50% of some streams of household waste (glass, paper, plastics, metals) and 70% of construction and demolition waste by 2020. The Directive also requires mandatory waste prevention plans to be produced and has to be transposed into law by December 2010.

Scotland's Zero Waste Plan must ensure that future resource use policy fully delivers the requirements set out in this Directive.

### **Policy proposals**

- **Landfill and incineration bans:** The introduction of landfill and incineration bans for unsorted waste and for recyclable waste streams e.g. biodegradable material, wood and paper to incentivise waste reduction and encourage much greater levels of recycling. Such bans have been shown to work elsewhere (e.g. Austria, Germany, Netherlands) in achieving higher levels of recycling and composting and should be adopted in Scotland. This approach would help address the issue of commercial and industrial waste and further incentivise separation, re-use and recycling.
- **Variable waste charging:** Introducing 'pay as you throw' for residual non-recycled or composted waste should accompany the further roll out of recycling provisions to stimulate maximum recycling and waste reduction. Research elsewhere has shown that pay as you throw schemes can help significantly increasing recycling levels.
- **Supporting anaerobic digestion facilities:** Sent to landfill biodegradable waste releases methane – a powerful greenhouse gas. Establishing a network of anaerobic digestion facilities in Scotland to process Scotland's biodegradable waste would enable the gas to be captured and used to generate heat and electricity in the local area and the digestate to replace artificial fertilisers.

### **Conclusion**

The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework identifies the need to address the impact of our consumption and identifies 'reduce overall all ecological footprint' as a Government priority. Realising a zero waste Scotland is central to transforming our attitude to resource use and realising a 'One Planet Economy' in which we live within our environmental limits.

### **For more information:**

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