

# Waste policy recommendations for Ireland

**John Gormley, Ireland's Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, recently launched a report underpinning a major review of waste management policy. The 1,200 page report examines all aspects of waste management policy, from prevention and minimisation to the management of residual waste. The extensive report was compiled by a group of consultants led by Dominic Hogg of Eunomia Research and Consulting. The Minister paid tribute to the work done in compiling such a comprehensive study by Dr Hogg and his associates.**

The Minister also announced increases to the landfill levy to drive waste from landfill in order to meet challenging EU targets, the first of which occurs in 2010. The levy will increase to EUR30 per tonne by 2010, to EUR50 in 2011 and to EUR75 in 2012. Last year the Government also decided to introduce an incineration levy, likely to be in the range of EUR20 to 38 per tonne.

Minister Gormley concluded that the Eunomia report represents a launch pad for transforming how Ireland deals with waste.

The scope of the study included:

- identifying possible changes to national policy, to help Ireland move towards a sustainable resource & waste policy
- minimising creation of waste and maximising self-sufficiency in reuse and recycling
- examining the legal, institutional, and organisational arrangements
- analysing potential changes to assist in achieving Ireland's policy goals
- meeting national and international obligations.

The study also sought to address how better to implement waste prevention and minimisation in the particular context of the emergence of new technologies for waste management, particularly those for the mechanical and biological treatment of waste which can reduce the need for both incineration and landfill.

The report by Eunomia Consulting and partners sets out a number of detailed recommendations in relation to same, including recommendations in respect of sequencing and timing for implementation.

The recommendations are supported by a comprehensive policy review.

## Towards sustainable materials management

The waste sector is affected by a plethora of regulations and instruments which affect either all, or part of, a sector which is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. The move away from a 'disposal oriented' society necessarily moves 'the waste sector' into a situation where, as the economy moves 'waste' materials into more valuable applications, the products and services so derived effectively compete in market sectors for these products and services.

Hence, the waste sector is now intimately affected by policies and influences coming through from the commodity markets, and the energy / fuel markets. There is also a development within the economy which stands to affect the physical size of the 'waste sector'.

This is the trend towards the prevention of waste at source, which is becoming increasingly important in the minds of businesses, as well as in the minds – hence, in part, the rationale for this study - of policy makers. Moves to decouple waste generation from economic activity are likely to define a new era of 'waste and resources' policy.

Evidence of the deepening of these trends can be found in:

- the Waste Framework Directive
- the increased significance being accorded, within the European Commission, to the theme of Sustainable Production and Consumption
- the OECD, where the 'end-of-pipe-and-life' focus of the past is giving way to a new approach characterised as 'sustainable materials management'.

In this sense, the 'waste sector', as

conventionally conceived, is in direct competition with the growing trends to:

- dematerialise
- increase resource efficiency
- make use of 'by-products'
- achieve bottom line gains, and improvements in reputation, through reducing waste generation.

Underlying the significance of these trends is the Irish Government's determination (and that of other Governments) to address climate change. The G8 summit at L'Aquila, at which the leaders of the G8 agreed to cut emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 (relative to 1990), suggests that momentum may build towards significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in years to come.

Such cuts will not be possible in the absence of continuing improvement in the management of resources across the economy, and it seems likely to lead to increased pressure to:

- reduce waste generation
- increase the extent to which that waste which is generated is valorised, while contributing to reducing carbon emissions
- maintain flexibility within the waste management system to 'do better' in future.



The consultants consider that the waste management market in Ireland is in a degree of turmoil:

1. there is uncertainty about who should and should not be allowed to collect household waste
2. even where it is not disputed that a competitive market should be allowed to function in waste collection (commercial and industrial waste), the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations appear to allow the competent authority to specify, to an increasing extent, how waste should be collected in different regions, though with significant variation – for any given operator - across the regions
3. with commercial waste, it would appear that local authorities will seek to direct waste to specific types of facility, particularly where they have made contractual commitments to deliver a quantity of waste to a facility which exceeds the quantity they themselves collect.

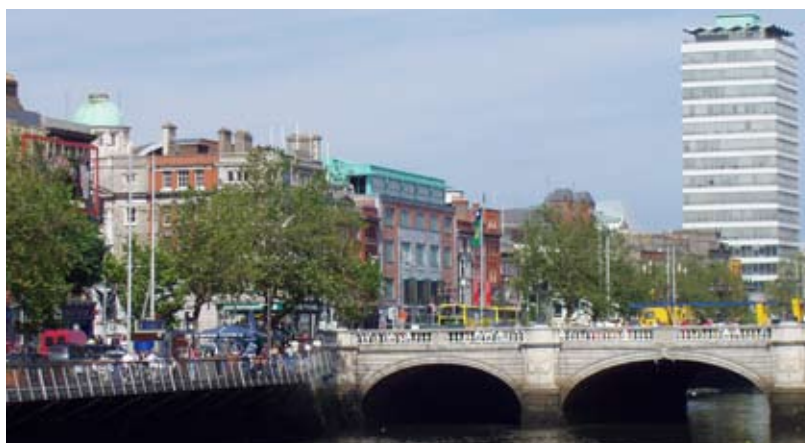
#### Consultants' policy recommendations

The report makes two dozen policy recommendations, of which a selection the most significant or pressing are given below.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** Legislation requiring that all collectors of household waste provide the following services:

- paper and card at least fortnightly, and no less frequently than residual waste
- textiles at least monthly
- food waste at least weekly
- steel and aluminium cans at least fortnightly, and no less frequently than residual waste
- plastic bottles at least fortnightly, and no less frequently than residual waste
- either glass containers at least fortnightly, and no less frequently than residual waste (or a network of bring banks with a density of at least one bank per 600 inhabitants).

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** Legislation to ensure that all household waste



recycling centres are equipped with facilities for the separate collection of garden waste and textiles.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The Waste Management (Food Waste) Regulations, currently in preparation, will require commercial producers to avail themselves of a food waste collection service. This is an important measure and needs to be implemented swiftly, but with a view to ensuring that the necessary treatment capacity is available.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** The following targets for residual household waste are proposed:

- <250 kg per inhabitant by 2011
- <200 kg per inhabitant by 2014
- <175 kg per inhabitant by 2017
- <50 kg per inhabitant by 2020.

These targets would apply to each local authority responsible for waste management. In order to give local authorities an incentive to ensure that improvement in this regard is delivered, the authors propose an incentive mechanism, adapted from Wallonia in Belgium:

1. where a local authority exceeds its allowance, a levy will be applied to the total excess residual waste
2. the levy is applied at the level of EUR50/t of excess residual waste
3. revenue received will be refunded back to all authorities who are below the target level, in proportion to the over-performance against the target (as total tonnes per authority).

This system is revenue neutral across

Table 1. Consultants' recommended structure for a residual waste levy			
Process	2010	2011	2012
Landfill*	EUR40/t	EUR60/t	EUR85/t
Incineration & Advanced Thermal Treatment	EUR10/t	EUR20/t	EUR26/t
	Plus non-GHG pollutant-related taxes (per kg of pollutant, all years)		
	NH3 VOCs PM2.5 SOx NOx Cd	EUR9.15 EUR2.50 EUR52.00 EUR17.30 EUR13.60 EUR26.00	Cr Hg Ni Pb Dioxin As
MBT processes	EUR5/t	EUR12/t	EUR20/t
Landfilling stabilised biowaste (standard landfill)	EUR5/t	EUR15/t	EUR25/t
Landfilling stabilised biowaste (dedicated cell)	EUR0/t	EUR0/t	EUR5/t
Secondary Recovered Fuel (SRF) to incineration	As for incineration, but expressed per t SRF		
SRF to cement kiln	EUR0.0		
* Residual MSW not meeting stability threshold under EPA Pre-treatment Guidelines			

the authorities and gives an incentive to all authorities to continue to improve.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** Commercial waste recycling rates should reach

- 55 per cent in 2010
- 60 per cent in 2012
- 65 per cent in 2014
- 70 per cent in 2016.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** The target rates for the recycling of construction and demolition waste are:

- 75 per cent in 2010
- 80 per cent in 2012
- 85 per cent in 2014
- 90 per cent in 2016.

These targets should be considered as the levels which Ireland should aspire to, thereby recognising that such high targets can be achieved, and that policy will be oriented to achieve these in future.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** The proposed levy structure is set out in Table 1 below.

**RECOMMENDATION 9:** Where producer responsibility measures are in place, the principle is established whereby producers will be expected to be fully financially responsible for delivering the services required to meet their obligation. Sanctions should be applied for non-compliance, with compliance being the subject of adequate checks.



**RECOMMENDATION 10:** The targets under Article 11 of the Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations be increased such that in future, the minimum recycling target increases to 75 per cent (up from 63.6 per cent in 2007) by 2013.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** Producer responsibility initiatives extended to newspaper and magazines as well as junk mail and other forms of direct marketing.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** Consideration be given to the wider implementation of product levies, principally targeting disposable products in widespread use. Suitable targets – recognising that alternatives are available - would be, for example, razors and cutlery.

**RECOMMENDATION 17:** The development of a National Action Plan for Green Procurement needs to be progressed with a degree of urgency.

**RECOMMENDATION 18:** Bottom ash should be treated as hazardous until it has been demonstrated otherwise.

**RECOMMENDATION 20:** The Waste Management Act is amended such that household waste collection is made the responsibility of local authorities. Household waste may be collected only by the local authority itself, or by an enterprise acting on its behalf.

As a next step in the Government's approach to modernising and reorientation of the waste management sector the recommendations will form a key element of a new policy statement on waste currently being developed with a view to its publication in 2010.

Copies of the documents can be collected from the Irish Environment Ministry's website at:

[www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

## Dublin City Council loses waste case

**The High Court in Dublin has ruled that Dublin City Council abused its dominant position in the household waste collection market in a bid to remove rival private operators.**

The Irish Times reports that Mr Justice Liam McKechnie quashed a variation to the Dublin region waste management plan whereby only the councils, or contractors appointed by them, could collect household waste. He said the variation had been impaired by "bias and prejudgment". The case arose from a challenge by private waste management firms Nurendale Ltd, trading as Panda Waste Service, and Greenstar Ltd, which took separate cases against the councils claiming the variation to the plan was an abuse of their dominant position and contrary to competition law. Panda had claimed this was an attempt to stop private sector collection of waste and amounted to a fundamental change in the organisation of the market so as to "effectively remove competition".

In his judgment, Mr Justice McKechnie said the variation would "substantially strengthen the position of the local authorities and substantially influence the structure of the market, to the detriment of competition". He agreed with submissions by Panda that an earlier review undertaken by the city council was prejudged and the outcome predestined. He ruled a similar case taken by Greenstar "will also succeed".

If a private company collects waste, then they own it and can determine where that waste goes, the judge said.