



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

Time, Date: Thursday 25th January 2024 – 10.00

Location: Via MS Teams

MINUTES

Frank Gallagher, Chair, Principal Officer, DECC welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief overview of the agenda for the session.

1. Presentations

The following presentations were given:

- Departmental update presented by Denis Dunne and Ellen Holloway, Assistant Principal's, DECC
- Sean Cotter Deposit Return Scheme – Re-Turn

Conor Walsh of the Irish Waste Management Association also updated the Group on the circumstances behind a recent media report on waste collection in the Dublin area.

Copies of the presentations by Mr Dunne, Ms Holloway and Mr Cotter will be circulated.

2. Landfill Levy and Waste Recovery Levy update

Ms Holloway gave a presentation on the landfill levy and waste recovery levy.

- According to levy returns submitted to the Department, last year almost 90% of waste going to landfill was declared exempt from the landfill levy. A review was recently

commissioned to examine the existing landfill levy exemptions. The objective of the review is to improve Ireland's waste performance and reduce our circularity gap. The findings will be presented to the Waste Advisory Group for discussion.

- The Waste Recovery levy was introduced at €10 per tonne with effect from 1 September 2023. The largest waste stream in the EU is C&D waste. C&D waste accounts for over half of the waste being generated¹. It is not sustainable to have C&D waste exempt from the levy. The disposal and recovery of C&D waste for both economic and environmental reasons needs to be rapidly and significantly reduced.

3. A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy.

Mr Dunne gave a presentation on a Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (WAPCE).

The WAPCE has 205 actions which will be introduced on a phased basis over the lifetime of the plan. Below are some of the items covered in the presentation which have been delivered or are planned to be introduced in the near future.

- Enacted the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022.
- Introduction of a waste recovery levy of €10 per tonne with a corresponding increase of €10 per tonne in the landfill levy.
- Introduced incentivised charging for waste collection in the commercial sector.
- Expansion of requirements on waste collectors to provide all their customer with a brown bin regardless of location.
- Publication of Ireland's first Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023.
- Publication of Ireland's National Food Waste Prevention Road Map 2023-2025.
- EPA published updated Green Public Procurement (GPP) guidance and criteria for the public sector in 2021. EPA has also funded GPP training and published reports on GPP activity by Government Departments for 2020 and 2021.
- Creation of the Circular Economy Fund which replaced the Environment Fund with effect from July 2023.
- Banning certain single-use plastics from the Irish market.
- Reconfigured the EPA National Waste Prevention Programme to become the Circular Economy programme.

¹ [Construction and demolition waste: challenges and opportunities in a circular economy — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](https://www.european-council.europa.eu/media/e4040424/1661224111212_en.pdf)

- Expansion of the list of items accepted in the household recyclable bin to include soft plastics.
- Established the new EPR scheme for tobacco products.
- EPA has established of end of waste criteria for recycled aggregates.

4. Upcoming

- A Deposit Return Scheme for certain plastic bottles and cans will go live on 1st February.
- The local authority sector will shortly publish a new national Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy.
- DECC is in the process of preparing a new green public procurement strategy and action plan. A public consultation on a draft plan was held in September 2023.
- The NWCPO will publish a report on incentivised charging for waste collection later this year.
- The Extended Responsibility scheme for tyres will include all categories of tyres.
- The EPA are finalising National By-Product criteria for greenfield soil and stone.

5. Still to be delivered

- Develop separate collection systems for household hazardous waste and textiles before the end of 2024.
- Introduce a levy on single use hot beverage cups.
- Finalise proposed legislative amendments to the Waste Management Act and EPA Act to streamline the EPA licensing process.

6. DRS – SEAN COTTER Re-turn Ireland

The scheme is to commence on the 1st February 2024.

- The interim goal is to have 25% of recycled material in PET bottles by 2026 rising to 30% by 2029.
- All packaging must be reusable or recyclable by 2030.
- Items included are plastic PET bottles and aluminium and steel beverage containers from 150ml to 3 litres.
- Deposit rates are set by the Minister and fixed for each container, currently 15c up to 500ml and 25c for up to 3l.
- Deposit must be shown as a separate line item on till receipts.

- 167 producers have registered with the scheme to date.
- It's expected to have 2,200 reverse vending machines in place when the scheme goes live.
- 43 rear end loaders and 13 vans for manual collections have been purchased and drivers were undergoing route training in January.
- A national processing centre in Limerick is fully commissioned with 5 regional consolidation centres around the country.
- The projection for separate collection for recycling is 70% of in-scope containers in year 1 with a target of 90% by 2029.

7. Update on segment on Joe Duffy Liveline Show in December regarding management of recyclable waste – Conor Walsh, Irish Waste Management Association

Mr Walsh gave a presentation addressing allegations on Liveline regarding recyclables being tracked directly to Dublin Waste to Energy Plant. Some key points from the presentation included:

- The gate fee for acceptance of material at Dublin Waste to Energy is a lot higher than the gate fee at a Material Recycling Facility so there is a large financial incentive on waste companies to bring recyclables to their proper destination.
- All waste companies are aware that Ireland has significantly challenging EU targets to achieve for recycling MSW and the important message is that material is being recycled.
- Companies are obliged under their permits to bring recyclables to an appropriate facility. Any company found to be in breach of this risks losing their permit to collect waste.
- The individual stated that the bag was left on the footpath during the day. Companies are not allowed to collect in the central commercial district in Dublin until after 5pm and after 7pm for bag collections so any bags left on the street are likely to be treated as waste by the City Council.
- No device with a battery should be placed into a waste receptacle as it represents a fire risk. Waste electrical equipment and batteries can be recycled for free with retailers or local authority sites.

8. Action Points/Updates

- There will be a public consultation on the amendments to the EPA Act.
- The 2nd Circular Economy Strategy is expected to be published in the 2nd half of 2024 and will include a significant public consultation.
- The next Circular Economy Innovation Grant call for applications will be published shortly.
- Regulations on End of Waste and By-Products are at an advanced stage and will undergo public consultation prior to finalisation.
- DECC reminded the group that this is a collaborative group and invited members to suggest presentations, topics or items for the agenda.

The Chair thanked the group for their attendance.

Date of next meeting Thursday 25 April at 10am.