

Consultation on preventing household waste in Scotland: Response of the Scottish Environmental Services Association

The Scottish Environmental Services Association (SESA) is the sectoral trade association representing Scotland's managers of waste and secondary resources. SESA's Members seek to align economic and environmental sustainability through delivering compliance with relevant EU waste and environment legislation.

The European Union will be the main driver for environmental improvement in Scotland. SESA believes the Scottish Executive and its agencies must ensure its approach is aligned with the EU's:

- Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of resources;
- Thematic Strategy on waste prevention and recycling;
- Integrated Product Policy; and
- proposed policy initiatives on eco-design.

The European Commission recognises the need to harness market forces and work with business to align environmental improvement with economic development. This will be achieved only by fully engaging business as a partner in the development of waste prevention measures in Scotland, rather than perceiving business solely as a delivery mechanism.

The majority of material and energy losses often occur during raw material extraction, processing and during a product's manufacture. Furthermore, a significant proportion of a product's total environmental impact occurs during its use.

SESA therefore supports the Scottish Executive's approach to address waste issues further up the supply chain. However, the Scottish Executive must recognise that waste prevention is a long term goal and unlikely to yield significant results in the short term.

SESA supports the Scottish Executive's work to promote producer responsibility as a means of minimising waste, and the development of markets for the return of recycled materials back into the economy.

SESA's response to the consultation questions are as follows:

Question 1: Do consultees consider that the Scottish Executive, SEPA and the Enterprise Networks, or other bodies sponsored by the Executive, such as Envirowise, should do more to promote eco-design in Scotland. If so, what?

Yes. Please see response to question 3.

Question 2: Should the Scottish Executive and SEPA carry out further work on "waste profiles" of products? If so, what?

Yes. Please see response to question 3.

Question 3: Do consultees consider that the Scottish Executive should take further action in relation to the life-span of products? If so, what?

Response to Questions 1 to 3.

Yes. Eco-design, waste profiles and life span analysis can be effectively achieved through producer responsibility obligations. For example, the WEEE, ELV and Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations all act as a significant driver to reduce the environmental impact of products. The regulations minimise the amount of waste material generated by a product over its entire lifespan and ensure that those materials which are integral to the design of the product can be easily extracted and recycled during the waste management phase of the product's life span. The onus of eco-design, waste profiles and life span analysis is on the producer and the recycling targets of the regulations promote innovative design.

The Scottish Executive and its agencies should therefore ensure available resources are focused on raising awareness within the business community to ensure all are aware of the regulations and impending changes. Resources should be focused on the timely implementation of the regulations and ensuring that subsequent enforcement is proportionate and consistent.

Question 4: Bearing in mind that some products are always likely to be disposable, do consultees consider any action should be taken at EU, UK or Scottish level to minimise waste from disposable products? If so, what?

Waste can never be totally eliminated from production and consumption but there is still potential for more effective initiatives at the UK government level to minimise waste.

An important driver to move businesses towards more recovery and recycling of waste would be to make disposing of waste to landfill more expensive than waste minimisation, recycling or recovery options.

Therefore SESA supports escalated increases in landfill tax. Higher landfill tax could make forms of waste and secondary resource management other than landfill more competitive and so assist Scotland to achieve compliance with EU law and recovery greater value from waste.

Where a particular substance has been identified within the domestic waste stream as being "problematic" (either by quantity or its hazardous nature) then producer responsibility obligations are an effective means of ensuring its separate collection and recycling prior to the waste product's return to the productive economy as a secondary resource.

Question 5: Would it be desirable and/or feasible to run an Integrated Product Policy pilot in Scotland? If so, for which product(s)? Would any Scottish-based companies wish to run an IPP project in Scotland?

SESA welcomes the principles of IPP as an integrated, whole life cycle approach is central to an effective resource management. SESA recognises this is an early stage of policy development and a pilot project would be desirable. However, any pilot project should address:

- How IPP will interact with other Directives (e.g WEEE, ELV) that already address the issue of restrictions on hazardous substances.
- What role does the Scottish Executive envisage IPP should have in the development of recycle markets.
- What measures will be taken to ensure IPP does not distort the global competitiveness of Scottish business.

- The monitoring of IPP progress.

Question 6: Do consultees consider that there is a need for guidance and support for retailers to build waste considerations into their procurement process? If yes, what guidance and support would be useful? It may be preferable to take this work forward at a UK, rather than Scottish, level.

Yes. Retailers represent the interface between consumer demands and the manufacturers. Therefore, retailers are well placed to consider waste in the marketing and design of products.

SESA's Members wish to maximise the recovery and recycling potential of waste material, however, many products which end up in the waste stream are not designed in such a way which facilitates recycling or treatment.

For example, there is evidence to suggest some supermarket carrier bags, which are claimed to be degradable do not biodegrade within a standard MBT or compost process.

Also, the physical separation of plastics within a waste treatment facility is difficult when more than one polymer is used within the same product. For example, the recyclable potential of a PET drinks bottle can be lost if it is covered by a PVC film as the product is identified as PVC and this is of little recyclable value.

In order to maximise recycling and appropriate treatment there needs to be clearer identification of polymers, and ideally, avoiding the mix of materials in a product.

Retailers need to be aware of issues such as these in the procurement process and guidance and support would be of benefit.

Question 7: Do consultees consider that retailers and their employees could do with further training, support and guidance on waste issues? If so, what?

Yes. Further training and support should be provided on the duty of care. Retailers need to become more aware of the waste they produce, provide an acceptable level of information to the waste management provider and take measures to ensure the waste is taken to a licensed site.

An issue of cross-sectoral importance is health and safety and more training and advice should be provided. SESA would wish this to include raising awareness amongst retailers that adequate on-site facilities are required for the safe storage and collection of waste.

Question 8: Do consultees consider that food labelling requirements cause any conflicts with waste prevention? If so, what are these conflicts and what can be done to reduce them?

No comment.

Question 9: Do consultees consider that more could be done to collect and use surplus food from wholesalers, retailers, caterers and other outlets? If so, what?

No comment

Question 10: Do consultees consider that action should be taken to reduce food waste in the home? If yes, what action should be taken.

No comment

Question 11 – Do you think the Packaging (Essential Requirements) Regulations 2003 are working? If not, why not? What action could be taken to improve their operation?

It is likely that the potential benefits of the regulations will evolve in the forthcoming years. Manufacturer will be under greater pressure from local authorities, with increasingly stringent municipal waste recycling targets, to ensure products' packaging are manufactured in such a way as to facilitate ease of recovery and recycling.

However, this is no excuse for not addressing the issue of product packaging now, particularly as SESA's Members have already invested in the waste treatment infrastructure which can maximise the recovery and recycling potential of packaging waste. The emphasis is now on manufactures to produce packaging which can be more readily recycled.

Question 12: Could any further action be taken in Scotland to minimise household waste from packaging?

No comment

Question 13: Do consultees consider more could be done to encourage re-use either through deposit and return schemes or more generally? Options could include "reverse vending" trials in Scotland or trials of deposit and return schemes.

No comment

Question 14: Could more action be taken to reduce waste from the retailing of products?

Yes. The packaging waste associated with the retailing of products should be targeted with measures in place to ensure retailers are aware of their obligations and the services that are currently in place for waste collection and recycling.

Question 15: Do consultees consider that retailers and manufacturers could provide more and better information on waste issues to their consumers? If so, what do consultees consider should be done?

Yes. There is an important role for retailers and manufacturers to provide information and education on waste

Consumers must understand their role and recognise there may be additional costs associated with improving environmental performance. For example, charges levied on new products could be used to meet the costs associated with end-of-life management, as is likely in the proposed WEEE Directive.

As such, there is a role for retailers and manufacturers to provide better information on costs associated with waste issues to their customers.

Question 16: Do consultees consider that an annual Waste Aware Scotland award for the retail sector would be useful? If so, what form should this take?

No comment

Question 17. Do consultees consider that further action should be taken to make it easier for consumers to raise environmental and waste issues with retailers and other providers of goods and services? Possible actions could include the provision of further information by Government, consumer bodies and retailers on how to complain about excessive packaging and waste.

The availability of better information, such as eco-labelling and life cycle assessment, supported by public awareness campaigns, would allow consumers to voice concerns over waste and environmental impacts associated with the goods and services.

However, to a large extent, consumers currently have the ability to control environmental and waste issues through the act of purchasing power. In reality, for the majority of consumers, price will always be a driver over quality and environment concerns. Therefore, until environmental issues become a greater priority for consumers, the more environmentally efficient products will struggle to compete.

Question 18: Do consultees consider that environmental loyalty cards should be run in Scotland? It is likely that any such cards would have to be run by retail outlets. Is there any role here for the Scottish Executive and/or SEPA?

No comment

Question 19: Which of the above options would consultees prefer in relation to the use of plastic bags?

SESA supports Option 1

(To take no action specifically on plastic bags. The argument for this is that although some plastic bags are handed out unnecessarily, they do not form a significant proportion of the waste stream and action to promote waste prevention should be targeted to ensure it has an impact. In addition, action on plastic bags alone might increase the use of other bags or packaging, which could have a greater environmental impact. The argument against no action is that waste prevention should be pursued wherever there might be some tangible impact, even though this impact may be limited).

Question 20: What priority do consultees consider the Executive should give to reducing the use of plastic bags in the context of work to promote household waste prevention generally?

SESA recognises that, properly structured, the proposed levy might have some effect on consumer behaviour. However, it is unclear whether its effect would be to increase re-use of plastic bags or lead to displacement. For example, according to the British Retail Consortium, retailers in the Republic of Ireland experienced a 70% year-on-year growth in the sales of heavy duty plastic bags following the introduction of plastic bag tax.

Greater environmental benefits would be delivered by addressing other waste streams. For example, a Bill to make mandatory the separate collection of household hazardous waste would have much more of an impact.

Furthermore, SESA believes it is much more important to raise awareness of other waste management issues such as the need to segregate materials for recycling, the need for new

waste and resource management facilities and the need for consumers to buy recycled materials and products to help stimulate the markets for recycled materials and goods.

Question 21: Do consultees consider that further action should be taken in relation to unwanted mail and leaflets? If so, what?

No comment

Question 22: Do consultees consider that further action could and should be taken to promote home composting, food digesters or wormeries in Scotland? If so, what?

Home composting can play a limited role but it will not be appropriate for all households, for example, high density city housing schemes. More modern developments tend to have smaller gardens which means that composting, potentially a source of bio aerosols, is closer to people. We believe it is safer and may in the longer term be cheaper for the vast majority of compost to be managed in strictly regulated facilities. For example, the environmental controls of in-vessel composting systems on odours and bio aerosols are very stringent.

Question 23. Do you consider more could be done to promote the re-use, repair and second-hand sector in Scotland? If so, what?

No comment

Question 24. Do you consider more work should be done to take a Scotland-wide overview of the re-use of products such as furniture, paint and carpets? If so, what?

No comment

Question 25. Do you could consider more could be done to promote community composting in Scotland? If so, what?

Whilst the community sector can play a role in increasing awareness of waste management and recycling issues such as composting, it will not be able to provide the investment at the scale required to deliver the requirements of Scotland's Waste Strategy and EU waste law.

Scotland's National Waste Plan has set a goal for 600 000 tpa (tonnes per annum) capacity of composting facilities by 2010. A further 450 000 tpa capacity will be required by 2020 to comply with Scotland's recycling and composting target. To deliver infrastructure on this scale will require a limited number of well managed, high capacity facilities, which is beyond the scope of community composting.

Question 26: Do you think that current community waste funding sources are designed to encourage waste prevention projects? If not, what changes do you think are required?

No comment.

Question 27: Do consultees consider that recycling credits should be made mandatory? If so, why?

Yes. SESA believes that this would provide an additional incentive for SESA's Members to introduce innovative recycling schemes which ultimately would contribute towards local authorities' statutory recycling targets.

Question 28: Do consultees consider that recycling credits should be extended to re-use and/or waste prevention?

Re-use Credits

There is some potential in this proposal. SESA believes that where domestic equipment, which is collected as waste, is legitimately and productively re-used, there is justification for introducing re-use credits. However careful consideration must be given to how long the item will be re-used before it is discarded again. This will depend largely on the type of product and its remaining useful life.

The Scottish Executive would need to develop robust auditing procedures for the payment of re-use credits to ensure that payments were made only where products were productively and legitimately re-used. Furthermore SESA would advocate a lower payment for re-use on the basis that re-use only delays disposal as opposed to preventing it. We believe that local arrangements are likely to be best to determine the value of any re-use credits.

There is no legitimate requirement for waste prevention credits.

Question 29: Do consultees consider that there would be merit in a similar approach to Barnet's (making use of certain receptacles mandatory, to encourage recycling) being adopted by local authorities in Scotland? Clearly, before authorities in Scotland took any action of this type, they would need to be satisfied about the scope of the existing legislative powers in Scotland.

Yes. Full use of local authorities' legislative powers should encourage greater rates of recycling within Scottish households.

Question 30: Should the Scottish Executive consider action in relation to the size of bins for residual waste provided by local authorities and/or the frequency of collection by local authorities? If so, what action should be taken?

No comment.

Question 31: Do you think that further research and guidance is required on green waste composting to minimise the effect on waste arisings? As indicated below, local authorities are already empowered to charge for the uplift of garden waste.

No comment.

Question 32: Should the Scottish Executive consider amending the existing regulations allowing charges to be made for the collection of other types of household waste. If so, what changes should be made, and why?

A charge should be imposed which would appropriately reflect the cost of collection and recycling or disposal. However, the Scottish Executive must ensure that the introduction of charges would not result in an increase in flytipping.

Question 33: Should the Scottish Executive consider issuing guidance on charging for special uplifts of bulky items and garden waste? If yes, what should the guidance say?

Waste awareness campaigns should target home owners to educate them that there are certain wastes that due to their size or hazardousness nature require special uplift. Without this level of education there will be a continuing rise in flytipping and associated increased costs in the collection of fly-tipped waste.

Question 34: Do consultees consider that it would be helpful to consider further the issues about "direct variable charging"? The next step would be to issue a full consultation paper on this subject, outlining the arguments for and against and the financial implications.

Financial incentives can be an effective way to encourage sustainable waste management within the home.

There is a clear distinction between *direct charging*, a flat fee collected from households to recover the costs of waste management services, and *variable charging* which requires householders to pay more if they generate more waste.

Variable charging is the purer application of the producer pays principle and may be the long-term solution for Scotland.

However, given the gap between the amount householders think they pay for waste management and how much is actually spent, flat rate direct charging might be a useful mechanism to increase the awareness of waste management charges.

SESA would welcome a full consultation paper on this issue.

Question 35: Do consultees consider the Scottish Executive should carry out further work on incentives? If so, what? One option would be trials of incentives with a number of authorities.

Financial incentives are effective. Increasing landfill tax is an incentive for moving away from landfill as the primary option for management of waste and promotes businesses to increase recovery and recycling rates.

Financial incentives should be extended to the municipal waste stream in the form of direct charging.

Whilst local authorities should be given a degree of flexibility to tailor incentive schemes according to local environmental socio-economic needs, a Scotland-wide incentive charging scheme could ensure that new incentive charging schemes would be introduced fairly across all local authorities.

Question 36: Do consultees consider that waste management contracts/service level agreements should include incentives for waste prevention? If yes, how is this best achieved? Do consultees consider that waste management contracts/service level agreements can currently include perverse incentives to increase the generation of waste? If yes, what can be done to tackle this?

Yes. Mandatory provision towards recycling credits should be an incentive for consideration.

Question 37: Do you consider that contracts (other than waste management) let by local authorities have scope for provisions on waste prevention? If so, which ones? There is clear scope to minimise waste in construction, although this may not impact on household waste. The best time to make adjustments to contracts may be when they are due to be renewed/re-let.

No comment

Question 38: Should the Scottish Executive take action to ensure local authorities do more on waste prevention? If so, what?

No comment.

Question 39: Should the Scottish Executive lay down targets on local authorities in relation to waste prevention? If so, what should these targets require and how would this be measured?

No. In the short to medium term this would not be appropriate. Before targets could be considered there would need to be a clear and coherent policy on the definition of waste prevention and an ability to monitor progress towards waste prevention.

Question 40: Do local authority officers require more training on the skills needed to encourage waste prevention? If so, what training is required and who should provide it?

No comment

Question 41: Do consultees have any comments on the allocation of Strategic Waste Fund resources to waste prevention work?

The allocation of Strategic Waste Fund resources must be transparent and demonstrate best value.

Question 42: Are consultees aware of any other action which could be undertaken to prevent waste? If so, what?

No comment