



Advisory Group on ‘A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy’

Time, Date, Duration: Tuesday 23rd November 2021 14:00

Location: Via Zoom

MINUTES

1. CE Bill / Strategy and alignment with CAP

DECC updated the meeting regarding the progress of Circular Economy Bill to date which is currently with the Oireachtas Committee. Once the Committee's report is received, it is expected that the Bill will be published late 2021/early 2022.

Next steps:

- Environmental Levies: Coffee cup levy – Commencement of consultation process regarding the Regulations, drafting of the Regulations and request for feedback.
- Strategy: Focus on awareness raising to ensure the circular economy is understood by the public, stakeholders and policy makers.
- Emphasis on the EU process with a determined approach on CE in line with Ireland's ambitious measures noting the need for circular economy as a key driving force for climate action which needs to be embedded across all areas of the Plan and a closer integration of the two policies.

Discussion highlights and comments:

There was a discussion regarding implementation of the levy, public awareness and engagement plan for cafes and consumers. DECC noted the importance of industry and public engagement and advised that an extensive awareness campaign will be put in place once the legislation is enacted. A public consultation of the levy will be published on enactment of the Bill and draft Regulations.

2. Waste capacity

DECC advised the meeting of a new arrangement in place and a new structure within the Local Government sector. Capacity will still be challenging in 2021 however, it is hoped this will ease in the future due to the waste prevention package. In particular, the new role of the Local Authority Waste Coordinator regarding coordination of shared services in the Local Government and other appropriate sectors.

It was noted that although the waste industry was effective during the pandemic, there are a few issues which will need to be addressed:

- Insufficient waste treatment capacity: Reliance on export where 20% msw is exported annually with no provision by operators for interruption or business continuity.
- Authorisations: The system must be streamlined to ensure it is fit for purpose regarding decision-making.
- Mitigation measures regarding waste contingency: Local Government has carried out a lot of work over the years in respect of this issue as regards prevention, recycling and developing more circularity etc. Enforcement has also played a key role.
- Waste Management Planning Office: Capacity data is generated on a quarterly basis.
- Predict and plan: The Waste Management Plans which are being drafted by the Waste Management Planning Offices and due for publication in 2022 will set out a pathway for waste over the next 6 years which will be based on a co-ownership model involving all the stakeholders. Focus groups are being established to run over the next couple of months to discuss.

Discussion highlights and comments:

Disagreed with the statement that there is no contingency capacity within industry. Difficulty moving through the existing system to build cross-contingency and the fact that a large operator left the system.

Query regarding involvement in the Waste Management Planning Office Stakeholders' Committee. DECC to check and revert.

Noted the Waste Management Plan is placed under a statutory footing in the CE Bill. However, emphasis needs to be put on waste prevention and reuse etc.

Query regarding prevention/targets in previous Waste Management Plans. DECC noted that this is a key piece of the Local Government role and if there is another method available, DECC is very happy to listen.

On a question, DECC advised that they will prepare a short paper on the Local Authority Waste Coordinator role and new Local Government Structure for Local Government members.

Ireland will be the CE hotspot in 2023 which is very important to promote CE and increase public awareness.

The National Hazardous Waste Management Plan will be published before the end of the year.

3. DRS

DECC advised the meeting of the recent announcement by Minister Eamonn Ryan and the signing of the Regulations. The Regulations were published in Iris Oifigiul on 19 November 2021 setting out the technical structure/legal framework surrounding the scheme together with the roles and responsibilities of producers and retailers and system operation. The next milestone to reach is to appoint a system operator.

Several issues must also be attended to:

- The Regulations are not definitive. There are a couple of issues to tidy up prior to the introduction of the scheme:
- Amount of deposit – the producers asked for leeway.
- Enforcement issues – these will need to be strengthened. DECC is working on this.

Several items arose during discussions which are being looked at separately and will not form part of the Regulations.

- Planning – exemption from planning for RVN machines. DECC held a very positive meeting with Housing regarding the current exemptions in the Planning Regulation. DECC will be drafting a paper as to requirements and they will engage with stakeholders in due course.
- VAT on the deposit – ideal position regarding VAT would be that the deposit is VAT exempt however, the initial feedback is that this may not be possible. DECC is working on this and note that several more recently introduced schemes through the EU have been VAT exempt.

- DRS Sub-Committee - a lot of engagement has occurred with the DRS sub-committee regarding the detailed nature of putting Regulations together. The scheme is still on track to launch in Q3 2022.

Discussion highlights and comments:

DECC confirmed that the full deposit on bottles or cans in MRF can be claimed. A proposal regarding this will need to be put before the Minister for approval.

There was a discussion regarding how the UK's approach to the scheme would affect Ireland's scheme. DECC noted that the UK are progressing very slowly and there could be logistical difficulties on the island of Ireland. This issue has been foreseen by DECC but it will not interrupt Ireland's timeline. Ireland's scheme will be RVN based at the launch of the scheme. It was noted that Industry is very committed to the scheme which is a conventional return to retail model and it is hoped that Northern Ireland will mirror Ireland's system.

There was a discussion regarding Planning permission and RVN machines, i.e., the size of and space required for these machines. If they are situated in local community areas, local communities will need to be informed and consulted. DECC stated that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage have alerted DECC to these issues, i.e., location, noise etc. which DECC will consider.

It was noted that the IWMA commissioned trial on Digital DRS in Dublin has been completed and achieved 94% return rate.

It was also noted that a Carbon Assessment report prepared by LR Consulting for the IWMA comparing return to retail DRS with Digital DRS. Digital has a much lower carbon footprint, which is the goal.

4. Foodwaste prevention roadmap

DECC made a presentation to the meeting regarding the Foodwaste Prevention Roadmap. The Charter with 5 major retailers has been a big step forward together with the donation piece with Foodcloud. The Foodwaste Prevention Roadmap is the next step.

Discussion highlights and comments:

Following a discussion, DECC advised the following:

- Interim targets aiming to establish a baseline for Ireland.
- This will not slow down the actions surrounding measurements and will be applicable to all sectors.

- It will provide understanding through measurement but will not be set out in the first Roadmap.
- Mandatory reporting is required by the EU mid-2022 and this data will be reported on an obligatory basis.
- The draft Roadmap will be out to public consultation and will provide an opportunity for comment as to how it is currently presented.
- The EPA will play a role in the publication of the foodwaste data.
- The EPA are measuring protocols for certain sectors. This needs to be developed as it is a huge area with a lot of sectors. It will be following the modelling of the Food Waste Charter in operation with the retail sector in terms of how data is reported which will enhance the mandatory reporting to the EU.
- The key focus is to measure data across the sectors to see where the issues lie before it considers interim targets. This applies to sectoral targets also. DECC/EPA needs to establish what the data is, if the sector is engaged and measure the food loss and food waste within the sectors.
- Currently there is a lot of work being carried out across EU level regarding baseline data. The first year will be officially reported mid-2022 for the year 2020. EPA noted the Food Waste Forum where there is a wealth of data available with excellent standardisation, monitoring and looking across the various sectors which will be harmonised from an EU perspective.
- EPA noted that the 2019 data will be published very shortly.
- DECC stated that the key issue regarding the data is that it is comparable to other EU Member States.
- It was noted that at least 25% unmeasured waste in food waste is costing a lot of money. Proper education and legislation are required to return focus to training and developing people. Local produce should be sourced which in turn reduces greenhouse gases surrounding food transportation.
- There was a discussion regarding the Samaritan Law and the legislation surrounding it. DECC stated that food donation commitments are set out in the Waste Action Plan regarding food donation, supporting the initiative, investigating legislation and barriers and reducing food waste.
- The meeting was reminded that every Local Authority has a public consultation hub and DECC should make use of those hubs to ensure a rounded public consultation. DECC noted this and advised they utilise the public hub regarding the public consultation piece.
- DECC the public is becoming very familiar with Mywaste.ie.

- DECC noted that work on food waste and the caddy programme is also being carried out which aims to engage and educate on the use of caddy bins and the proper use of the brown bin system.
- There was a discussion regarding the method of measuring food waste. How much of the data relates to edible food? How much was a by-product of food, e.g., potato peelings. Is the roadmap trying to halve edible food waste only?
- The EPA is extending an invite to attend to the annual food waste forums which addresses this issue. Figures are driven by waste characterisation carried out under the National Waste Characterisation in 2018 which is currently being undertaken again. The EPA is looking to develop a more refined methodology with a greater focus of food waste, i.e. edible/non-edible. The EPA is engaging extensively with a number of sectors regarding terminology i.e., the Food Waste Prevention Programme, hospitality and the supply chain sectors, high level sectors and subsectors, e.g. bakeries, deli counters, retailers etc.

5. AOB

- The CE Programme will be published in the next few weeks in line with the CE Strategy.
- DECC advised that under the CE Strategy, a National CE platform will be established complimentary to MyWaste which will include communications together with its key messages and how best to target more sustainable behaviours which will be driven by the CE Advisory Group.
- DECC will liaise with Food Safety Authority Ireland regarding the CE Strategy. DECC is already engaged with Food Safety Authority Ireland regarding the Food Waste Prevention Roadmap.