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ESA PRESS STATEMENT

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Energy for the Circular Economy: how policy could prevent 60 million tonnes of waste going to landfill

LONDON, 06 June 2018: The Environmental Services Association (ESA), the voice for the UK's resource and waste management industry, has launched its latest report, an overview of the contribution that Energy from Waste (EfW) makes to the UK economy, which demonstrates how simple policy interventions could boost resource productivity and support the diversion of up to 60m tonnes of waste from landfill over the next 10 years, powering the equivalent of all the homes in Birmingham, whilst saving 12m tonnes of CO₂e.

With the right Government support ESA estimates that up to £10bn of private sector capital will be unleashed across the recycling and resource management sector, delivering 50,000 jobs, boosting GDP by £3bn each year and contributing to economic growth.

Jacob Hayler, ESA's Executive Director, said:

“Government must support us in unlocking domestic infrastructure investment in EfW by creating a coherent, stable policy environment for recycling and resource management, focusing on the material that simply cannot be recycled, that recognises our sector's positive role in delivering even greater benefits to the economy, whilst supporting and delivering the UK's recycling ambitions.”

“Our sector, in cost-effective partnerships with local authorities, is already successfully generating clean, low-carbon energy from non-recyclable waste at world-class facilities across the UK, and its contribution could be even greater.”

In 2016, ESA's members, which represent 97% of the UK's current EfW capacity, diverted 9.6Mt of waste from landfill to EfW and produced 5TWh of low-carbon electricity, enough to power 1.6m homes, as well as 730GWh of heat to district heating networks and industrial users.

ESA's report, *Energy for the Circular Economy: an overview of Energy from Waste in the UK*, makes three recommendations that will enable the UK to become a world leader in resource productivity and efficiency:

1. POLICY: Develop an ambitious and robust Resources & Waste Strategy and establish a plan for high quality recycling

The forthcoming Resources & Waste Strategy must not only set long-term ambition levels for greater resource productivity, it must put in place comprehensive policies to deliver the outcomes it wants to see; including a clear plan for waste reduction and recycling that will improve the quality of recycled material and stimulate demand. Last week ESA highlighted on Radio 4's You and Yours programme that local councils will need to make changes to collection services and manufacturers will need to use recycled content in their products if we are to hit the Circular Economy Package targets.

2. SOLUTIONS: Address the residual waste capacity gap and provide long-term regulatory certainty

Once waste reduction and recycling priorities have been set in the forthcoming Resources & Waste Strategy, the Government should work with industry to assess how much extra residual waste treatment capacity is needed and to enable its delivery. Delivery should not be undermined by sudden changes to taxes and subsidies, or by changes in policy and targets, and any such changes should be signalled well in advance.

3. ENABLERS: Enable CHP plants to help address the energy gap and ensure the planning and permitting regime does not unfairly disadvantage EfW

A heat sector plan should be developed and Local Authorities should strengthen sustainability criteria in their local plans, for example with low-carbon heat targets, to encourage greater use of combined heat and power. The Government should also enforce the determination period in the local planning process to ensure projects can be delivered on time and for the best value, whilst permits issued by the regulator should be fit for purpose and enforced.

By addressing these three areas, we can seize the opportunity of making the most out of the UK's resources.

A copy of the report can be downloaded below:

http://www.esauk.org/esa_reports/Energy_for_the_Circular_Economy_an_overview_of_Energy_from_Waste_in_the_UK.pdf.

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Notes to editors:

1. The **Environmental Services Association** (ESA) is the trade association representing the UK's resource and waste management industry, which is leading the transformation of how the UK's waste is managed.
2. We work with all levels of government, regulators and the public to deliver a more sustainable waste and resource management solution for the UK. ESA's recent Circular Economy report '*Going for Growth – A practical route to a circular economy*', which outlines how a Circular rather than a linear economy can help manage resources sustainably, can be downloaded [here](#).
3. ESA's Members manage waste on behalf of the whole of society and we are recovering more than ever before. For example, the industry has helped quintuple the UK's household recycling rates over the last decade.
4. **The sector at a glance**
 - Total turnover: **£11 billion**
 - Direct Employment: **106,000 people** (*including waste collection, treatment and materials recovery*)
 - Municipal waste handled each year: **27 million tonnes**
 - Energy generated (across landfill gas, anaerobic digestion and energy from waste) each year: **approximately 11,867 GWh**, which is 3.5% of the UK's electricity
 - **9,083 GWh of that was renewable electricity** (taking out non-biodegradable portion of EfW) which is **11%** of UK's renewable electricity
 - Greenhouse **gas emissions down by 70% since 1990**.
 - The **top seven companies account for approximately 40% of turnover**. Many hundreds of SMEs provide either localised or more specialised services
 - Waste & recycling is the **most highly rated of all council services** by the public (2016 survey)

For further details please visit www.esauk.org

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