

## **ADEPT Waste Group – Update December 2019**

The waste group met virtually by telephone conference on 18 December 2019.

### **BIOWASTE AND PLASTICS CONTAMINATION**

The meeting began with a presentation from Judy Proctor and Kathy Nichols from the Environment Agency on plastics in the environment, including proposals for the EA to amend standard rules permits for biowaste treatment plant.

The presentation confirmed that this was the beginning of a process of improved joint working to improve environmental impacts associated with plastics contamination of waste and recycling.

It was explained that the standard rules permit consultation followed work on incident reports and auditing of AD sites. The consultation proposes limits on contamination through the gate which are proposed to not be excessive but the perceived lack of willing improvements within the sector now requires action.

It was noted that there is a lack of end use for biowaste product due to concerns on quality with feedback that farmers like the product but it is too contaminated - even when PAS110 compliant.

There is some evidence of end users being unable to market their products because of loss of certification due to plastics contamination. Airborne plastics are also noted as an emerging issue.

The proposal is now to work towards a zero target for contamination over time.

Quality protocols are being tightened up to sit alongside permits with a call for evidence now out to inform future action.

It was noted that the consultation is extended to the end of February.

The discussion within the group following the presentation identified issues such as opportunities for joint communications and the need for better intelligence on the scale of the improvements needed in collection practices. It was clarified that the EA is proposing a 0.5% contamination limit at the front end of waste processing plant rather than relying on technology to remove plastics from feedstock. Concern was expressed by the group on the practicality of meeting this requirement. It was noted that the industry preference appears to be for tighter output standard.

The item concluded with JP offering continuing engagement with ADEPT and a view from the group that ADEPT needs to take advantage of this offer.

Wendy Barratt from Devon has subsequently volunteered to lead for ADEPT on this issue.

### **PROVING SERVICES**

HB reported that workshops on a potential benchmarking tool led by Proving Services have concluded that the complexity of waste issues mean it is impractical to develop a universal tool. Proving have developed a 'factor set' which have been discussed with Surrey, Herts and Luton but the conclusion is that benchmarking in two-tier is doable but would be very expensive. The proposal is now to continue but focus on smaller unitaries.

HB also highlighted the launch of 'Wikiwaste' as a new online repository of facts and data for waste.

## **UPDATE ON RESOURCES AND WASTE STRATEGY**

The meeting heard from Robert Vaughan from DEFRA with an update on Government position on waste following the General Election. Robert confirmed that the PM is commitment to net zero carbon emissions and the environment, and that the Environment Bill continues with a first reading in the new Government expected in the new year. Consultations can be expected in July before summer recess.

DEFRA are working on impact assessments and are currently exploring what materials should be included in definitions e.g. flexible packaging. It was noted that evidence was being reviewed for restricting free garden waste collections.

Stakeholder engagement meetings being will be scheduled for the new year with ADEPT to be invited. DEFRA are also setting up a local authority group to look at collection consistency to meet in February.

It was noted that Sonia Phippard has retired and the new Director is David Hill. HB is meeting DH on 9th Jan

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND WASTE**

Steve Palfrey had previously circulated a paper seeking views on how authorities are considering waste within any climate change emergency. There was a range of approaches from the group with interest expressed by a number of members for a further working group.

Comments were made on metrics used by zero waste Scotland, and work by Unomia on a carbon league table.