

From Rubbish to Resource



SOUTH WEST
Regional Assembly



*The Regional Waste Strategy
for the South West 2004 - 2020*



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Envirowise

Recycle Now Campaign

Remade South West

Rethink Rubbish



Executive Summary

Time is running out to tackle the mounting waste problem facing the South West: we cannot continue dealing with it in the way we have in the past.

The increasing number of people who live here and visitors to the region means more and more waste has to be dealt with.

Every year, we produce around:

2½ million tonnes of domestic waste

5½ million tonnes of commercial and industrial waste

12½ million tonnes of construction and demolition waste and domestic waste alone is increasing by around 100,000 tonnes every year.

At present, 80% of domestic waste and around 50% of commercial and industrial waste is dumped in landfill sites. We are running out of space for putting waste into landfill and it is no longer the best or safest approach to dealing with waste.

More and more of our “waste” is being recycled for other uses. But, in spite of the excellent efforts by many people – including our local authorities and businesses – to recycle waste, we throw away hundreds of thousands of tonnes of material that could be reused. The draft Regional Waste Strategy proposes new ways to manage our waste more effectively, and to realise the value of what is being thrown away.



Why Do We Need a Regional Waste Strategy?

The short answer is we want to make our region an even better place to live. Although, across the South West there are already some excellent plans for dealing with the issue of waste at local level, a regional strategy can add value by:

- ➔ *Looking at all types of waste across the whole region*
- ➔ *Helping address waste issues that cross local boundaries*
- ➔ *Tackling difficult issues that locally might present too many insoluble problems, but where regional solutions can help meet the needs of several areas*
- ➔ *Lobbying on behalf of the whole region where problems, such as lack of funding, exist*
- ➔ *Enabling the removal of barriers to better management of waste*

What Does the Waste Strategy Do?

The draft Waste Strategy sets out how we can deliver the 'South West Vision for Waste: Minimum Waste, Maximum Benefit'. This Vision was supported by the region. It says:

"The South West will become a minimum waste region by 2030, with households and businesses maximising opportunities for reuse and recycling"

What are the Aims of the Draft Waste Strategy?

The Waste Strategy aims to ensure that by the year 2020 over 45% of waste is recycled and reused and less than 20% of waste produced in the region will be landfilled.

This is an ambitious goal. The Strategy identifies a number of key areas for action by the people of the region and by organisations:

- ➔ *Adopting the 'waste hierarchy' so that:*
 - *First we seek to reduce the amount of waste we all produce*
 - *Second we reuse as much as possible*
 - *Third we recycle*
 - *Fourth we recover as much value as we can from what is left*
 - *Only as a last resort do we dispose of the left over waste and then we should:*
 - *Always dispose of waste as close as possible to where it is produced*
 - *Make sure we always look for solutions which give the best practicable outcome environmentally*
 - *Work together across geographic boundaries for more effective solutions to waste issues*



How Do We Reduce the Amount of Waste and Reuse More of It?

Goods should not have too much packaging, and must be reusable where possible. The Strategy proposes that public sector organisations in the South West lead by example. The production of a Guide for procuring recycled products is recommended. Businesses across the South West will be encouraged to have their own waste minimisation and recycling action plans. The Regional Assembly working with partners will lobby nationally and internationally for product redesign based on longevity, reuse and recycling.

How Can the South West Earn Money and Create Jobs by Increasing the Amount of Recycling and Recover Its Value?

The region has some of the best recycling rates in the country. The Strategy proposes the development of local high value markets for recycled products. Currently around 350,000 tonnes of products for recycling are collected from households in the South West. However, most of these are processed elsewhere, so the value of the products produced is lost to the region and so are the jobs that go with the work. In addition around 150,000 tonnes of organic garden waste are collected from households for composting.

Most of this is processed in the region. Based on existing analyses, the South West could process well over 3¹/₂ million tonnes of recyclables (excluding concrete¹) and over 300,000 tonnes of compostables from all waste streams. Developing the market for recyclates in the region will be a key to achieving this. The Strategy sees two key organisations: Remade South West and Remade Kernow leading the development of markets for recycled products, but other organisations need to support this work. Local authorities, the industry and the South West Regional Development Agency should encourage innovative technologies and new ways of applying existing technologies.

A minimum of around 45% of local authority and commercial and industrial waste should be recycled or composted, although local authorities should set higher recycling targets if they can. Value should be recovered from the remainder by mechanical, biological or thermal treatment close to where the waste arises.

Where Do We Get Rid of Our Waste?

Two of the most significant challenges of this Strategy are for private industry to develop and install new technology and for waste planning authorities to identify suitable sites for them. This Strategy proposes that waste treatment should

¹ A further 6 million tonnes of concrete and asphalt are also potentially recyclable



happen as close as possible to where the waste is produced. We know local authorities will have a difficult job balancing wider waste management pressures with the needs of local communities. However, the Strategy recognises that large parts of the region are of a more rural nature and, therefore, waste from these areas may need to travel further to suitable facilities.

How Do We Get Rid of Our Waste?

Reducing the proportion of waste we put into landfill to less than 20% in 2020 is a tough target. It is more ambitious than current Government targets and looks to what might be asked of the South West in the future. The greatest change will be required in how we deal with waste currently collected by local authorities, around 80% of which is now put in the land. But we must meet this target if we are to move forward.

In developing solutions within the draft Waste Strategy a range of estimates for how much more waste we might produce in future have been considered. The proposals in the Strategy are based on growth in waste that is around the middle of the estimates for growth. An independent study which looked at the best practical way of dealing with the problems facing us all, suggests that around 500-600 new facilities of all types will need



to be in place by the year 2020. The exact location of these will be for local people to decide, and Waste Development Frameworks of local authorities must deal with the identification of locations for the new facilities. But, the Regional Waste Strategy does provide guidance on where the facilities should be put in the South West. The types of facilities required include:

- ➔ *Places for making compost*
- ➔ *Sorting facilities for the products we are recycling*
- ➔ *Facilities for mechanical, biological or thermal treatment of remaining waste; and*
- ➔ *Land for disposing of waste where the space in existing landfill has run out*

If we are to develop the market for recyclates in the region, there will also be a need for recycling reprocessing facilities.





How Do We Make the Strategy Work?

Only by everyone working together will we be able to make the Strategy happen. Local people may not welcome the range of new facilities required for delivery of this Strategy especially when they will be close to the places they live. The reasons, advantages and disadvantages of different options need to be explained clearly. Co-operation between local authorities is vital. Finding suitable sites for approximately 500 facilities – some small, some large - will be a major challenge for the whole region.

Waste will sometimes have to be carried from one part of the South West to another part, crossing boundaries between local authorities. However, this Strategy sets out policies and targets that aim to enable us to deal with our waste management within the region. Only in the case of hazardous waste may it be necessary for waste to be transported far across or outside the region.

What is the Process for Reviewing the Strategy?

This Waste Strategy is based on the best advice we have now for how to deal with the issues, in the way that does least damage to the environment in which we live. It needs to be kept under review, as there are many uncertainties. Further work will be needed over the next few months to identify the need for facilities to manage hazardous waste. It is proposed to fully review the Waste Strategy by the year 2007/8.

What Will It Cost the South West?

It will cost us a lot NOT to implement the Strategy. The impact will not just be in terms of the financial costs but in the damage it will do to the fantastic environment of the South West. A recent opinion poll showed 64% of us identified the environment as the greatest strength of the region.

The Strategy does have significant financial implications, although it is difficult to be precise about costs at this stage as there are many uncertainties.

At the moment managing our waste is costing the people and businesses of the South West somewhere around £400-£500 million every year. If we take no action and do not make all the changes



suggested in the Strategy, so that the amount of waste we have to deal with continues to rise, then the annual bill is likely to rise to between £1,200-£1,350 million. If we only follow some of the measures suggested the costs could still be as high as £1,100 million. This is a huge amount of money, and it takes no account of the long-term damage that would be suffered in the environment.

Following the measures set out in the draft Strategy is likely to cost us somewhere between £950-£1,200 million. This needs to be met if we are to achieve the Strategy – it is an ambitious Strategy and we need to look for help in supporting it across the whole region, but also from Central Government.

What Might Stop Us Delivering the Strategy?

There are significant uncertainties and risks involved in delivery of this ambitious programme of change including:

- ➔ *Lack of money*
- ➔ *Failure to reduce the amount of packaging and other ways of reducing waste*
- ➔ *Levels of all our understanding about what can be recycled*

- ➔ *Failure to develop markets for recycled products*
- ➔ *The levels of awareness; understanding and acceptance of the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with waste in particular ways*
- ➔ *Government commitment to promoting innovation*
- ➔ *Failure of all people and partners to accept the need to move forward together to meet this ambitious programme to safeguard our future*

The Strategy sets out tactics to raise awareness, generate support and establish good practice across the region.

