



House of Commons
Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs Committee

**The Future of Waste
Management:
Government Reply to
the Committee's
Report**

Ninth Special Report

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The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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The current staff of the Committee are Gavin Devine (Clerk), Tim Jarvis (Second Clerk), Richard Kelly and Dr Kate Trumper (Committee Specialists), Mark Oxborough and Louise Combs (Committee Assistants), and Anne Woolhouse (Secretary).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3262; the Committee's e-mail address is: efracom@parliament.uk.

NINTH SPECIAL REPORT

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee reported to the House on *The Future of Waste Management* in its Eighth Report of Session 2002–03, published on 22 May 2003 as HC 385-I. The Government's Reply to the Report was received on 22 July 2003.

Government response

Introduction

1. The Government takes the problem of waste very seriously. It is a problem that everyone can associate with, and one that everyone must take responsibility for. If not handled properly, waste can have significant negative impacts on the environment, and pose a risk to public health. This is why the Waste Strategy was published, and why Government continues to implement further measures to address the problems of waste management.
2. The Government's approach to waste in the years since the Waste Strategy was published has been far from timid. There have been numerous measures introduced, and with the publication of the response to the Strategy Unit report comes new opportunity. This was not considered in detail in the EFRA report, but commits Government to implementing a package of strategic measures that will help to kick-start the step change in waste management that is required in this country.
3. The integrated approach focuses on delivery, using a combination of levers to support local authorities in achieving their targets, promoting recycling, re-use and minimisation, and boosting the development of innovative waste management technologies.
4. What follows sets out the Government's response to the 29 conclusions and recommendations of the EFRA report. The response should be seen as an illustration of Government's commitment to the introduction of sufficient measures to bring about significant progress.
5. What is needed is commitment from all involved to tackle waste growth and increase the amount we reuse and recycle. These are issues which affect everyone, and we all have a part to play in finding solutions. By working together we can make genuine progress towards a truly sustainable waste management system.

Defra

Recommendation 1: We are concerned that Defra still appears to lack the capacity, the vision, the sense of urgency and the political will to break the mould and bring about truly sustainable waste management in this country. (Paragraph 20)

Recommendation 2: The current fragmentation of responsibility between three Government departments has hindered the evolution of a consistent approach to resource use and waste management. The Government as a whole must ensure that its policies are consistent and mutually supportive. However, whether or not the Government decides to concentrate waste and resource use policy-making in a single department, these issues are so far-reaching that there will always be some degree of shared responsibility. Defra's particular tasks are to prove that there is sufficient political will to pay for sustainable waste management and to give the clearest possible signals of exactly what is required of all the stakeholders involved. (Paragraph 27)

Recommendation 4: Defra's lack of capacity is an important issue not only for sustainable waste management but for sustainable development as a whole. We are encouraged that Defra has recognised that this is a matter that needs attention and we will return to this issue in future inquiries. (Paragraph 32)

6. Defra is acutely aware of the problems that this country faces on waste. Since the Waste Summit, numerous measures have been introduced to address these problems, and the speed with which many of the recommendations of the Strategy Unit report have been adopted further illustrates the Government's commitment to taking things forward as urgently as the situation requires.
7. Almost immediately after publication of the report, commitments were made to increase the Landfill Tax, reform the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and commission a review of the health and environmental impacts of different waste management options.
8. These actions have since been supplemented by many more, not least the launch of the new sustainable waste management programme in Defra, announced in the Budget, the 'Waste Implementation Programme.' This will concentrate on improving waste minimisation, recycling and composting, and researching new technologies for dealing with those wastes which are not readily reduced, reused or recycled. In keeping with the Strategy Unit's recommendations and the requirements of the Landfill Directive, the focus will be municipal waste.
9. A key feature of the Waste Implementation Programme will be its Local Authority support team, which will assist local authorities to meet their recycling and composting targets. The first task of this particular workstream will be to

bridge the gap between Central and Local Government, and improve our understanding of Local Authority performance including the barriers they face, economic drivers and the impact of various policy levers. A dedicated data workstream is also being established within WIP to ensure a sound evidence base to inform future policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

10. In keeping with the Strategy Unit's (SU) recommendations, a new organisational structure is being implemented to ensure the programme remains delivery and outcome focused. Delivery of the programme will be driven by a new WIP Programme Director, John Burns, with a proven track record in programme management and a Steering Group chaired by David Varney of mmo2, comprised of key stakeholders with expertise and interest in key areas of the programme.
11. Along with these new measures, the Government has confirmed an additional £1.5m will be made available for administrative resource in Defra to implement waste delivery. Recruitment for additional posts within the strategy and delivery teams is underway following a skills analysis of the new workstreams and a new training programme is being identified to address any additional needs.
12. In keeping with PPM principles, the progress of WIP will be measured against clearly defined milestones and objectives. A headline trajectory has been devised, which will allow us to monitor the impact of individual programmes on both our recycling PSA and landfill targets. Improving the timescales of data collection to monitor progress will be a priority for the programme, and trajectories will be improved and modified over time, as our assumptions are validated using data collected as a result of the work of the dedicated data workstream.
13. On sustainable development more widely, Defra has this as its central aim, and has mainstreamed Sustainable Development thinking throughout the department. In addition, departmental restructuring later this year will see the Sustainable Development Unit move to a central Strategy directorate, putting the unit physically at the core of the Department's operations.
14. The Unit actively encourages and supports other Government departments to integrate Sustainable Development into their operations and policies, and to focus the necessary resources to establish their own sustainable development units if they have not already done so. This network of Government contacts gives greater scope and significance to the Sustainable Development in Government initiative.

15. It is accepted that dramatic change is needed to meet the challenging and imminent targets that face this country, but there is no doubt within Government that the will and the mechanisms will be in place to ensure the best chance possible.
16. It is hoped that these positive moves will deliver results, and produce a welcome response from the Committee in future inquiries.

Recommendation 3: It is vital that Defra improves its approach to European Union Directives. It should consult with its stakeholders earlier and we would like it to adopt a “maximum benefit” approach rather than the “least short-term cost” attitude it seems to have now. (Paragraph 30)

17. The UK has participated fully in negotiations in the European Community on a range of measures based on the principles of producer responsibility and has fully supported the Packaging and Packaging Waste, the End of Life Vehicles and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directives. These Directives focus on waste minimisation, re-use, recycling, product standards, and increasingly, reduction in the use of hazardous substances, as well as treatment facilities.
18. In implementing Directives, the UK seeks to achieve the environmental benefits in the Directives through the most cost-effective producer responsibility approach, trying to ensure that the burden on business is the minimum consistent with achieving the environmental objectives. In each case, industry has the opportunity to contribute to the development of the particular producer responsibility system to be adopted, and consultation with the relevant industry and other interested parties is always undertaken. For example, on packaging, an industry Advisory Committee on Packaging was set up providing a forum for Ministers to communicate with the industry.

Environment Agency

Recommendation 5: In our view, regulation of waste facilities and prevention and prosecution of environmental crimes are the Environment Agency’s most important roles in waste management. We recognise that it can also offer information and expert advice, but should the two come into competition, for example for funding, the Agency must ensure its regulatory obligations are met first. (Paragraph 33)

19. The Government fully endorses this recommendation.

Recommendation 6: We are pleased that the Government is pressing for higher penalties for serious environmental crimes. We recommend that the proceeds of fines imposed for such crimes be passed to the Agency to support its work. (Paragraph 36)

20. The Government notes this recommendation, and is carrying out research to look at recent penalties for environmental offences. The aim is to establish whether fines have been adequate and consistent across England and Wales in the past few years. We are also interested in whether they generally reflect the true cost to society of environmental offences, and whether they are effective at deterring repeat offences.
21. We are currently considering further options for improving the range of powers available to the Environment Agency and local authorities for tackling fly tipping, which is one of the most serious environmental crimes. This will include a consideration of the current penalties, whether they pose sufficient deterrents, and whether there might be scope for the use of Fixed Penalty Notices in this area. We plan to consult on proposals at the end of the summer and to publish a policy statement once this has been completed.
22. Under current provisions and those proposed in both the Local Government Bill and the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, local authorities are and will be allowed to retain the receipts from Fixed Penalty Notices that are issued for offences involving litter, dog fouling, graffiti and fly posting. The Government will consider whether there might be more scope for fine receipts to be retained in this way, but it should be noted that receipts are never likely to cover the costs of enforcement and that other resources will always be needed.

Recommendation 7: The Government must ensure that the Environment Agency is adequately resourced to enforce waste legislation. In its focus on the most seriously polluting incidents, the Agency must not lose sight of the smaller scale but cumulatively damaging crimes such as fly-tipping. (Paragraph 37)

23. The Government agrees that the Environment Agency must be adequately resourced. The Agency has continued to receive significant grant-in-aid from the Department. This has increased from £103.7m in 1999/2000 to a budget of £123.7m in 2003/04.
24. In total, the Agency's budget, comprising grant plus charges and levies, has increased from £620m in 1999/2000 to £805m in 2003/04. Of its total operating budget, the Agency intends to spend £81.7m during 2003/04 on its waste function, this represents an above inflation increase of £4.7m (6%) on 2002/03. These are substantial resources, and in the Government's view, the Agency is sufficiently funded to deliver its statutory responsibilities.

25. Polluting such as fly tipping is being addressed with the same vigour as large-scale pollution incidents. The Agency is working with external partners, including local authorities, to improve incident detection and reduce the occurrence and impact of environmental crimes.

Recommendation 8: New waste management plants must be judged against the best available techniques and each must be considered within its local context. Nevertheless, the Environment Agency must speed up its licensing procedures, without compromising the level of environmental protection offered, if the necessary increase in waste treatment facilities is to be achieved. (Paragraph 39)

26. The Agency has taken a number of measures to speed up its licensing work, including the development and use of standard licences and templates. The time taken to negotiate and enter into financial provision has been identified as a major barrier within the licensing process. The Agency is implementing a new policy from 1 July 2003 for non-landfill sites that will replace the existing arrangements with a system of up-front financial health checks and will be keeping under review the effectiveness of this change.
27. In reviewing how it carries out its permitting functions, the Agency has established strategic permitting teams to deal with the more complex and higher risk activities, including landfills.
28. The Agency is working with Government to ensure that the implementation of new permitting requirements, including those required by the ELV and WEEE Directives is capable of being delivered in an integrated, efficient and effective manner.
29. To facilitate the Agency's work and any necessary increase in waste treatment facilities, Defra is undertaking a review of waste permitting. The overall aim of the review is to develop a new regulatory regime where the degree of regulatory control is proportionate to the environmental and human health risks associated with different waste disposal and recovery activities. The resulting regime should be one that effectively and efficiently meets the needs of the public, the environment, affected industries and good public administration and minimises burdens on industry and the agencies. The review is expected to be concluded early in 2004.

Recommendation 9: We are concerned that the Environment Agency does not have the capacity to regulate effectively, particularly in the face of the increasing demands on it. Unless the public and the waste management industry can be assured that all facilities are stringently regulated and operate to the best of international standards, public confidence in the safety of such facilities and industry's willingness to invest in the best available equipment will both be compromised. (Paragraph 53)

30. The Government acknowledges that we face the challenge of many new directives and regulations at the same time as being required to provide greater transparency in the regulatory process.
31. As a modern regulator, the Agency's incorporation of risk-based regulation will allow it to target to much better effect its regulating resources, and provide incentives for better performers, applying the most effective regulation for the environment with the minimum regulatory burden. Some examples of this include a revision of the statutory guidance in Waste Management Paper 4 and the waste permitting review.
32. This will be coupled with increased self-monitoring supported by enforcement. The Agency will also seek to simplify and rationalise existing regimes, reducing administration and bureaucracy. In addition, the Government will be working with them to develop non-regulatory approaches for achieving environmental improvement.
33. In practice, the Agency's performance will be assessed by its results and the concomitant environmental improvements, including prevention of deterioration of the environment. Its Corporate Strategy sets out smart indicators aimed at identifying clear progress in achieving reductions in the increase of waste, and overall reductions in waste production by Agency-regulated processes.

Local Authorities

Recommendation 10: We recommend that, where possible, local authorities produce joint waste strategies to minimise disposal and to encourage waste minimisation, re-use and recycling. We also recommend that the Government consider what incentives it could introduce for disposal authorities to encourage recycling and composting. (Paragraph 42)

34. Local authorities have already been set statutory targets, broadly to double their recycling and composting rate by 2003-04, with a minimum level of 10 per cent and an upper level of 33 per cent, and further targets for 2005-06.
35. The Government has announced that the Waste and Emissions Trading (WET) Bill will be amended to require authorities in two tier areas (with some exceptions) to prepare a Joint Municipal Waste Strategy thus affording more opportunity for the County and Districts to work together.
36. The WET Bill will also introduce a system of tradable landfill allowances that will reduce year on year to encourage local authorities to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill. It is clear that if Local Authorities are to

meet their obligations under the WET Bill, they will need to increase their efforts to compost biodegradable waste

37. The Government will shortly be starting work on reviewing 'recycling credits'. It will also consider what other incentives are feasible. It is hoped the review will be completed by November.

Recommendation 11: We recommend that the Government complete its deliberations about local authority household incentive schemes as soon as practicable and certainly by the time of the next Pre-Budget Report. We are strongly in favour of local authorities being given the ability to introduce incentive schemes if they so wish. (Paragraph 58)

38. In its response to the Strategy Unit report, the Government has undertaken to carry out further work before any decision is taken to enable local authorities to implement direct or variable charging for waste. This will look at the practicalities of operating schemes, how potential disadvantages could be overcome, and will analyse international experience of such schemes. The work will be carried out in co-operation with the Local Government Association and other stakeholders and will start this summer thus enabling Government to review its position on this in 2004.

39. Issues to be addressed in the further work include

- a) The potential concerns about the effects of pilot schemes
- how to ensure that a local authority has facilities and services in place to help householders reduce or recycle waste (eg help with home composting, kerbside collection of separate materials for recycling) when they introduce a pilot scheme to ensure public support
 - how to make any charges equitable (eg reflect size of household and ability to pay)
 - the enforcement issues to prevent waste tourism (householders using free/cheaper facilities in neighbouring authorities) and fly-tipping
- b) The practical and financial arrangements for schemes
- what is the cost of introducing and administering schemes
 - how will any additional net revenue raised by pilot schemes be used
 - how will the financial arrangements for pilot schemes interact with other LA funding for waste, council tax etc
 - what new legal powers are required
- c) The potential effectiveness of pilot schemes on reducing waste, increasing recycling etc – drawing on international experience.

Recommendation 12: It remains to be seen whether the total pot of money available for local authorities to spend on more sustainable waste management is large enough. However, we are dissatisfied that what funding there is has to be bid for in competition with other authorities, or is not specifically for waste, or is tied to the introduction of Private Finance Initiatives. (Paragraph 63)

40. Additional funding to help local authorities deliver more sustainable waste management solutions has been provided by a number of means.
41. The bulk of additional funding for waste services has been provided through the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) formulae and Revenue Support Grant associated with those SSAs. The SSA that includes waste services was increased by £1.1b over the Spending Review 2000 period and by £671m over the Spending Review 2002 period. A separate waste formula was considered as part of last year's formula grant review. The review used regression analysis, and failed to provide any substantial clarity in relation to the cost drivers to waste expenditure.
42. These increases have been supplemented by a Waste Minimisation and Recycling Challenge Fund of £140m over the 2 years 2002-03 and 2003-04. This approach was taken following an extensive consultation exercise on the approach and use of the funds. It was set up on a challenge fund basis to enable targeting on particular authorities, e.g. those starting from a very low base, because of concerns that the SSA formulae for distributing funding did not exactly match the need for additional spending on recycling in every authority.
43. Ring fencing and challenge funds are not wholly compatible with the white paper Strong Local Leadership - Quality Public Services and the subsequent freedoms and flexibilities agenda. In line with this, the Government announced in the Budget that the existing Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund will be replaced with a Performance Reward Grant. The Government expects to announce more details of the new arrangements, including the timing of its introduction, later in the year.
44. Some additional resource has also been provided for waste Private Finance Initiative schemes. This increase largely reflects increasing demands from local authorities for support, reflecting local decisions to pursue that procurement route and business cases that demonstrate on a project basis that this approach represents better value for money than alternatives. The Government is very keen that waste minimisation and recycling are central to waste management solutions and is pleased to have been able to support a number of worthwhile proposals in recent months.

Recommendation 13: We welcome the measures in the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill that will give local authorities greater powers to take action against fly tipping. We recommend that such powers be accorded to local authorities as soon as practicable. (Paragraph 66)

45. The Government notes this recommendation and will commence the new powers as soon as it is both possible and practicable.

Recommendation 14: We recommend that the Government fully support school waste minimisation and recycling schemes which involve pupils. The Government should work with local authorities to remove barriers to schools' inclusion in local authority recycling schemes as soon as possible. (Paragraph 67)

46. The Government agrees that school waste minimisation and recycling schemes have an important role to play in increasing awareness of dealing with waste in a more sustainable manner. As such the Government, through its Environment Action Fund scheme, supports Waste Watch's Waste Education Support Programme which provides information on recycling to schools.

47. Under Schedule 2 of the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992 waste from schools is considered to be household waste for which the local authority, if asked to collect it, may make a charge. This would include any material collected in a recycling scheme. The imposition of a charge is at the local authorities' discretion.

48. There is nothing to prevent a school taking part in a local authority scheme and we know of examples where this occurs, for instance in Bexley and Hammersmith.

Recommendation 15: We recommend that the Government move towards material specific recycling targets, with an emphasis on those materials whose recycling offers the greatest environmental benefit. (Paragraph 88)

49. The Government accepts that there is case for considering material specific recycling targets (MRST) in conjunction with local authority household waste recycling targets.

50. The Government will consider this issue as part of the review of BVPIs and associated targets to ensure they provide the right incentives to authorities to deliver performance improvements against major priorities for waste. However, Government does not seek to increase the number of indicators, and to protect the value of longitudinal data we would only seek to change indicators where a strong case can be made.

Recommendation 16: We urge the Government to look again at ways of recognising success in promoting home composting in local authorities' waste performance figures. (Paragraph 81)

51. Home composting can reduce the amount of household waste that a local authority is required to collect. This is reflected in the Best Value Performance Indicators.
52. The Government is considering whether there are further ways of recognising success in promoting home composting in local authorities' waste performance figures as part of the review of Best Value Performance Indicators, which will be consulted on later this year.
53. Part of the additional work being undertaken by Waste and Resources Action Programme, following the Strategy Unit report, will be a home composting scheme that will roll out a quarter of a million home composting bins this year, and will also provide guidance to home composters on how to do it effectively.

Economic Instruments

Recommendation 17: We welcome the increase in the landfill tax and recognise the need for waste producers and local authorities to have adequate time to prepare for it, but we urge the Government to raise it more rapidly than the minimum £3 per year outlined in the Pre-Budget Report. We are persuaded that the tax will have little influence until it reaches a rate of £35 per tonne. (Paragraph 46)

54. The Government has clearly stated that the standard rate of landfill tax will reach a level of £35 per tonne in the medium to long term. The Government's own analysis and the recommendations of other reports suggest that a standard rate of tax of this level will result in alternatives to landfill being made available and being an economically viable option.
55. Waste producers and the waste management industry need sufficient warning of the tax rises to be able to invest in alternatives to landfill. The most important factor in stimulating a shift in behaviour away from landfill is not the current rate of tax, but the confidence and knowledge that the rate of tax will reach a level of around £35 per tonne, but we acknowledge that the levels of increase are a factor that can drive change and the right balance needs to be struck.
56. The increases in the landfill tax are also only one part of the Government's package of measures to tackle the issue of waste. Increases in the landfill tax need to be timed to complement the implementation of the rest of the package.

Markets for Recyclates

Recommendation 18: We recommend that the Government ensure that all economic instruments – both taxes and subsidies – are used in such a way that they reflect the position of each waste management option in the waste hierarchy. (Paragraph 49)

57. The Government's approach to environmental taxation and other economic instruments is set out in *Tax and the environment: using economic instruments*, which was published with the 2002 Pre-Budget Report. This reiterates the Government's commitment to making use of taxes as one of the policy mechanisms for improving the environment as set out in the 1997 Statement of Intent on environmental taxation.
58. The Government will continue to apply the principles and the approach set out in the document in the development of economic instruments. This involves early signalling of objectives, careful analysis of the costs and benefits of intervention, and extensive consultation on possible measures before their introduction.
59. The Government is considering how the use of economic instruments for waste could be extended further. The case for using economic instruments for incineration will be considered in light of the review of the environmental and health impacts that the Government has commissioned.
60. Public expenditure interventions are an important policy tool in the delivery of the Government's recycling targets. The £140m Waste Minimisation Recycling Fund has helped local authorities kick-start improvements in recycling performance, while the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) is designed to stimulate the market for recycled products and materials. Most recently, in its response to the Strategy Unit's 'Waste Not, Want Not' report, the Government announced additional public spending of up to £92m per year in England to further improve municipal waste management performance. Details of the new programmes can be found at www.defra.gov.uk.

Recommendation 19: We welcome this wider role for WRAP in principle, but its focus on markets must not be lost. (Paragraph 68)

61. Government accepts this recommendation. The Government recognised the need to tackle the issue of markets for recyclates which is why we set up WRAP. It was always the intention that the additional work taken on under the Waste Implementation Programme (WIP) would complement, not replace WRAP's 'core' programme of work on market development. We will work with WRAP to develop a forward business plan and targets to ensure the focus on market development work remains.

Recommendation 20: We are disappointed that the Commission does not appear to include recycling under its Environmental Guidelines for state aid, and recommend that the Government support WRAP in its negotiations with the Commission. (Paragraph 69)

62. Government accepts this recommendation. We have already secured State aid approval from the Commission for a proportion of WRAP's activities. We will continue to work with WRAP to secure a satisfactory outcome on the remaining elements of the notification to the Commission for State aid clearance.
63. The Government has yet to see how far the Commission's interpretation of the Environmental Guidelines may affect good recycling proposals. We understand that the Commission are not planning a thoroughgoing review of the Guidelines in the near future. However, we will continue to work towards developing an interpretation that recognises the contribution that recycling can make to improving the environment and the legitimacy of public funding support to tackle certain market barriers, both through individual notifications and in any subsequent review of the Guidelines.

Recommendation 21: We recommend that public bodies adopt green procurement strategies wherever it is economically feasible to do so and that Parliament and central Government take the lead. (Paragraph 70).

64. The Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate (<<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/sdig/improving/index.htm>>) was published in July 2002, with targets for travel, water consumption, and environmental management systems and contains guidance to support Departments. Targets for waste, energy, procurement, estates management, biodiversity and social impacts will be announced over the next year. This new approach, agreed by all of the central Departments, is the main vehicle for systematically assessing, managing, reporting and improving Government performance.
65. In November 2001 at the request of Secretary of State for Defra, an interdepartmental Sustainable Procurement Group (SPG) was established to look at the scope to improve the way in which sustainable development considerations are incorporated into purchasing. It is anticipated that outcomes from the SPG's recommendations will inform the procurement section of the Framework.

Community Waste Projects

Recommendation 22: We recommend that both central and local government actively support community waste projects. The Government should consider making the payment of recycling credits to community waste projects mandatory, or seek other ways in which such projects can minimise their unrecovered costs. (Paragraph 74)

66. Defra will shortly start work on reviewing the recycling credits scheme. The review will look at the current operation of the scheme, what can be done to improve it and alternatives to recycling credits. This will be an issue that will be considered during the review. It is hoped the review will be completed by the end of the year.

Biodegradable Waste

Recommendation 23: Defra must ensure that regulations and guidance on the treatment of biodegradable waste are made available as soon as possible and that it makes every effort to minimise the negative impact of such regulations on the composting industry. (Paragraph 79)

67. The Government agrees that it is important for the regulations and guidance on Animal By-Products to be made available quickly. The UK's national Animal By-Products Regulations 2003 came into force on 1 July. These Regulations (that repeal the Animal By Products Order 1999 as amended) introduce controls based on a risk assessment and allow the composting of catering waste to take place economically while fully protecting animal and public health.

68. The Government is also taking the Waste and Emissions Trading (WET) Bill through its Parliamentary stages. In both Houses, Opposition parties have tried to introduce specific controls of composting of waste onto the face of the Bill. The Government has resisted these attempts as it believes the controls were unnecessary (as they are included in the Animal By-products Regulations), too prescriptive and run against the interests of local authorities and the composting industry. As the Bill stands at present it does not include controls on composting as the House of Commons removed an amendment added by the House of Lords.

69. The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), is working hard to help the industry develop BSI standards for compost. The first BSI-PAS standard was launched in November 2002, and work is continuing to adapt that standard for specific uses of compost.

Recommendation 24: Kerbside collections of kitchen waste and paper may prove to be essential if England is to meet its landfill targets. We would expect the paper to be recycled, but the choice between home composting and central composting depends on local circumstances. (Paragraph 80)

70. The Government accepts that source separation is an important element in any sustainable waste management system. An extension of kerbside collection of biodegradable waste can be part of this approach. The Government will be funding a new kerbside task-force to offer advice to local authorities on kerbside collection as part of its new Waste Implementation Programme. In accordance with the recommendations of the Strategy Unit, the taskforce will be implemented by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).
71. Like the Committee, the Government would expect paper to be recycled and agrees that the choice between home and central composting of kitchen and green waste depends on local circumstances. Home composting is a waste minimisation measure that can be very effective, while central composting systems give greater control over the end product. The Government will be offering further support to home composting under the new Waste Implementation Programme.

Recommendation 25: This is an opportunity for Defra to integrate its soil and organic waste strategies and to provide a springboard for an internationally competitive composting industry to export its expertise. We recommend that it takes the opportunity. (Paragraph 82)

72. The EU Commission produced a Communication in April 2003, outlining its thoughts on the development of a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection. Work on the Strategy is now progressing through expert working groups, consisting of representatives from Member States, the Commission, European Agencies and other stakeholders and experts. The work of these groups, in which the UK is playing a leading role, should be completed by January 2004.
73. The Commission aims to publish a further Communication in June 2004, which will include a proposal for a Soil Monitoring Directive and detailed recommendations, in particular to tackle soil erosion, declining soil organic matter and soil contamination. In negotiations on any biowaste legislation that follows from this work, the Government, will seek to protect UK interests, while negotiating constructively for a positive outcome. The Government recognises that well thought out and relevant bio-waste directive/regulation could play an important role in achieving its aim of a sustainable waste management system.

Hazardous Waste

Recommendation 26: Hazardous wastes are by their nature the most likely to cause damage to human health and the environment. The Government should prioritise waste minimisation, producer responsibility and safe treatment for these wastes. (Paragraph 83)

Recommendation 27: In its response to this report, Defra should set out the progress it has made in preparing for next year's reduction in hazardous waste landfill capacity and also the activities of the hazardous waste forum. (Paragraph 85)

74. The Government agrees that waste minimisation—in terms of reducing the hazardousness of wastes and reducing the amount produced are priorities—for action. The Government agrees that there is further scope for producer responsibility in relation to hazardous wastes and that the continued environmentally sound management and treatment of hazardous waste is also a key aim. The Government has established a Forum for all relevant stakeholders to discuss these issues and those relating to the provision of treatment capacity for hazardous waste. It has met three times already.
75. One of the earliest points made at the Forum is that the issue of hazardous waste landfill capacity is not the only important factor in relation to the ability of the UK to deal with hazardous waste. Total treatment capacity has to be considered, because some wastes will simply not be landfilled in the future, either because the increased cost of landfill will make alternative treatments more attractive, or because the Directive bans them from landfill altogether, as has been the case since July 2002 with liquid wastes and wastes with certain hazardous properties (explosive, corrosive, oxidising, and flammable).
76. In addition, in order to assess the UK's ability to deal in the future with hazardous waste, against a background of change in regulation and the market, a number of further factors need to be considered. First, the likely effect of higher costs of disposal on arisings of hazardous waste, whether those are changes in volume or the types of waste. Second, the likely future treatment and disposal capacity, whether that be landfill or alternative waste treatments.
77. In addition to physico-chemical treatment, incineration and co-incineration, a considerable amount of hazardous waste can be stabilised to such an extent that it may be disposed of in a separate cell in a non-hazardous landfill. It is clear that this treatment process is destined to play a major role in hazardous waste management in the UK, and is already largely used in other countries.
78. The Government recognises that there are still gaps in the information we have available about the annual tonnages of waste presently treated, as well as

difficulties in forecasting what might be possible in the future, and it is one of the aims of the Forum to plug the knowledge gaps wherever possible.

79. To that end, the Forum has established two sub groups to urgently consider (i) the effects of changes in legislation on producers, the scope for further waste prevention and minimisation and the consequent effect on hazardous waste arisings, and, (ii) treatment options and capacity. This second group will consider the capacity of the waste water industry to treat further hazardous wastes; the role that stabilisation and bioremediation can play in treatment of waste. A third sub-group will use the other two groups' work to produce an advisory document in early September.
80. Further information on the activities of the Hazardous Waste Forum, including minutes of the meetings and presentations from the meetings have been made available on the following site:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/hazforum/index.htm>

Incineration

Recommendation 28: Where there is still significant scientific doubt about the impacts of different methods of waste management, the Government should commission new research into those impacts. (Paragraph 52)

81. In response to recommendation 15 of the Strategy Unit report, and as announced in the Pre-Budget Report, the Government has commissioned a review of the health and environmental effects of waste management and disposal options, which is well underway. The report is due to be published in the autumn, and will provide a side-by-side comparison of different waste management and disposal options. This will help to inform and support local authority decisions on waste management, and provide background for decisions on economic instruments relating to incineration. It is also likely to identify areas for further research.

Recommendation 29: The Government should publish a report on the use of incineration techniques setting out the case both for and against this type of waste disposal. It should also make its own position clear on incineration addressing particularly the health and environmental implications of this type of disposal. (Paragraph 52)

82. It is important to make a distinction between incineration as a form of disposal, and recovering energy from waste through incineration.
83. The use of incineration for the disposal of residual waste after recycling and recovery, or where materials cannot be safely or practically re-used or recycled,

84. is acknowledged to be a viable waste management option by its inclusion in the waste hierarchy. It would not be appropriate to discuss the effects of this technology independently of the effects of other waste management options. This is the principle behind the application of Best Practicable Environmental Option. However it is accepted that communicating and consulting on the decision making process for waste management policy and land use planning, and associated risk assessments, is very important.
85. The study referred to in para 79 above will provide comparative data on different waste management options.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
22 July 2003