

**REPORT TO THE SOUTH TYNE AND WEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT
PARTNERSHIP JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

30 APRIL 2021

REPORT OF: Colin Huntington, Project Director, South Tyne and Wear Waste
Management Partnership

SUBJECT: Resources and Waste Strategy Consultations

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Joint Executive Committee following the publication of the latest consultation exercises arising from the national resources and waste strategy proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In late December 2018, government issued a new, national, resources and waste strategy, *'Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England'*. The strategy contains proposals that set out the long-term waste policy framework and aims to encourage England to move away from the traditional linear economy (take, make, use, throw away) and begin to recognise and maximise the value of resource usage by minimising waste and its impact on the environment.
- 2.2 Following its publication, the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) issued three initial consultation exercises, which sought views from a wide range of organisations on many of the proposals outlined within the strategy (such as local authorities; waste management companies; retailers; manufacturers; product designers; trade organisations; charities and social enterprises; academic and research organisations; and individual responses from members of the public etc.).
- 2.3 The Joint Executive Committee previously received reports regarding the first consultation exercises:
- On 14 June 2019, highlighting the STWWMP responses to the three consultation exercises; and
 - On 13 September 2019, providing an overview of the consultation outcomes that were published by Defra.

- 2.4 Following the publication of the outcomes, further consultation was scheduled to take place during 2020, but the coronavirus public health emergency impacted on the consultation programme and no further exercises were issued.
- 2.5 However, on 25 March 2021, government published the next series of consultation exercises, which covered two topics:
- Introducing a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and
 - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging.
- 2.6 However, the anticipated third consultation exercise updating the previous proposals regarding the introduction of consistent recycling collections for all households and businesses remains delayed, with government recently announcing that its publication has been held back until after the local elections that are taking place in May. No additional details for the further delay have been provided.
- 2.7 This is a particularly significant consultation exercise for local authorities as further clarification is expected around key proposals, such as the provision of free-of-charge garden waste collections to all households with gardens and mandatory separate collection of food waste.

3. **DRS CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Moving towards a more circular economy, where resources are kept in use for as long as possible and waste is minimised to ensure that the UK is a world leader in resource efficiency and productivity is a priority for government.
- 3.2 The introduction of a DRS is key part of this aspiration. Every year across the UK, consumers use an estimated 14 billion plastic drinks bottles, nine billion drinks cans, and five billion glass bottles. The DRS proposals are aimed at incentivising consumers to deliver used, empty, drinks containers to return points that will be hosted by retailers, where they will be reimbursed for the up-front deposit for each container that was paid at the point of purchase.
- 3.3 Following the first consultation exercise in 2019, government indicated that they intended to introduce a DRS for drinks containers in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland from 2023, subject to receiving additional evidence and carrying out further analysis on the costs and benefits of such a scheme.
- 3.4 A joint (yet separate) second consultation exercise has now been issued by Defra in England, the Welsh Government, and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland. The exercise contains 78 questions in total. Scotland has already set out their own plans to implement a DRS, which acknowledges the support for coherent schemes across the United Kingdom.
- 3.5 However, whilst government remains committed to delivering on its commitments to introduce a DRS, it also recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the economy and society. This has resulted in many

people reassessing their values, decisions, and priorities in both the immediate and longer term.

3.6 On this basis, government confirm that the second consultation also offers an opportunity to explore further what the continued appetite is for a DRS in a 'post-COVID context. Therefore, this consultation will also inform how a future scheme can be designed in the best and most coherent way possible to deliver on the objectives set out by its introduction.

3.7 With this in mind, government has also reassessed what a realistic timeline for implementation of a DRS would be to ensure that sufficient time is provided to ensure a successful roll-out of the scheme. Therefore, it is now anticipated that the introduction of a DRS in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will now be delayed until late 2024 at the earliest.

4. EPR CONSULTATION

4.1 The joint EPR consultation has been issued by all four United Kingdom governments and contains 104 questions in total.

4.2 In 2019, approximately 11.7 million tonnes of packaging was placed on the UK market. The proposals being covered in this consultation are concerned with reforms to the packaging waste regulations, which have been in place since 1997. Initial reforms were outlined in the first consultation, which seek to transform the current PRN (packaging waste recovery note) system to ensure packaging manufacturers pay for the full costs of managing the disposal of their packaging waste at its end-of-life, with higher fees being levied if packaging is harder to reuse or recycle.

4.3 One of the key principles for extending producer responsibility for packaging is to enable fair and transparent payments to local authorities for the cost of collecting and disposing packaging waste from both the residual and recycling waste streams.

5. NEXT STEPS

5.1 Stakeholders are invited to respond to the consultation exercises within a ten-and-a-half-week period, with both consultation exercises closing at 2345 on 4 June 2021.

5.2 The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) has expressed 'grave concerns' about the delay to the release of the consultation on consistent collections and also raised concerns about the shortened consultation period, which, they say is 'taking place at a time when local authorities and business are stretched with their ongoing efforts in the face of COVID-19' and would, therefore, 'ask the governments to seriously consider reinstating the consultation period to the full 12 weeks.'

5.3 However, the joint partnership team will now develop a series of internal consultation exercises aimed at developing a joint partnership response to each

consultation. This will include direct discussions with elected members/portfolio holders and senior service managers in each of the partner authorities.

- 5.4 This process will also involve close working with all current external waste service providers, and public sector waste organisations, such as the LARAC and the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO).

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 The Joint Executive Committee is requested to:

- (i) Note the contents of this report; and
- (ii) Agree to receive further updates on the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership submissions to the Deposit Return Scheme and Extended Producer Responsibility consultation exercises. as appropriate.

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