

Current Developments in the UK

Single Use Plastics

1. Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled. These items are things like plastic bags, straws, coffee stirrers, soda and water bottles and most food packaging.
2. The UK produces roughly 300 million tons of plastic each year and half of it is disposable. World-wide only 10% of plastic items are recycled. The nature of petroleum based disposable plastic makes it difficult to recycle and they have to add new virgin materials and chemicals to it to do so. Additionally there are a limited number of items that recycled plastic can be used.
3. Petroleum based plastic is not biodegradable and usually goes into a landfill where it is buried or it gets into the water and finds its way into the ocean. Although plastic will not biodegrade, (decompose into natural substance like soil), it will break down into tiny particles after many years. In the process of breaking down, it releases toxic chemicals (additives that were used to shape and harden the plastic) which make their way into our food and water supply.
4. These toxic chemicals can be found in our bloodstream. And the latest research has linked them to cancer, infertility, birth defects, impaired immunity and many other ailments.
5. We produce hundreds of millions of tons of plastic every year, most of which cannot be recycled. It's obvious that we need to use less plastic, move towards sustainable products and services, and come up with technology that recycles plastic more efficiently.

UK paper and plastic exporters switch from China

6. Environment secretary Michael Gove has acknowledged that China's restrictions on the import of secondary materials will "cause some issues" for recycling in the UK, and noted that affected businesses are now exporting to other markets. In a written statement, Gove said data for the third quarter of last year showed increases in exports of plastics to Turkey, Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia along with increases in exports of paper to Turkey, Taiwan and Vietnam.

7. China imposed a New Year import ban on grades including mixed paper and post-consumer plastics. Other grades, including all other paper and plastics exports, will have to achieve tighter contamination rates of 0.5% from March. There have been fears that these restrictions will result in stockpiling and associated problems in the UK. Gove said: "Since China announced its intentions on 18 July 2017, ministers have worked with industry, the Environment Agency (EA), WRAP, the devolved administrations and representatives from local government to understand the potential impact of the ban and the action that needs to be taken. We have engaged internationally to understand the scale and scope of China's waste restrictions. The Government raised the issue with the EU in September. Alongside four other members, the EU subsequently questioned the proposals at the WTO in October."

8. Gove said that Defra and the EA had made it clear to operators on their duties to handle waste in light of China's proposals. "The EA issued fresh guidance to exporters, stating that any waste which does not meet China's new criteria will be stopped, in the same way as banned waste going to any other country." He warned that operators had to continue managing waste in accordance with their permit conditions. Where export markets or domestic reprocessing were not available, any alternative had to follow the waste hierarchy. "I recognise that China's decision will cause some issues in the short term for recycling in the UK. We will continue to work closely with industry, the EA, local authorities and all interested parties to manage those issues. The Government remains committed to maximising the value we get from our resources, and is already assessing how we handle our waste in the UK in the longer term," he said.

9. Gove maintained that tackling waste was a top priority for the Government and he set out a number of initiatives:
 - A resources and waste strategy due later this year
 - Clean growth strategy last October
 - An industry round table on plastics in December, with a four-point plan for tackling plastic waste: cutting the total amount of plastic in circulation; reducing the number of different plastics in use; improving the rate of recycling; supporting comprehensive and frequent rubbish and recycling collections.
 - 5p charge on plastic bags
 - Ban on the manufacture of personal care products containing plastic microbeads
 - Call for evidence on managing single-use drinks containers
 - Call for evidence on how the tax system or charges could reduce the amount of single-use plastic waste
 - 25-year environment plan expected shortly

10. The Resource Association (RA) is calling for “bold and radical” leadership from the Government to stimulate secondary markets for plastic waste in the UK.
11. The association says the crackdown by China on the import of plastic recyclate will have a serious impact on the UK recycling supply chain, and requires greater producer responsibility for plastic products placed on the UK market.
12. Chief executive Ray Georgeson said the Chinese position presented an opportunity to rebalance the UK recycling economy and develop domestic markets and sustainable end uses for secondary materials. “By definition, this will not solve the short-term challenges that need different interventions, but as Defra revisits its resources and waste strategy and secretary of state Michael Gove expresses the need for the ‘reshoring of our dirt’, an action plan for secondary resources is essential,” he said.
13. The RA says the most reasoned response to the Chinese restrictions would be to improve the quality of UK recyclate and to back its use in UK manufacturing wherever possible. It calls for the balance of responsibility for plastic products placed on the market to shift towards producers through design for recyclability and minimum recycled content.
14. “A whole circular resource economy approach that tackles collection, materials handling, reprocessing, production, retailing and consumer behaviour would help to deliver the benefits of smarter use and better recycling of plastics in the UK, as well as send the right signals in support of taking responsibility again for the resources we use. “The time has come for Defra and WRAP to once again assume a leadership role on this aspect of resources policy. If the Government chooses to engage, research and act, the industry will respond.”
15. The association says a more interventionist regulatory approach would include:
 - Mandatory recycled content for various plastic products, taking account of environmental benefits and food safety considerations
 - A new programme of R&D and enhanced tax credits support for investment in manufacturing technology to support the use of recyclate as a primary input
 - Mandatory design guidelines for plastic packaging products sold on the UK market
 - Action through trading standards to ban certain single-use plastic products
 - Reforms to producer responsibility that include incentives for the use of recycled content with levies on non-recyclable products, with any funds generated used for new communications and collections action

More than 40 companies have signed up to a pact to cut plastic pollution over the next seven years.

16. The firms, which include Coca-Cola and Asda, have promised to honour a number of pledges such as eliminating single-use packaging through better design. They have joined the government, trade associations and campaigners to form the UK Plastics Pact. The signatories are responsible for more than 80% of plastic packaging on products sold through UK supermarkets.

17. One of the promises which companies, such as consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble and Marks & Spencer, have signed up to is to make 100% of plastic packaging ready for recycling or composting by 2025.

18. Led by the sustainability campaign group WRAP, the pact is described as a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to rethink plastic both to make use of its value and to stop it damaging the environment.

- What are the alternatives to plastic?
- What are supermarkets doing to fight plastic?
- A month without plastic - 10 years on
- The plastic choking Indonesian rivers

19. WRAP's chief executive Marcus Gover, said: "This requires a whole scale transformation of the plastics system and can only be achieved by bringing together all links in the chain under a shared commitment to act. "That is what makes the UK Plastics Pact unique. It unites everybody, business and organisation with a will to act on plastic pollution. We will never have a better time to act, and together we can."

20. The set of pledges to tackle plastic pollution over the next seven years include:

- Eliminate difficult or unnecessary single use plastic packaging through better design
- Make 100% of plastic packaging reusable or recyclable or compostable
- Make sure 70% of plastic packaging is recycled or composted
- 30% of all plastic packaging to include recycled material

21. The pact is also supported by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The yachtswoman, who broke the solo record for sailing around the world in 2005, has long campaigned for plastic products to be re-used and not allowed to enter the oceans. Research conducted by her foundation concluded that 95% of plastic packaging around the world is used only once. She said the Plastics Pact would create "a circular economy

for plastics that tackles the causes of plastics waste and pollution, not just the symptoms." "Focusing on innovation, better packaging design and end-of-use systems will not only generate long-term benefits for the environment, but is also a huge economic opportunity."

ESPO Framework on Waste and Recycling Collection and Disposal Service

22. ESPO has created a framework on Waste and Recycling Collection and Disposal Service. This ESPO framework offers customers a quick, simple, reliable and competitive route for procuring their waste and recycling collection and disposal services. In addition to the more common waste and recycling services, this framework also offers a food waste collection and recycling service which offers customers yet further opportunity to both reduce costs (by diverting food waste from landfill) whilst helping meet their environmental aspirations by supporting the zero waste to landfill initiative.

23. The framework is split into the following Lots:

Lot 1 - General Waste (Collection and Disposal) Services

Lot 2 - Source Separated Recycling Services

Lot 3 - Comingled Recycling Services

Lot 4 - Food Waste Recycling Services

24. Customers can schedule their annual service requirements in advance by choosing their services and agreeing collection dates, frequency, but with the flexibility to amend their requirement as necessary by giving suitable notice to the service provider. Ad-hoc or emergency collections are also easy to arrange, giving customers yet further flexibility and helping avoid excess waste becoming a nuisance on site.

General Waste

25. All General Waste collected will be disposed of in strict compliance with the terms and requirements of the Controlled Waste Regulations (2012) and all other legislation relating to the collection and disposal of waste valid from the framework commencement date, or as may be amended or revised during the framework term.

26. The service provider shall only use licensed waste treatment or disposal operators to treat or dispose of the waste collected.

Source Separated Recycling

27. This service offers Customers the option to segregate their recyclable materials into individual receptacles.
28. Source Separated recyclable materials are likely to include;
- Paper
 - Cardboard
 - Glass
 - Plastic
 - Aluminium / Steel Cans
 - Waxed Cardboard (Tetra-Pak)
29. Each service providers has a specific recycling price schedule for confirmation of what materials they can collect on a source separated basis.

Comingled Recycling

30. Comingled recycling is a popular service as it allows customers to collate certain recyclable materials together in a single receptacle therefore reducing the number of receptacles required on site. Each service provider has access to a Material Recovery Facility (or MRF) where they will take comingled material and segregate it into individual recycling streams for onward recycling. The segregation capabilities of each facility determine which materials each service provider can collect on a comingled basis.
31. The specific materials that each service provider can accept in their comingled receptacles (at this time) are listed within the price schedule (accompanying this user guide), by supplier. Should the materials vary, the price schedule will be updated. It is always recommended however that you speak to your service provider for specific guidance or further explanation on approved materials to comeingle.

Food Waste Recycling

32. This Service offers Customers the option to segregate their food waste from general waste, prior to it being collected. Where necessary, compostable liners (such as starch or anaerobic sacks), should be used. Food waste will be recycled by the service provider in the most commercially viable way, whether this is by composting, rendering, anaerobic digestion, incineration, or any other environmentally friendly method. However, where food waste is recycled, it will be carried out in strict accordance with all regulation's and legislation surrounding this method of recycling.

Quality of the material being recycled

33. All recyclable material collected is processed in accordance with Government Directives and pre-treatment Regulations valid from the contract commencement date, and as may be amended or revised by the Government throughout the framework term. The 'cleaner' the material is when being recycled, the greater the service providers chance to recycle the material as 'contaminated waste' has to be sent to landfill.

Recycling Percentages

34. The service providers average recycling rates are not currently known however with the closure of more and more landfill sites nationally and the income that can be generated from good quality recycled material it is clear that service providers will consistently strive to adopt a zero waste to landfill initiative and recycle as much material as possible, thereby avoiding landfill and its associated charges.

Receptacles

35. The service provider shall supply receptacles as required by the Customer given the material type and proposed volume. However, customers is responsible for any general cleanliness of the receptacles, signage or training necessary to advise users of the service and subsequently the importance of ensuring the material is separated in a clean and accurate manner.

Bin Weights

36. Many of the providers operate a 'standard/assumed' bin weight policy. This is to avoid bins being over-filled or materials which are not considered 'domestic' being placed in the bins, such as hard-core, soil, tables and chairs, etc. There is a health and safety risk to consider for service provider 'operatives' should they be tasked with moving overweight bins. And so for customers, a duty of care exists to work with the provider to minimise such risks. The assumed bin weight for each receptacle size and waste type is included within the price schedule. The providers will offer guidance, and work with the customer to reach a simple solution (such as considering larger general waste bins and/or recycling more).

This page is intentionally left blank