



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Policy Position Statement

Waste

Until very recently the amount of waste generated has been growing. Rates of household recycling are still low at 15%. With controls on the amount of waste going to landfill sites – generally large holes in the ground which are gradually filled with domestic and commercial rubbish – what to do with our mounting waste problem is of growing importance.

What are the issues for the countryside?

The UK produced around 330 million tonnes of waste in 2002/03. The vast majority of this is construction and demolition waste. A third is produced by industry, commerce and households. Household waste represents around 9% with almost 26 million tonnes generated in England in 2002/03. The vast majority of this (over 70%) went to landfill sites.

While the amount of waste being recycled or reused is gradually rising, these gains have tended to be outstripped by the growth in the overall volume of waste.

The legacy of disposing of household waste in landfill sites means that in many parts of the country you are rarely more than 10 miles from an existing site. Where sites are closed, they leave the landscape changed and the lurking threat of groundwater contamination and other pollution remains. Where sites are still open, there are the added problems of heavy lorry traffic, noise, odours and dust. Waste incinerators pose their own problems, raising concerns about the landscape intrusion from major plants

and uncertainties about the health impacts of associated emissions.

CPRE's approach

CPRE believes waste policy should be governed by a waste hierarchy which places in order of priority waste minimisation, re-use and recycling and, lastly, disposal by incineration and landfill. The Government's Waste Strategy 2000 aims to reduce the volume of waste produced and to increase recycling, composting and re-use (which includes incineration), with energy from burning waste providing heat and power. In response to the EU Landfill Directive, the waste strategy aims to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste disposed in landfill sites. CPRE supports this, but so far progress has been slow in delivering results. There is an urgent need to do more to prioritise waste reduction, minimisation and reuse. Under the targets set in the waste strategy, one-third of municipal waste could still end up being incinerated and one-third sent to landfill, with unacceptable environmental impacts.

We believe governments at all levels need

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to do more to deliver change. In particular:

- > the Government needs to provide strong leadership to ensure that waste reduction is seen as a priority by local government, business and individuals. It should set challenging targets for waste minimisation to complement the existing statutory recycling targets;
- > the provision of new landfill sites and waste incineration plants should be strictly limited, and dependent on the relevant local authorities having achieved demanding targets for waste reduction and recycling. Provision should happen only after waste disposal options further up the waste hierarchy have been exploited. Landfilling and incineration should no longer be viewed as the acceptable default option where recycling ventures have failed;
- > the Government should significantly and progressively increase the landfill tax as a necessary economic incentive to reducing landfill, with the proceeds used to support waste minimisation programmes. The current commitment to increase the tax by £3 a tonne per year is insufficient. The tax should be broadened to include waste incineration. Other economic incentives should be examined to send the right price signals, such as enabling local authorities to charge for waste collection on the basis of the weight of rubbish collected; and
- > the planning and development of new houses and flats provides a crucial opportunity to install recycling facilities at the outset and to ensure that houses and flats can be served by doorstep

collections. Similar consideration should be given to the design of commercial properties.

What can you do?

With waste strategies and plans being prepared in all areas, there are numerous opportunities to get involved and to press the case for protecting the countryside by reducing waste:

- > encourage your local authority to adopt measures to minimise the amount of waste produced and maximise re-use wherever possible. As well as introduced or improved recycling schemes, measures could include increasing popular understanding of the issues and of the need to reduce waste from the outset;
- > scrutinise your county council's or unitary authority's Waste Development Framework to check that policies are in line with Government policy on sustainable waste management and environmental protection set out in the Government's guidance on planning and waste management (called PPS10) and the national waste strategy;
- > track your local authority's progress in meeting its recycling targets. Information on recycling rates by each authority are available on the Defra website. Give it support when it is successful and quiz councillors and officers if targets are not being met. In 2002/3 only 14.5% of household waste was recycled in England – considerably lower than in most European countries. If your local authority is doing better than the average, then encourage it to do better still. If it is doing worse, then

try to shame it into at least achieving the average;

- > encourage your local authority to ensure that policies are included in the local development plan for your area which require large new housing, commercial and other developments to include recycling facilities through the use of planning conditions;
- > check that any proposals for new incinerators or landfill sites only follow after full exploitation of waste minimisation, recycling and composting options have been exploited. In exceptional circumstances, where incinerators are considered the best option to deliver environmental objectives, the incinerators should always incorporate energy recovery so that they are not simply a waste disposal facility;
- > encourage your local authority to set up a doorstep collection of recyclable waste as required under the *Household Waste Recycling Act, 2003*. Urge your authority to broaden the range of materials accepted for recycling. If one already exists in your local area, encourage friends and neighbours to use it; and
- > cut down on waste at home by setting up a compost bin, reusing containers and bags, avoiding heavily packaged goods and complaining to retailers and manufacturers about goods which are over-packaged.

Further reading

Waste Strategy 2000 – A CPRE briefing, CPRE, 2000. Available from CPRE Publications.

Waste Strategy 2000: England and Wales, Department of Environment, Transport and Regions, 2000. Available from the Stationery Office.

PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005. Available from the Stationery Office.

Hungry Housing, CPRE, 1998. Available from CPRE Publications.

Waste and the Countryside, CPRE, 1997. Available from CPRE Publications.