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ESA PRESS STATEMENT

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New ESA report – Smarter Measures for the Circular Economy - “why weight is not working”

LONDON, 20 August 2018: The Environmental Services Association (ESA), the voice for the UK’s resource and waste management industry, today launched the second of 2 new reports looking at what it will take to meet the (weight based) recycling targets proposed by the EU Circular Economy Package.

The current weight based recycling targets for waste have been useful in driving performance to date, but are they fit for purpose?

The report, ‘Smarter Measures for the Circular Economy’ shines a light on how we measure the recycling rate and why weight is not the best way of measuring what is actually remanufactured into new products. The report covers a wide range of topics including:

- why we should measure more than just the recycling rate, and contains proposals for how we could measure things differently to help the move to a more circular economy,
- increasing domestic reprocessing capacity should be a priority. We need to drive manufacturing within the UK by demanding recycled content. It makes better sense to recover and recycle materials in the UK rather than send them around the world.
- instead of an absolute target for recycling, individual material streams could each have their own target, linked to the best environmental option for that particular material.
- some of the things that will need to change in the way things are produced, consumed, and how they are treated when they are discarded to help drive this transition,

- products containing “hard to recycle” materials should attract a cost of recovery charge. This charge could also drive investment into product redesign and methods to recover and reuse key components
- how manufacturers, businesses, local residents, public-sector and waste management professionals will all have a part to play to improve our environmental performance.

ESA’s Executive Director, Jacob Hayler said:

“Current EU waste policy measures success or failure on the basis of how heavy something is when it is recycled. There is clearly scope in a post-Brexit world for us to do something much smarter which actually focuses properly on environmental outcomes and enables us to capture more value from our waste resources.

This report examines how we could bring this about in practice. It offers a clear and pragmatic route-map for introducing new metrics alongside our current weight based system, which could offer us the future flexibility to phase out the most problematic materials and decarbonise our waste and recycling systems most effectively.”

A copy of the report can be found on the ESA website at: http://www.esauk.org/esa_reports/

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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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