



Advisory Group on a 'Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy'

Meeting Thursday 7 May 2020

Discussion Note – Construction and Development Waste

Context

Construction and development waste arises from any building works or demolition site, including transport infrastructure and the upgrading of roadways and pavements. The largest element of c & d waste is excavated soil and stone. The remainder consists primarily of concrete, brick, tiles, metal, glass, wood and plastic.

Preliminary data shows the total amounts for C&D/Soil Wastes for recent years as:

2017	2018	2019	2020 (est)
4.7m tonnes	5.6m tonnes	6.05m tonnes	6.4m tonnes

After a period of low activity, and notwithstanding current restrictions, construction activity has been accelerating in recent years in line with the upturn in the economy. **Project Ireland 2040** sets out the State's ambitions and vision in terms of development over the next 20 years. It includes a large number of major construction projects which present huge potential in terms of economic development and a challenge in ensuring we have the ability to manage the waste generated. The construction sector has a huge role to play in Ireland's transition to a more circular economy and to Ireland's economic

recovery, post Covid-19 in a way that decouples economic activity from waste generation.

Focus for Action

For every ten houses built, enough waste is generated to build an eleventh. This represents a huge cost and loss of value to the construction sector as well as resulting in significant volumes of avoidable waste. There is clearly a need to increase the recycling of construction waste and replace the current reliance on landfill- particularly against the background of a dramatic reduction in the number of available landfill sites.

Over the coming years the sector needs to move towards:

- Waste prevention and circularity – maximising resource value of materials in use, minimising waste arising, getting usable products out of the waste regulatory system;
- Following best available techniques in design, planning, products and practices;
- Expanding the range and use of recycled products and creating a demand for recycled products;
- Segregating more materials on site to allow for recycling; and,
- Planning for C&D Waste management at the earliest possible stage in a construction project.

Policy Options and Measures

Reducing C&D Waste will require effective actions across several policy areas and a cross government response is required in a number of areas including:

- The development of national end of waste decisions for specific C&D streams;
- Producing 'best available techniques' documentation for the sector- reflecting application of circular economy principles;
- Develop Planning Guidelines to drive the prevention of waste and the promotion and incentivising recycling;
- Implement and monitor Green Public Procurement specifications for public construction and developing programmes to support adoption of best practice.

Some questions to consider

- What further measures need to be put in place to encourage all players to prevent and recycle construction waste? Are there existing provisions that could be strengthened?
- What other regulatory codes can be used to embed circularity into construction processes?
- Is legislation required e.g. in Planning, Environment or Taxation to reduce current levels of waste and encourage more recycling?
- What can be done to improve levels of waste segregation on construction sites?