

THE REVISION OF THE REGIONAL WASTE PLANS

Purpose

1. This paper outlines the Welsh Assembly Government's objectives for the revision of the three Regional Waste Plans that the three Regional Waste Planning Group coordinators should seek to achieve (through best endeavours) as part of the review of the Plans. It revises the version of the paper produced on 14th June 2006

Background

2. The EU Waste Framework Directive lays down a requirement for Member States to establish an "integrated and adequate network of waste disposal installations". Article 7 of the Framework Directive also requires Member States to produce waste management plans that "relate to suitable disposal sites or installations". The devolution settlement means that the Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the Framework Directive are met in Wales. The three Regional Waste Plans (RWPs) form an important part of Wales' compliance with the Directive.
3. The first three RWPs produced in early 2004 were a useful first step but their revision needs to better address the requirement in TAN21 for the identification of areas of search, locations or sites for regional or sub-regional scale facilities. Paragraph 2.16 of TAN21 specifies that: *"The identification of areas or types of location for future facilities will be of particular importance. The RWP would not allocate sites for facilities, but it will indicate areas of need and search for potential sites for future facilities, and where possible, a choice of locations that once agreed in the due political process and in recognition of existing contractual arrangements, would serve the region. In some cases (for instance if the waste to be treated is of an infrequently arising type) a facility might serve other regions also."*
4. The Audit Committee and EPC Committees' inquiries into waste both made recommendations in relation to the revision of the RWPs. In particular, Recommendation 3 of the Audit Committees report advised that: *"Regional waste plans are revised in order to indicate the types of locations where regional facilities could be situated."* The Assembly Government in its December 2005 response accepted the need for RWPs to be revised to indicate types of location where regional facilities could be situated. The response added that a Geographic Information System (GIS) waste mapping model has been developed by the Assembly Government that will help inform the process further by defining areas of search for suitable waste facilities.
5. Recommendation 9 of the EPC Committee's inquiry into waste advised that "...Regional Waste Plans should be revised to ensure they identify suitable geographical locations for regional facilities and that the Welsh Assembly Government provides local authorities with clearer guidance to deliver this objective." The Assembly Government's response on 8th March 2006 identified that "...it is seeking greater clarity and rigour in the revised regional waste plans that will be produced in 2007. The current plans already have the status of material considerations in the planning process and the revised plans will be expected to identify with more certainty the types of sites that will be considered suitable for waste management facilities."
6. One of the key aims of the Regional Waste Groups is to identify the need for additional waste facilities serving more than one local authority area and ensure appropriate land use provision. It is anticipated that there is likely to be a need for of the order of a hundred or so waste facilities across Wales serving more than one local authority area. Whilst this figure is

by no means prescriptive, it does give a broad indication of the total number of facilities required and an indication of the task ahead. A more accurate figure should be determined by each of the Regional Waste Groups during the revision of its plan.

7. The next 3-4 years will be critical in determining whether Wales establishes the necessary infrastructure in time to meet EU and Waste Strategy targets and to provide the alternatives to landfill that are required. The revision of the RWPs thus comes at a critical juncture and it is considered essential that a choice of locations for waste facilities is identified so that more certainty can be provided to the market.

Welsh Assembly Government stance on the revision of the Regional Waste Plans

Outcomes sought

8. The Assembly Government seeks the following outcomes in each revised RWP:
 - i). The identification of the indicative number of different types of additional waste facilities (for each type of waste) required to be provided in the region that will be needed to serve (see point 9 in relation to shared residual municipal waste treatment facilities):
 - a single authority;
 - more than one authority (ie. for facilities with capacity for greater than one local authority area).
 - ii). The identification of a list providing a choice of locations/ sites (eg. named industrial estates, business parks etc) suitable for the location of additional “within building” waste facilities with capacity for greater than one local authority area (i.e. in relation to the facilities identified in i) above). Each local authority should identify a list providing a choice of preferred potential locations or sites for additional waste facilities with capacity for greater than one local authority area for inclusion in the RWP. There needs to be a degree of over-provision – just because a site is identified it does not mean that it will definitely get a facility, nor does it have to be safeguarded necessarily. The degree of over provision should be agreed by the Regional Waste Group – a figure of 150% of the figure derived in i.) would seem reasonable, but is not prescriptive. Each authority should then be required to identify an appropriate proportion of this number. Preferred locations/ sites should be chosen on the basis of their suitability for waste facilities, including giving consideration to the nature of existing business already on the site/location, the presence of existing waste facilities, the existence of suitable site infrastructure (e.g. water, sewerage and electricity supply), the existence of planning permissions and/ or waste licences already in place for waste facilities, the availability of suitable business units and/or unoccupied premises and/or undeveloped land at the locations, and other factors deemed relevant by the Regional Waste Group. Any existing sites with facilities that currently serve more than one local authority can count towards the total number of alternative locations for that authority, providing they can accommodate additional capacity, or new facilities of a different kind.
 - iii). The identification of existing sites and areas of search for new “open air” waste facilities with capacity for greater than one local authority area.
 - iv). The inclusion of a set of detailed criteria for the identification of suitable locations or sites that can be used by each constituent local planning authority when identifying a choice of locations and sites for waste facilities in their local developments plans. The detailed criteria can be devised at an all Wales level in consultation with the Welsh Assembly Government (i.e. similar to the approach on the Hazardous Waste Supplements).
 - v). The more accurate determination of the new additional capacity (in tonnes per annum) required for the new waste facilities needed to deliver the preferred option and to meet

EU Directive and Waste Strategy targets. This is dependent on more accurate information on current capacity being provided by the Environment Agency.

- vi). The inclusion of an implementation plan within the RWP that includes the steps that will be taken by each local authority to ensure that the necessary land is identified in their Unitary and Local Development Plans for all types of waste facilities, including those that only serve an individual local authority (referred to as “local” facilities).
9. It should be up to the Regional Waste Group to identify the numbers of different types of new facilities that will be required across the region to deliver the preferred option and meet targets. It is proposed that, as a guide, the types of facilities should be broadly grouped under categories of scale. It is also proposed that each local authority identify in their Unitary or Local Development Plans several choices of locations or sites suitable for facilities with capacity for greater than one local authority area ensuring that there is an over-provision of locations/sites to provide market flexibility for the private sector.
10. The identification of the number and scale of facilities required for municipal waste must take into account evolving collaborative ventures between local authorities within and outside of the regions.

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