

Waste and Recycling Committee

Date: 11 October 2023

Subject: The Government's Waste Prevention Programme for England: Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste

Report of: Paul Morgan, Head of Commercial Services, GMCA Waste and Resources Team

Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on the Government's Waste Prevention Programme published in July 2023 and its potential implications for GMCA.

Recommendations:

Members of the Committee are requested to:

1. Note the report and the government's strategic approach to waste prevention.

Contact Officers

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The Committee is requested to note the government's Waste Prevention Plan. The Plan is a positive strategy that will promote the waste hierarchy ensuring waste prevention and reuse is prioritised by all sectors over and above recycling and disposal. GMCA has already made innovative strides in this area through its Renew network and this is recognised by Defra.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	Increasing reuse generates high quality goods so that all economic ranges have access to vital appliances, furniture etc.
Health		
Resilience and Adaptation	G	Reuse adds resilience to the economic providing high quality, lower cost vital goods.
Housing		
Economy	G	The reuse/vintage/thrift market in GM will be strengthened through this Plan.
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	Reuse is the second highest tier of the waste hierarchy. Reusing, repairing, refurbishing reduces carbon emissions reducing the exploitation of materials.
Consumption and Production	G	See above and also the Plan promotes GMCA's work with local universities championing the reuse and recycling of waste materials.
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		GMCA has developed significant services that already implement parts of the government's Waste Prevention Plan through the Renew services and the Sustainable Consumption and Production Plan. Government's recognition of waste prevention and the proposals will help GMCA drive innovation with its partners to contribute to carbon neutrality and improved social and economic conditions.
Overall	G Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider. R Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider. RR Negative impacts overall.

Risk Management

At the current time there are no risks associated with this report.

Legal Considerations

At the current time there are no legal considerations associated with this report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

At the current time there are no revenue consequences associated with this report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

At the current time there are no capital consequences associated with this report.

Number of attachments to the report:

None.

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

- [The waste prevention programme for England: Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

Report to be noted.

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

At the end of July 2023 Defra published the government's *waste prevention programme for England: Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste* (the Plan) following a public consultation in 2021. The Plan is the government's response to statements in the Environmental Improvement Plan that "...resources on our islands – indeed on our planet – are finite and precious. Their extraction and manufacture can cause environmental harm.". Additionally, the English Resources and Waste Strategy sets out long-term commitments and ambitions to eliminate avoidable waste by 2050. The Plan sets out how the government intends to achieve strategic principle 2 of the Resources and Waste Strategy – to prevent waste from occurring in the first place and manage it better when it does.

The Plan sets out the government's priorities for action to manage resources and waste in accordance with the top layers of the waste hierarchy - prevention and reuse. It will take a policy approach encompassing three cross-cutting themes:

- Designing out waste: Including ecodesign and consumer information requirements, and Extended Producer Responsibility schemes;
- Systems and services: Including collection and take-back services, encouraging reuse, repair, leasing businesses and facilities; and
- Data and information: including materials databases, product passports (sets of data, unique to the specific product that can be accessed online and give detailed information on, for example, contained materials, components and history, to support improved outcomes such as higher quality recycling) and voluntary corporate reporting.

These cross-cutting themes will be applied to seven key sectors selected on the amount of waste arisings from each sector or known carbon emissions from production:

- Construction (61.4 million tonnes per annum (mtpa));
- Textiles (1.04 mtpa);
- Furniture (0.86 mtpa);
- Electronics (1.5 mtpa);
- Vehicles (1.8mtpa);
- Plastic and packaging (2.5 mtpa); and

- Food (9.5 mtpa).

The Plan confirms that any new policy proposed in this programme will be subject to public consultation considering individual and cumulative impacts on public expenditure, the cost to business including small and medium-sized enterprises, and consumer choice and affordability.

The government's intentions behind the Plan are stated as wanting to encourage business models which maximise the value of end products, for example through the sharing of products supported through digital systems or increasing where the company retains ownership and responsibility for maintenance but sells the product as a service. This will be supported by the adoption of ecodesign principles in marketed products, aiding consumers to make even more informed decisions using reliable information about the sustainability of their product choices, and collection of more products once consumers no longer have use for them. Reuse and repair facilities and services will increasingly be available for consumers, and information about the availability of secondary materials will be more readily available to manufacturers which want to use them.

2. The Cross Cutting Themes

2.1 Designing Out Waste

The government's aim is to drive change in product design so that products are durable, repairable, and recyclable, and can be remanufactured where appropriate, through policies such as ecodesign, consumer information, and Extended Producer Responsibility schemes.

Setting 'ecodesign' requirements means products must meet a mandatory minimum level of environmental performance. For example, regulations may require a certain level of energy efficiency, proportion of recycled content, minimum number of use cycles before performance deteriorates or that certain components can be easily removed and

replaced by consumers when they fail. Informed consumer choice helps drive the market.

To progress work in this theme the government will:

- continue to work with industry, academia and other key stakeholders to support the shift towards product, material and business model design for greater circularity and resource efficiency, minimising waste and reducing environmental and climate impacts;
- encourage industry to set their own standards, reducing the need for regulation;
- broaden the range of products ecodesign requirement apply to and using modular design to facilitate repairs, upgrades, disassembly and recovery of components and materials; and
- use powers in the Environment Act 2021 to implement mandatory ecodesign, Extended Producer Responsibility schemes and require environmental information for consumers, or product passports for use throughout value chains. For non-energy-related products such as textiles and furniture explore how these powers can be used.

2.2 Systems and Services

The government's aim is to ensure there is a well-functioning system of public, private, and voluntary sector and social enterprise organisations, and services operating at the local level that facilitate reuse, repair and remanufacture of products, addressing market weaknesses such as limited collections and reverse logistics.

Reuse and repair are not new practices. Whilst in some cases fast changing technology can render older products obsolete, most older products continue to be useful if resold, repaired, or remanufactured. But the relative costs of doing so and sending individual products back to the manufacturer can be difficult and costly, particularly for smaller businesses.

Business models in terms of hiring, sharing and leasing are changing promoting a burgeoning "sharing economy", consumer goods, food, and transport (such as bikes),

are distributed on demand using digital platforms, which extends the useful life of products.

Some local authorities currently facilitate reuse through Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and bulky waste collections. The voluntary sector and social enterprise, reverse logistics, re-commerce businesses and emerging digital platforms provide further opportunities for sharing and resale. Charity shops and social enterprises, like the Reuse Network, provide jobs and affordable quality goods, whilst also reducing waste. However, WasteDataFlow reports that reuse accounted for only 8% of the total bulky waste collected.

To progress this theme the government will:

- ensure the waste hierarchy is more stringently applied when companies and other bodies deal with their waste and revising it to set clear expectations for how decisions on waste treatment routes should be made;
- develop best practice guidance on reuse for local authorities, including consideration of how reuse is reported and providing case studies of successful reuse hubs to help ensure that more Household Waste Recycling Centres and bulky waste collections are performing an effective role in waste prevention; and
- As a means of reducing the burden on local authorities and ensuring that it is as easy as possible for households to return unwanted old items for reuse or recycling, they will consult on proposals to remove fees for consumers to have bulky domestic furniture collected from their homes by 2025.

2.3 Data and Information

The government wants to make use of data and digitalisation to support greater use of secondary materials and used products, as well as to increase transparency in terms of progress by local authorities and businesses.

This theme underpins the others and seeks to be able to obtain, manage and disseminate high quality data from academia, the private sector and the public sector to be able to manage materials better and contribute to net zero objectives. In this area the government has initiated a number of industrial symbiosis and research programmes.

Future actions will include continued development of industrial symbiosis, continue to take action to establish a digital waste tracking system which will help better understand stocks and flows of waste returned to the economy as secondary materials, improve access to and the quality of materials data and explore powers to require data/information provision on products.

3. The Sectors

As summarised above the government has identified a number of key sectors it wishes to focus attention based on the quantities of waste associated and the carbon impact.

To provide some brief examples, the government is seeking to see, in construction, changes in the way buildings are designed for deconstruction and reuse of components such as steel beams, bricks and roofing.

Other simpler actions are to be pursued in textiles (e.g. greater reuse); furniture/furnishings – greater repair and reuse; road vehicles – light weighting of components, assist the transition to electric vehicles; packaging and plastics – consider further bans of single use items and promote refillable packaging; food and drink – further awareness campaigns on food waste and greater collaboration through the supply chain to reduce waste.

4. Next Steps

The Plan contains a significant number of proposals and the government has promised that new policy will be subject to public consultation. As and when these emerge the Committee will receive updates.

5. Implications for GMCA

The Waste Prevention Plan aligns well with the actions the GMCA is already taking through its contracts with Suez (most notably the Renew network and specifically the Hub) and the Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Plan and its work in the sectors identified by the government and our collaboration with industry and academia.

The Waste Prevention Plan's reference to reuse and hubs suggests that we will be approached by Defra to provide case studies in this area. We will take this and any opportunity to champion the waste prevention work being undertaken in the city region.