

# Bulky Waste Re-Use and Recycling For Local Authorities

South East Region

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009



**REMADE**  
SOUTH EAST

## Workshop Summaries



Funded by:



## WORKSHOP ONE - 'Working On Re-use Projects'

Facilitator: Diana Lock

### Guide Questions:

***How can local authorities engage more effectively with re-use organisations to achieve a greater re-use of bulky items from household waste sites and doorstep household collections of municipal waste?***

#### *Issues*

- *Professionalism of social enterprises (correct approaches to H&S, tendering, reliability, audit trail)*
- *Funding for continued services (can these schemes be run on a business basis or should they be subsidised by local authorities?)*
- *Data collection on effectiveness of schemes*
- *Benefits to local authorities (increased PR, engagement with community projects, corporate social responsibility)*

***Is re-use of bulky items better than recycling, incineration or landfill?***

#### *Issues*

- *Re-use is a higher priority in the waste hierarchy but what are the practicalities of re-use of bulky waste?*
- *Cost – is it cheaper/more convenient for local authorities to send bulky items to landfill than working with community re-use schemes?*
- *CO2 impacts from re-use – what are the arguments for and against as compared to reprocessing, landfill and incineration and how do local authorities measure these impacts?*

### Discussion:

**The workshop addressed the questions examining the earlier experiences of Local Authorities (LA) when working with reuse organisations and Non Government Organisation (NGOs)**

#### **Reliability**

Some positive experiences were reported and it was felt that perceived unreliability did not often exist; however there is scope for NGOs to work in a more businesslike manner. The group felt that the fact that reuse organisations 'cherry-pick' the items they will accept, it makes it more difficult for LAs to establish formal contractual agreements with reuse organisations. LAs find it easier to manage contractual agreements which accept all bulky materials.

## **Cost**

There is a need to conduct a full cost benefit analysis in order to assess the merits of the diversion of bulky items for reuse. This assessment should take into account practices such as transport, labour, storage and residual disposal for landfill. Co<sub>2</sub> monitoring should also be considered as a factor within the overall assessment of reuse.

NGOs and LAs both find the operational costs of separating and storing bulky items for reuse are high, therefore it is often necessary to subsidize such fees.

The decision to support reuse activities is therefore often a political one.

## **Timing**

When householders make the decision to change furniture they often expect a simultaneous collection service for the old items. LA and re use organisations are usually unable to offer a same day service which results in the items being stored outside thus rendering them unusable. The group felt that customer demands cannot be met through the existing response rate.

## **Opportunities**

Bulky items available from a transient population, such as students, could provide a source of clean reusable material. Similarly office clear outs often produce high volumes of good quality reusable products.

WRAP has produced a report which can be circulated to the group for information.

## **Agreements between LA and NGO**

LCRN and WRAP felt that the key to offering an improved bulky waste collection service to householders and businesses was to promote formal contractual agreements between NGOs and LAs.

Support exists to promote appropriate contractual wording and content from LCRN and WRAP.

This approach would help promote reliable collections and a sustainable supply of materials for reuse

## **Recommendations;**

The group felt that additional work could be carried out in the following areas;

- a) Identification of sources of good quality items which are able to be stored in clean dry areas prior to collection.
- b) Reuse organisations should look at the potential to offer an inclusive collection service for all bulky items. They should also make sufficient charges for disposal items.
- c) Provide assistance to NGOs and LAs to come up with the approved agreements. LCRN can provide support to achieve this.
- d) WRAP and LCRN should work with other organisations to lobby the government to introduce product

responsibility for manufacturers of furniture, bedding and soft furnishings.

- e) The group felt it was important for LAs and NGOs to participate in DEFRA consultation on waste to ensure their voices are heard regarding the reuse of bulky items.

## WORKSHOP TWO – ‘Markets for Bulky Waste’

Facilitator: Alan Potter

### **Guide Question:**

***What markets currently exist for bulky items collected through local authority schemes?***

*Discussion on current status of markets for plasterboard, wood, furniture, carpets, mattresses and bulky plastics*

#### *Issues*

- *Cost of alternatives to landfill - (transport, increasing gate fees, landfill tax accelerator, double handling, reprocessing )*
- *Availability of reprocessing facilities in the South East - (capacity of existing and new facilities, economies of scale for investment, proximity principle)*
- *Supply chain – availability of consistent sources of waste materials*

### **Discussion:**

The workshop guided by the question took on the role of outlining the issues faced by local authorities [also applicable to most] when it comes to recycling an additional waste stream. Although many materials were mentioned, due to PPR Wipag’s plastic attendance, the discussion was based around bulky plastics in particular.

#### Barriers Identified:

- LA Management/Arrangements
  - Two tier or Unitary structure. In two tier authorities WCA don’t have direct control of the collected waste (as they are directed by WDA) so have less flexibility and have to persuade WDA to align with their outlets.
  - UAs have control but generally insufficient waste to create a critical mass of supply
  - Long term existing waste contracts with private sector often offer little scope for flexibility on outlets.
  - Different LAs have different recycling targets and wider Local Area Agreement targets – this creates division in creating critical mass to develop new materials markets.
- CA sites
  - Input specifications and control need to ensure risk of contamination controlled – otherwise risk to material quality.

- Limited space allows little new material additions – CA site providers under increasing pressure to find space for separation of material so have to trade off on which is most needed; planning restricts new CA sites.
- Even if space available for collection needs to be kept clean and dry; limited resources or facilities to sort the materials.

- Economics & Infrastructure

- Restrictions on Finance due to risk of rate capping – councils will only pay what disposal cost even if recycling is the right thing to do.
- Infrastructure to landfill materials already in place and will need to continue even when re recycling more.
- Sorting of materials and sending to different reprocessors increase costs and transport costs are high due to lack of local reprocessors.
- Value to tax payer; what does the tax payer want and are they educated enough (LA perception that the public believe recycling is free)
- Should price of landfill reflect landfill void value when considering bulky items?

- Quantity of material

- Perception of a lack of material for regular supply as needed to sustain reprocessors; PPR Wipag and KCC trials prove a regular supply may exist (although further more lengthy trials required).
- Unknown seasonality trends; increase in plastic garden furniture at spring and autumn. Monitoring data is needed to check the seasonality of arisings.
- EFW options only viable with a regular flow of material with a predicted calorific value; although blending of materials can solve consistency issues.

Positive outcomes:

- Recycling of plastic Food Packaging is highest priority for the public and therefore LA's are looking to begin to recycle – although currently few outlets.
- Increasing separation of materials at CA sites means that remaining residual materials are largely bulky waste items i.e. negative sorting. Taking this to a 'dirty' MRF for sorting or shredding and blending to produce a calorie controlled fuel to supply to Efw may be

preferable due to space constraints on CA sites.

- Where supply is intermittent could place a bin onsite once a month (inform residents of this) and then co-ordinate collection with other LA's to optimise logistics (reducing transport costs) and generate a critical mass. If this was done on a region wide basis at different times a reliable flow of material might be generated. Companies such as PPR Wipag and Kingsnorth Waste Management identified as routes for LA Plastic materials including discarded waste receptacles.
- 30m<sup>3</sup> bin of bulky plastic converted to less than a tonne of plastic granules that go for reuse – low reject rate – 75% of input gets converted. Other plastic s sent onward to other recyclers. Question – should items found in bulky plastics go for reuse rather than recycling? A significant amount are recycling and composting bins supplied to householders!