Local Government Association

material resources & waste

greening communities: ideas into action

2

Material resources & waste – top 10 ideas

These ideas are based on existing good practice. Case studies can be found on the LGA's website at www.lga.gov.uk/greeningcommunities

1. Offer separate collections of recyclable materials to trade waste customers. Set up recycling 'bring sites' for traders, and work with local markets to compost food waste. If you do not have trade waste customers, then work with the local waste contractors to encourage more recycling.

2. For small or micro-businesses, help provide joined-up advice on waste minimisation and recycling with advice on energy-use and water efficiency, and help with complying with regulation (Environment Agency, Health & Safety, Trading Standards etc) through the Local Business Partnership.

3. Buy-recycled! Contact WRAP for help (details below). Also, support market development and promote sustainable production eg timber and other construction products, to ensure there are sustainably produced goods available to buy locally.

4. Use recycled aggregate in highways, and use locally produced compost, woodchip mulch and recycled plastic in estates management. New developments mean roads can be easily recycled back into roads. Councils can use compost made from local garden waste, woodchip mulch and recycled plastic in estates management, saving money in doing so.

5. Make space for necessary infrastructure and sites and proactively encourage the waste management and materials processing industries to build the much needed reprocessing, composting, manufacturing, treatment and dismantling facilities. This will bring investment and jobs to your area.

6. Provide more opportunities for bigger business or industry to improve resource management by working with the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (contact below).

7. Work with farmers and water/sewage companies. You can provide information for local farmers on the new waste regulations that are affecting them, or go further and facilitate collection or bring systems for agricultural waste, or help establish on-farm composting business for garden waste, or work with water companies with the capacity to treat food waste.

8. Improve material use in construction & demolition. Specify that recycled or other sustainable building materials must be used, and support recovery and re-use of construction materials: this will reduce the need for primary extraction of aggregate. Encourage recycling of waste materials arising during construction and demolition.

9. Link it up with municipal waste management and aim for high recycling rates for domestic rubbish. Household waste is only seven per cent of all waste. All material resources and waste management issues need to be considered holistically across an area. This has particular implications for land-use planning as we run the risk of establishing infrastructure to cope

with municipal waste without considering the needs of other waste producers.

10. Develop a Material Resources Strategy to help the local community deliver results and to underpin land-use planning. A material resources strategy will provide a secure underpinning for Waste Development Frameworks and manage emerging risks arising from the closing of landfill options.

Why are material resources and waste management important?

- Material resources we use are often non-renewable, and even renewable resources can be pushed beyond the limits of recovery if over-exploited. Minerals such as sand, gravel and stone, fossil fuels, metal ores, gypsum and clay are non-renewable within a human timeframe. Biomass – though in principle renewable within the human timeframe – can be pushed beyond the limits of recovery if over-exploited.
- Use of material resources impacts on the environment the whole way through the production and supply chain. Materials extraction and reprocessing, and product manufacture and transportation all have environmental impacts – on ecosystems, climate change, soil and air quality.
- Waste management is expensive and has varied environmental impacts. Household waste is only seven per cent of all waste. Most waste is industrial, commercial, construction etc. Impacts vary: landfilled waste can emit powerful greenhouse gases; contaminated liquid can leak from landfills and pollute soil and water; rubbish is a wasted resource, and landfill uses up valuable land.

What do we need from central government?

- There is a clear need for local government to take responsibility for strategy and planning for more sustainable waste management of all wastes, as well as material resources generally, across a geographical area. We need central government to recognise there is a clear role for local government in this respect.
- Strong local leadership needs to be backed-up by capacity locally to deliver. This is not just a call for funding – but an invest-to-save case: with some limited strategic resources, we can drive resource efficiency, help local businesses save money and promote new reprocessing business.
- Local leadership and capacity needs to be backed up by strategic central support. Councils need a home-grown resource for information, guidance and advice focussed on helping them to understand and share good practice on what works on the ground.

Where can I find out more?

- Case studies have been compiled by the LGA in a consultation document (May 2005) www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Briefing/Our_Work/Environment/waste/material.pdf
- WRAP offer support on green procurement – visit www.wrap.org.uk/procurement/index.html. Or visit the on-line Recycled Products Guide www.recycledproducts.org.uk
- Envirowise and NISP are funded to help businesses manage waste and resources better www.nisp.org.uk, www.envirowise.org.uk
- For information on the government's BREW fund (supporting businesses), visit www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/brew/index.htm

Who is responsible for making sure we manage material resources better?

No one particular body or organisation has responsibility for making sure we make best use of material resources and wastes across a geographical area.

Local planning authorities have a duty to ensure there are facilities available to manage all wastes (household, industrial, commercial etc), and must also plan to meet mineral needs.

Local authorities clearly also have a duty to manage household waste and be the 'provider of last resort' to local traders if they request it.

However, government has set a fiscal framework, for example, taxing primary extraction of aggregates and landfilling of waste. It has also established various programmes (WRAP, BREW) to help businesses and residents to manage material resources better, and reduce, reuse or recycle more waste.

Are we building the right facilities? – risk management

Waste Planners are currently, to an extent, having to second-guess the levels of need for waste reprocessing, treatment, dismantling, re-manufacturing and disposal plant. The LGA and Planning Officers Society believe that Local Waste Plans need to be underpinned by Material Resource Strategy to avoid the risk that facilities will be inappropriate, expensive or simply not available.

Invest-to-save

Many of the suggested actions could be taken on an invest-to-save basis, for example; improving trade waste management by offering cheap rates for recycling and at the same time reducing fly-tipping associated with trade waste; or providing high quality information to the planning authority so they are able to do their job effectively; or supporting local businesses to help them improve productivity.