

**CCMA Submission**  
**to the**  
**EPA on Consultation Draft for Municipal Solid Waste**  
**Pre-Treatment and Residual Management (CCMA)**

**Oct 15th 2008**

## Section 1 - Introduction

The County and City Managers' Association (CCMA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the publication of the EPA's Guidance Document on Municipal Solid Waste Pre-treatment and Residual Management. The document attempts to bring a greater clarity to the cumulative impact (and targets) occasioned by the various waste enactments and directives to date. It also provides useful guidance on terminology interpretation and provides good guidance on what are acceptable forms of Pre-Treatment. The Document is informative in relation to the context and in the general legislative background.

This submission presents general feedback on behalf of the CCMA Environment Committee and also in relation to some particular technical aspects of the document where it is felt that clarity is needed.

### **Local Authority progress to date on recycling**

Local authorities have made considerable progress in reaching targets on municipal recovery rates, implementing regional waste management plans, and providing enhanced access to recycling facilities in local authority areas. Kerbside collection, of some form, has been successfully rolled out to the majority of households. Between 2004 and 2007 the "bring bank" network expanded by almost 4%<sup>1</sup>, the number of civic amenity sites increased by approximately 27%<sup>2</sup> whilst the range of materials, and tonnages recycled has also increased significantly.<sup>3</sup>

In making this submission, however, local authorities are fully aware of the extent of the challenge and urgency attached to meeting the EU Landfill Directive obligations with regard to the diversion of bio-degradable waste. In order to meet these objectives the current policy focus (as per Circular WPPR 17/08) is to extend and accelerate brown bin segregated collections to provide for bio-waste and to encourage home composting.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the number of bring banks which cater for glass recycling.

<sup>2</sup> Derived from local authority service indicator data. Source: Service Indicators in Local Authorities 2007.

<sup>3</sup> For example, according to the service indicators, between 2004 and 2007, the average tonnage of glass recycled per local authority increased by 43%.

The Environment Committee wishes to make the following general comments:

## 1. General

1.1.1 It was felt that the contents of the document are generally at a high level. The document contains useful background information in relation to EU targets and legislation. The document is not prescriptive as to how waste is to be treated at this stage, but concentrates on the targets to be achieved by landfill operators. It was felt that a greater level of detail will be required in due course.

1.1.2 The CCMA is conscious of the challenging timescales involved, with regard to the practicalities of achieving the targets set out. The document envisages that the EPA will issue a final plan in November 2008, with a focus on targets to be achieved by January 2010. It was felt that, in addition to the guidance document, the EPA would need to issue more detailed guidance to landfill operators. Landfill operators will then require further time to implement revised arrangements with suppliers who are tasked with implementing changes on the ground.

1.1.3 In regard to 2 (above), the CCMA is of the view that the Guidance Document should provide flexibility on 'date' triggers where it is clearly demonstrated by a Regional Waste Grouping that an intervention planned for a later date will, notwithstanding its lateness (having regard to targets in the Guidance Document) ensure that the targets in the Directives will be met.

1.2 That the Guidance Document should provide greater clarity in how target figures that require compliance are to be calculated at target achievement time to avoid confusion arising by the changing terminology and targets as they appeared in various policy documents ranging from 'Changing Our ways' in 1998 to present day.

1.3 That the Guidance Document should recognise the need for flexibility to consider Ireland's Targets under the various Directives as an **absolute target**

for the ***nation as a whole*** rather than requiring each Regional Waste Area to meet the targets individually.

- 1.4 The CCMA is of the view that it would be more appropriate for the EPA and / or local authorities acting through Regional Waste Management Plans to determine what levels of pre-treatment should be applied to different waste streams.
  
- 1.5 In order to ensure targets are met, it should also be open to the EPA and / or local authorities to direct waste including residual waste to facilities which provide higher recovery potential in accordance with the EU Waste Hierarchy.
  
- 1.6 The CCMA is of the view that the key to ensuring compliance with the Landfill Directive might be summarised as follows:
  - a. Maximise source segregation by 3 bin collection system
  
  - b. The development of key waste management infrastructure i.e. (MRF, biological treatment facilities and thermal treatment)
  
  - c. MRF and biological treatment facilities, where appropriate, to be supported by state subsidies in the short to medium term.
  
  - d. Policy and regulatory certainty is essential to allow local authorities to plan and private sector to invest.

## **2. Specific**

- 2.1 BAT (Best Available Techniques) in waste management encourages / permits that the selection of techniques to protect the environment should achieve an appropriate balance between realising environmental benefits and the costs to be incurred in so doing.
- 2.2 In that context it is argued that environmental benefit of achieving full compliance with the targets set out in the EU Waste Framework Directive (2006 /12/EC), the Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC) and the EU IPPC Directive (96/61/EC) and the measures contained in the Draft Guidance Document are much more difficult to achieve in a Predominately Rural Setting than in a more densely populated area. This is influenced by lack of economy of scale and the 'scattered' nature of waste point sources (effectively the individual rural households).
- 2.3 It is considered therefore that the guidance should recognise this difficulty and provide the scope to enable Ireland's obligations under the Directives to be met on the basis of an absolute target for the Nation as a whole rather than requiring each individual Waste Region to meet the same level of target.
- 2.4 That the Guidance Document should recognise the difficulties faced by Waste Regions who have a significant proportion of their border with Northern Ireland in achieving economy of scale due to prohibitions in cross border movement of waste. This is an issue which affects the Donegal Waste Region in particular in that the volumes of waste arising in the Region are insufficient to generate economically affordable solutions / interventions.
- 2.5 In relation to page 6, the Committee raised an issue of interpretation as to whether the levels of treatment specified for bio-waste i.e. (i.e. 50%, 70% and 90%) relates to the total amount of bio waste arising, and not just to that

portion of bio-waste that is expected to be brought to landfill. This interpretation might be confirmed.

- 2.6 It is assumed that a landfill operator can offset higher levels of pre-treatment by one supplier with lower levels from another. This interpretation might be confirmed.
- 2.7 In regard to 2.6 above, the Committee also wish to seek clarity on the methodology (i.e. the calculations and waste projections upon which these treatment levels are based) as to whether the projections take account of recent rapid economic growth.
- 2.8 It was felt that there was a discrepancy between Fig 5 and the description contained on Page 15 in relation to the minimum pre-treatment obligations.
- 2.9 The Committee assume that the comment on page 15 that '...for urban areas, treatment of 'black bin' or mixed municipal waste by mechanical means is also expected...' refers to situations where there is no source separation in place i.e. no 2 bin system. This interpretation might be confirmed.
- 2.10 The last paragraph on page 12, continuing to the top of page 13, refers to the provision of integrated waste treatment operations, particularly in urban areas where collected waste is brought to purpose built factory units with modular waste treatment processes combining all or combinations of manual, mechanical and biological treatments. The document states that such operations previously referred to as Materials Recovery Facilities, are now often identified as mechanical biological treatment (MBT) facilities. According to the international literature, MBT should be seen as a generic term for a variety of processes. It must be considered as an integrated process involving a number of technologies. Therefore, it is *'neither a single technology nor a*

*complete solution*'.<sup>4</sup> It entails the use of several types of biological and mechanical processes combined in a number of ways to meet environmental objectives. The CCMA is strongly of the view that the distinction between Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and mechanical biological treatment (MBT) should be highlighted as it is confusing to identify these facilities as being similar in nature.

#### 2.11 **Consistency of Terms:**

It is suggested that greater clarity in the use of terms in the document is required in the interest of consistency. Examples are:

- (a) "waste incineration" : page 2
- " waste to energy (incineration)" : page 3
- "thermal treatment": pages 12 and 16
- "incineration" : page 14
- "incineration with energy recovery": page 14
- "incineration paragraph": page 17
- (b) "urban areas" : page 15
- "large urban areas" : page 16 (Figure 6)

A definition of an urban area, e.g. population threshold, also needs to be stated.

#### 2.12 **Economies of Scale:**

The CCMA notes that pre-treatment of waste for landfills with relatively small tonnages may be less efficient, based on economies of scale, than some of the larger landfill sites with high tonnages. The cost implications of such pre-treatment requirements must be carefully considered.

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<sup>4</sup> Juniper Consultancy Services, 2005. MBT: A Guide for Decision Makers – Processes, Policies & Markets. The Summary Report, p. 11.

## 2.13 Clarification in relation to landfill operators:

2.13.1 The essence of the proposal, with regard to landfills, is that “the operator of an existing landfill must demonstrate to the EPA that, by the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009, all waste delivered to the landfill will have been adequately pre-treated”. The CCMA is of the view that it seems somewhat unreasonable that landfill operators would have the obligation to ensure appropriate pre-treatment including 2 or 3 bin collection systems, when they are not directly involved in the collection process.

2.13.2 Clarification is sought as to how a landfill operator is required to deal with specific waste streams that are (arguably) not currently the subject of source separated pre-treatment e.g. individual members of the public bringing waste to a landfill, street sweepings and litter bins, fly-tipping material collected by local authorities etc.

2.13.3 Clarification is sought as to how landfill operators might satisfy themselves that suppliers of waste will comply with the level of treatment/diversion required for 2010, 2013 and 2016 as appropriate. It is submitted that the document only refers to a proposal to issue a characterization protocol. In addition there is a suggestion on page 17 that the EPA assessment may be on a site or regional basis

2.13.4 Clarification is sought as to what is envisaged in the event that a landfill operator finds that the amount of bio-waste accepted at the landfill exceeds the level required in order to meet the Directive targets at local level.

2.13.5 The EPA might usefully consider what incentives might be provided for suppliers to ensure that, his/her waste is treated/diverted to the required level prior to landfill.

### **3. Additional Points raised in relation to collection systems:**

3.1 The minimum proposed pre-treatment for municipal solid waste is for a source separated 2-bin system plus further mechanical and biological treatment. Figure 5, however, indicates that even where the 3-bin system is in place further mechanical and biological treatment will also be required. The risk with this approach is that the costs associated with providing a 3-bin system plus MBT will be prohibitive and collectors will opt for a 2-bin system with MBT which will be less environmentally beneficial than providing a 3-bin system without MBT. The guidance document should provide advice relating to the environmental benefits of a 3-bin rather than a 2-bin system which will strike a balance between costs and environmental benefits.

3.2.1 The three bin collection system needs to be recognised as a pre-treatment system. Otherwise local authorities with a 3 bin collection system will be required to pre-treat the residual waste which will put additional unnecessary cost on the waste collection service with minimum benefit.

3.2.2 It is not clear if a three bin collection system is mandatory. If not, it conflicts with the National Strategy on biodegradable waste which requires phased introduction of a separate collection for bio waste. The CCMA is of the view that the three bin collection system is in line with 'best practice' and that the document should recognise this.

3.2.3 This consultation draft seems to be accepting a 2 bin collection system followed by MBT. This policy will discourage the roll out of the brown bin collection and the development of essential biological treatment facilities and is contrary to the recent DOEHLG Circular. It is also contrary to the South East Waste Management Plan which has a long term strategy of a 3 bin collection system, MRF, biological treatment facility and thermal treatment for the residual waste. It is important to state that while MBT allows the opportunity to recover materials, this material has few recyclable options due to contamination. Also given that the majority of the stabilised bio waste must either be land filled or incinerated, it makes MBT unsustainable and adds unnecessary cost.

3.2.4 The proposal distinguishes between Urban and Rural areas on the requirement for pre-treatment of residual waste. While there may be a need to require less segregation of waste on rural and domestic collection routes because of the energy use and cost of collecting from sparsely populated areas, once the waste is collected and brought to a waste facility there is no basis for not requiring MBT treatment of rural derived waste as opposed to urban derived waste.

3.2.5 With regard to the requirement to extract recoverable recyclables from incinerator ashes, consideration should be given to dropping this requirement where there is a dry recyclable collection which will remove tins and cans. The quantity of metal that is likely to be recovered and the cost of treating the ash should be considered before requiring this additional treatment process.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the CCMA, as a key stakeholder, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process. We would be happy to engage with the EPA to discuss any issues raised in further detail.

Should any details need to be clarified with the committee, please feel free to contact Ronan Murphy in the Office for Local Authority Management on 01-6438400.