

First report: Waste management in North Wales

Introduction

1.1 The North Wales Regional Committee is one of the Assembly's four regional committees. It covers Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Isle of Anglesey, Wrexham and the area of Gwynedd made up of the former districts of Arfon and Dwyfor.

1.2 The role of the regional committees, as defined by Standing Order 10.2, is to advise the National Assembly on matters affecting their regions, the effect of Assembly policies in those regions and the work of public bodies there.

1.3 At its meeting on 4 July 2003 the Committee considered waste management issues affecting the region. The proceedings are summarised in this report.

Waste management in North Wales

1.4 Waste management is one of Wales' biggest environmental challenges, with around 93% of municipal waste being sent to landfill and around 7% being recycled and composted. By 2003-04 local authorities in Wales are expected to achieve at least 15% of recycling and composting of municipal waste, increasing to 25% in three years and 40% in six years time. The Assembly has provided additional resources to local authorities for sustainable waste management.

Key messages

1.5 The focus of the meeting was on the challenges associated with developing more sustainable methods of waste management in North Wales. The key messages from the session were:

- Availability of sustainable waste management methods – concern at the continued increase in household waste, the ease of waste disposal (e.g. large wheelie bins for refuse collection), and lack of local facilities for recycling and composting;
- Promotion of waste awareness – call for public consultation to be meaningful, for rigorous risk assessment of waste management options under consideration, and for the concerns of local people to be taken seriously. The need for greater promotion of sustainable waste management,

so as to affect a culture change, particularly through education and information targeted at young people. Also the importance of effective partnerships at all levels – voluntary, public and private sectors;

- Increasing sustainable waste management – the need for segregation of household waste in the home, kerb-side collection of recycling, and increased number of local recycling centres, so as to minimise the volume of waste transported around the region.

Presentations

1.6 At the meeting the Committee heard short presentations from the following organisations on different aspects of meeting this challenge. Copies of the presentations are reproduced in the Annexes.

- Environment Agency Wales - outlining the waste hierarchy and main work being done by the Agency to encourage more sustainable waste management;
- Welsh Local Government Association - some of the practical issues associated with meeting targets;
- Cylch - examples of good practice in the region;
- TCC Wales Broadbased Organisation (an alliance of diverse local groups working together to make a difference in communities) - some of the concerns in the region and a suggested way forward.

Views of the North Wales public

1.7 Specific points raised by members of the public were as follows:

- Cllr Harry Jones raised the need to understand the causes of, and reverse the increase in household waste;
- Bob Barton, Llanarmon-yn-Ial Community Council, stressed that waste was a major problem, and tackling it required a change in culture. He noted that facilities for disposal and recycling were not widely available in rural communities in North Wales, and suggested that composting be encouraged;
- Chris Thomas said he had invented a machine that clears mortar from bricks, which enabled them to be re-used. The re-use and recycle philosophy could also be applied to household waste;
- Janet Williams, Women's Environment Network, raised concerns about the hypothetical nature of

data used for risk assessments and queried regulation of ‘waste’ when it ceased to be classed as such, e.g. following re-use or recycling;

- Louise Halestrap, Centre for Alternative Technology, commented that central targets seemed to conflict with local authorities’ assessment of what needed to be done. She suggested that the targets could be met, as they have elsewhere in Europe, and that this was a resource rather than a waste management issue;
- Dr Peter White, a retired toxicologist, stressed the global nature of the challenge, and the need for culture change through discussion and public consultation. He also raised the potential for waste associated with producing bilingual publications;
- Andrew Sully, TCC and Church in Wales, indicated that there was a culture of suspicion towards central government, whom many felt put markets before sustainability;
- Fiona Trapp, representing a private sector organisation, queried whether there was consultation with other countries facing similar issues, and the arrangements in place to consult with the private sector;
- William Hughes, of Community Enterprise and Director of Cylch, said that there was no transparency in local decision making and that often public consultation took place after decisions had been made by professionals. He stressed the need for partnership, and for a co-ordinating body independent of vested interests;
- A representative of a private sector waste company said that his company had invested in a recycling centre and commented on the lack of reference to SMEs during discussion. He also questioned the disparity between landfill and aggregate tax, and suggested that the new Assembly building use reclaimed materials.

Written comments

1.8 Written comments were submitted after the meeting, and are reproduced in the Annexes, the main points raised were as follows:

- A.L.& S.A. Black press for more extensive recycling and reduction of waste combined with well-managed landfill. They support community composting schemes, doorstep collection, and sorting of waste at source, but call for local authorities to take responsibility for prompting communal action;
- Cllr Harry Jones, Holt Community Council, expresses the Council’s concerns about the proposed incinerator in Wrexham, and the nature of the consultation process;

- Dr Stan Moore, Department of Science and Natural Environment, NEWI, suggests an holistic approach, based on education, waste minimisation and recovery of materials;
- Chris Pittaway, Deputy Headteacher and Environmental Co-ordinator, St Christopher's School, Wrexham, asks a series of questions about education and sustainable development, which have been forwarded to the Welsh Assembly Government;
- G Francis Roberts asked questions on composting and new rules for burying fallen stock, which have been forwarded to the Welsh Assembly Government. He also suggested more sustainable options for refreshments at regional committee meetings, which will be acted upon;
- Chris Thomas provided further details of brick cleaning machine mentioned during the meeting, and referred to more efficient use for old tyres than burning;
- Judy Ling Wong raised concerns about recycling in Llanberis, which have been forwarded to Gwynedd County Council.

Next steps

1.9 Copies of this report will be presented to the Chair of the Assembly's Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee, the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside, and local authorities in North Wales.

Janet Ryder AM
Committee Chair

A copy of this report is available on the National Assembly website www.wales.gov.uk If you would like a hard copy, please email NWales.regcomm@wales.gsi.gov.uk or contact Silvia Ricondo on 029 2089 8018.

ANNEXES

Presentations (hard copies only)

Environment Agency

Welsh Local Government Association

Cylch

TCC

Written comments (hard copies only)

AL & SA Black

Cllr Harry Jones

Dr Stan Moore

Chris Pittaway

G Francis Roberts

Chris Thomas

Judy Ling Wong