

## **Statement by Chair and Vice-Chair**

Dear Minister

We are pleased to present to you the Report of the Waste Infrastructure Task Force, detailing its findings and recommendations for addressing Northern Ireland's waste infrastructure deficit.

The work of the Task Force has developed against a background of imminent and sometimes uncertain change, not just in the way local government is reformed but also in how we manage, dispose of and indeed value, the resource that we call 'waste'. In the face of the uncertainties generated by these changes, we are grateful to our colleagues in the Task Force and in the wider arenas of local and central government for their commitment to producing this Report. Since the Task Force was established in April 2005, they have given generously of their time and expertise in identifying solutions to the complex and urgent challenges that face us as we move ever closer to the dates by which we must have the waste infrastructure capacity we need in place.

We have obligations as members of the European Community, and, no less importantly, as custodians of the environment in Northern Ireland, to ensure that the impacts of waste disposal are managed effectively. We also have an obligation to ensure that the solutions to meeting those obligations are affordable and do not impose unfair or unsustainable burdens on any sector of the community. In considering how best to advance the procurement of waste infrastructure, we in the Task Force have been very mindful of the challenge of reconciling proposed infrastructure requirements and structural arrangements with affordability, and with local accountability.

Finally, we commend to you the dedication of Task Force members in carrying out the research, evaluation and debate that underpin the recommendations of this Report. It constitutes an important step on the road to implementation of waste infrastructure procurement.

**Ian Maye, Chair**  
**Councillor Patricia Lewsley, MLA, Vice-Chair**  
**December 2006**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Waste Infrastructure Task Force was established in April 2005 to consider and report on key stakeholders' views on how best to facilitate the delivery of the waste infrastructure required to enable Northern Ireland to meet national and European waste management targets.
2. The Terms of Reference for the Task Force, noted at paragraph 1.3, were designed to address the three issues identified as crucial to the effective procurement of waste infrastructure procurement.
3. A Secretariat to assist the Task Force in its work was provided by the Environmental Policy Division of the Department of the Environment (DOE).
4. The Task Force engaged in an extensive process of consultation, with both local and central government. In conjunction with NILGA (Northern Ireland Local Government Association), it hosted an externally managed Away Day for members and an Information Day for officers and elected members of District Councils, from which all results were recorded. We also sought the views of the Chief Executives of all Northern Ireland's District Councils.
5. We studied and commissioned extensive research to inform our consideration of key issues, notably governance structures for waste management, waste management costs, and funding of waste management in the rest of GB. We debated and explored the different models and options for delivering effective procurement, and have worked hard to listen to and resolve different views as to how best to develop those options.
6. Our key recommendations derive from extensive discussion, both internally and with other stakeholders, on what actions are necessary to expedite the establishment in Northern Ireland of a sustainable and cost-effective network of waste infrastructure.
7. Our key recommendations cover four related elements, long-term structural arrangements, short-term structural arrangements, funding the provision of waste infrastructure and assisting local government to fulfil its statutory obligations in respect of waste infrastructure procurement.
8. We acknowledge that the full working out of our key recommendations will be a matter of further discussion. We are mindful that those discussions will have to take place against the background of steadily approaching and steeply accelerating national and European targets for landfill diversion, and that they must therefore take place sooner rather than later. While addressing waste infrastructural needs against the background of uncertainty engendered by the Review of Public Administration presents a challenge to all stakeholders, it also presents

an opportunity, to modernise our waste management processes in tandem with our wider programme of reform, and to ensure that waste management structures contribute effectively to a re-invigorated and revitalized local government.

9. The Waste Infrastructure Task Force considers implementation of its recommendations an essential element of the measures needed to advance Northern Ireland's capacity to play its full part in meeting our national obligations to dispose of waste in line with the principles of sustainable development. We advocate their full adoption.

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***4.1 Recommendation 1 – Long-Term Structural Arrangements***

**Given the pressures placed on the legislative timetable by the RPA, and the need to ensure that no option is excluded from full consideration, by time or other factors, the Task Force recommends the preparation of legislative proposals that allow for the creation of one or more waste disposal authorities within local government, facilitating the introduction of the preferred structure(s) once outstanding issues have been resolved in consultation with local government. We further recommend that the Department of the Environment (DOE) continues to work with key stakeholders to resolve issues identified by Task Force members.**

### ***4.4 Recommendation 2 – Short-Term Structural Arrangements***

**The Task Force recommends that the DOE encourages the Waste Management Groups to address the barriers to co-operation they have identified, and that it works with them to establish enhanced mechanisms for improving liaison between central and local government on issues such as data collection, research and funding. We also recommend that the Department takes steps to ensure that local government's interests are represented when other Departments propose actions which impinge on waste management issues.**

### ***5.3 Recommendation 3 – Location, Type and Cost of Infrastructure***

**The Task Force recommends that the Minister takes note of its ongoing work on Financial Modelling, and considers the implications of the findings of the Comparative Analysis of Waste Management Funding for the preparation of a full and detailed business case for central government support for waste infrastructure funding.**

### ***6.5 Recommendation 4***

**We recommend that the Minister endorses the establishment of the Programme Delivery Support Unit, and approves the prompt establishment of the Strategic Waste Board.**

# **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## **1.1 The Policy Context**

The Task Force was established in April 2005, with the overarching aim of canvassing and articulating key stakeholders' views on facilitating the delivery of the integrated network of waste infrastructure necessary to enable Northern Ireland to meet national and European waste management targets up to the year 2020, and ensuring that this network is planned, designed, administered and operated to the standards required to protect the environment and public health.

The work of the Task Force has progressed against the background of the development of the new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland, *Towards Resource Management*, the principal aim of which is to achieve fully sustainable waste management. The Task Force has recognised that achieving this in the context of the complex issues surrounding the procurement of waste facilities requires a high level of integration of resources, infrastructure and policy initiatives.

## **1.2 Membership of the Waste Infrastructure Task Force**

The Task Force is a partnership between central and local government. It comprises key stakeholders from relevant government departments, the Strategic Investment Board and local government, including waste officers, elected representatives and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA). Its chairman is Mr Ian Maye, latterly Director of the Environmental Policy Division, Department of the Environment, and now Director of Local Government Reform, and the vice-chair is Councillor Patricia Lewsley, MLA. A full list of members is enclosed at paragraph 7.1 (Appendix A).

## **1.3 Terms of Reference**

The Task Force agreed at its initial meeting that it should focus on three complex and inter-related issues identified as crucial to the procurement of waste management infrastructure:

- structural arrangements for the procurement of waste infrastructure
- location, type and cost of infrastructure
- procurement and funding

## **2. METHODOLOGY: WASTE INFRASTRUCTURE TASK FORCE SUB-GROUPS**

To take forward the initial phase of its work, the Task Force established three sub-groups to examine each of the three issues identified in paragraph 1.3, and to report back to the Task Force at regular intervals. Sub-groups had scope where necessary to commission research and qualitative data-gathering, and to consult with relevant experts, organisations and stakeholders. The Task Force held monthly plenary sessions, including one Away Day, at which the Sub-Groups submitted their findings to their colleagues. Research data was assembled on structural arrangements, financial modelling and waste collection and disposal costs. A comparative analysis of the funding of waste infrastructure procurement in the rest of the United Kingdom (UK) is still underway.

Each sub-group's membership was determined on the basis of its objectives, as outlined below.

### **2.1 Sub-Group 1: Structural Arrangements for the Procurement of Waste Infrastructure**

Sub-Group 1 was chaired by Mr Ian Maye and comprised representatives from the three regional Waste Management Groups, the Strategic Investment Board, Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), Central Procurement Directorate, Environment and Heritage Service, DOE Local Government Division, NILGA and DOE Environmental Policy Division.

#### Objectives

- To consider the fitness for purpose of the current structural arrangements for procuring waste infrastructure
- To consider options for short-term change (next three to five years) to the existing structural arrangements
- To consider what, if any, changes to the existing structural arrangements may be necessary in the longer term (after five years)

### **2.2 Sub-Group 2: Location, Type and Cost of Infrastructure**

Sub-Group 2 was chaired by Dr Eugene Kelly, Environment and Heritage Service, and comprised representatives of the three regional Waste Management Groups, DOE Planning Service, DOE Finance, Strategic Investment Board and DOE Environmental Policy Division

#### Objectives

- To consider what waste management infrastructure is required to deal with both municipal and commercial and industrial waste streams to meet the requirements of EU Directives
- To identify a number of alternative scenarios using the output of the Best Practicable Environmental Option for Waste Management in Northern Ireland exercise as a baseline, and derive cost estimates for each of these scenarios

- To identify broad areas of search where the proposed infrastructure could be located

### **2.3 Sub-Group 3: Procurement and Funding**

Sub-Group 3 was chaired by Mr Paul Dolan, Strategic Investment Board, and comprised representatives from the three regional Waste Management Groups, DFP Central Procurement Directorate, DFP Central Expenditure Directorate, DOE Central Finance and DOE Environmental Policy Division.

#### Objective

- To consider the mechanics of the procurement process and the mix of funding required in order to meet the infrastructure deficit

### **2.4 Stakeholder Engagement**

During the consultation on the new Northern Ireland Management Waste Strategy, in the period October 2005 to January 2006, a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties, including local government, was invited to comment on the Task Force proposals for advancing waste infrastructure procurement. Respondents largely endorsed all the key proposals developed by the Task Force, and Government has given a strong commitment to provide the leadership needed to drive forward implementation of all the strands in the new strategy, including waste planning.

The funding and procurement of waste infrastructure is an issue of particular concern to local government. The collection and disposal of municipal waste is one of its key and most expensive functions. Further, the cost and siting of waste infrastructure impacts directly on constituents, with the result that the local effects of policy initiatives being developed centrally are closely monitored by elected members. Elected members and waste management group representatives on the Task Force have been able to report on its workings to their colleagues. The Task Force has also circulated papers outlining its progress, and has held an Information Day specifically for councillors and officials, to enable them to hear detailed reports from the sub-groups on the proposals they have developed, and also, equally important, to enable them to convey their concerns and views to the Task Force. The Task Force has taken careful note of concerns raised and worked hard to address them, through dialogue and correspondence with the three Waste Management Groups. This has resulted in the modification of some recommendations and further clarification of others.

An executive summary of local government's views on the Task Force proposals, as expressed at the Information Day on 27 April 2006, is included at paragraph 7.2 (Appendix B).

### **3. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The background against which the Task Force has developed its proposals is one that is shaped by the issues of waste growth, waste disposal targets, waste collection and disposal costs, and the statutory roles and responsibilities borne by disparate sectors of central and local government. Each issue poses a challenge, to efficiency, to costs, and to the environment, but also presents an opportunity for the way in which infrastructure is procured and managed to impact positively on the scale of that challenge. These issues have all been well-rehearsed in the wider context of the Waste Management Strategy; nonetheless, they merit being reiterated here because of their capacity to impact upon what major infrastructure is required, where it will be located, and how it will be administered.

#### **3.1 Waste Growth**

Along with other European States, the UK has become increasingly aware of the importance of sustainable development. This is reflected in the shift in focus towards waste prevention and resource management in the new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland, and the recognition that it is no longer sufficient simply to manage our waste. We have a responsibility to prevent waste arising in the first place, and to focus on waste not just as waste but as a resource with economic potential whose environmental impact must be minimised.

The importance of this shift in focus in the context of waste infrastructure requirements cannot be disregarded. Northern Ireland currently produces some one million tonnes of municipal waste annually, and this figure has grown by 2.5% between 2003 and 2004. If waste prevention measures do not curb this rate of growth, municipal waste arisings will have increased by almost 50% by 2020.

It stands to reason that effective waste prevention would reduce the amount and type of infrastructure required, with associated reductions in infrastructure costs and service charges. The Task Force recognises that the scale of waste infrastructure procurement must bear a direct relation to the successful implementation of waste prevention measures. Government has already initiated this process, with the publication in September 2005 of A Framework for Waste Prevention in Northern Ireland, and a commitment to develop a strategy for implementing the Framework.

#### **3.2 Waste Targets**

There are economic and legislative as well as environmental incentives to reduce waste arisings. The EU Landfill Directive sets strict statutory targets for reducing the quantities of municipal waste sent to landfill, and will impose substantial fines if those targets are not met, with the cost of the fines, estimated to be in the region of £180 million per annum, likely to be passed to the responsible administration(s). Under the Directive, reductions in municipal waste sent to landfill must be on the following scale:

- 75% of 1995 levels by 2010
- 50% of 1995 levels by 2013
- 35% of 1995 levels by 2020

The Northern Ireland Landfill Allowances Scheme (NILAS), introduced in April 2005, allocates a limited number of allowances for the landfilling of such waste, and imposes penalties upon councils for exceeding those allowances. To illustrate the scale of the challenge this imposes upon councils, the maximum amount of biodegradable waste they will be allowed to landfill in 2020 is 220,000 tonnes. The amount landfilled in 2003 was 640,000 tonnes, and the current rate of waste growth is 2.5% per annum.

In addition, producer responsibility legislation sets statutory targets for the recovery of materials from other specific waste streams, including:

- packaging waste
- end of life vehicles
- waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)

When waste cannot and should not go to landfill, alternative methods of disposal have to be made available. In determining how waste infrastructure requirements should be calculated, the Task Force has been mindful of the need to quantify the probable relative impacts of waste prevention measures and amounts of wastes arising requiring recycling and recovery, including waste from energy.

### **3.3 Waste Collection and Disposal Costs**

#### **3.3.1 Current costs**

Waste constitutes one of the main areas of expenditure for local councils in Northern Ireland. Total gross expenditure on waste in 2005/06 amounted to £107.8 million. This accounts for approximately 21% of total district council expenditure.

In 2005/06, the NI average gross expenditure per head on waste collection and disposal was £62. There were, however, significant variations in waste expenditure per head between councils; gross expenditure in Belfast, for example, was £88 per head compared to only £41 per head in Fermanagh. Even when district council revenues from waste collection and disposal are taken into account this variation remains significant; £45 per head in Belfast, for example, compared to only £15 per head in Ballymoney and Fermanagh.

In 2005/06, NI gross expenditure on waste collection was approximately £61 million, equating to 11% of total expenditure and approximately £35 per head. Expenditure on waste disposal amounted to £47 million; i.e., 9% of total expenditure and approximately £27 per head.

#### **3.3.2 Projected Costs**

The new council structure proposed under the Review of Public Administration, of seven rather than twenty-six councils, is not expected of itself to affect

these waste costs significantly. What will affect them is any increase in expenditure on waste. The Strategic Investment Board has estimated that addressing Northern Ireland's infrastructure deficit to meet landfill diversion and enhanced recycling and recovery targets will require a programme of capital investment of the order of £300 million, with a concomitant increase in operating costs.

This issue is central to the work of the Task Force and its three Sub-Groups. It requires the involvement of people with the appropriate range of skills to facilitate this type of complex procurement programme. It requires a means of securing funding that does not impose unsustainable economic burdens upon the populace, and it requires consideration of the best way to administer the collection and disposal of waste so that both local and national needs and obligations are met effectively.

### **3.3.3 Central Government Grant Support**

Since 2001, DOE's Environment & Heritage Service (EHS) has administered a number of grant schemes providing support to Councils and to the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Sums awarded to date, including proposed allocations for 2007/08 where appropriate, are as follows:

#### Grant Support to Councils

Waste Management Grant Scheme, 2001-2008	£45 million
Hazardous WEEE , Aug 2005-Mar 2007 *	£500,000
Fridges/WEEE Grant Aid to District Councils, 2001-2007*	£3.1 million
End of Life Vehicles, 2004-2007*	£361,000
Schools Recycling Capital Grant Scheme 2004-2005	£400,000

#### Grant Support to the Private Sector

Waste Management Industry Fund 2003-2004	£1 million
WRAP, 2002-2008*	£3.65 million

#### Grant Support to NGO Sector

Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, 2003-2005	£2 million
Community Waste Innovation Scheme, 2005-2008	£3 million
Environmental Campaigns (ENCAMS) 2001-2011* (*estimated)	£1.4 million

### **3.4 Statutory Roles and Responsibilities**

Under current arrangements, Northern Ireland's twenty-six local councils are the competent authorities in respect of waste management, with statutory responsibility for the collection and disposal of municipal waste. The three regional Waste Management Groups, arc21, the Southern Waste Management Partnership (SWAMP) and the North West Region Waste Management Group (NWRWMG) are responsible for drawing up Waste Management Plans on behalf of their constituent councils. They are also, to

varying degrees, responsible for procuring infrastructure on their councils' behalf.

The current statutory arrangements have worked well insofar as local councils have a high level of expertise developed from long experience in managing waste at local level, and local populations can identify (in some instances very closely!) with waste issues in their area. The complex decision-making process at local authority level and the limitations upon councils' powers in respect of infrastructure procurement, however, present significant hurdles when it comes to the siting, financing and delivery of the large waste facilities required by national and European targets. Northern Ireland is thus at an increased risk of failing to meet those targets and thereby accruing massive fines for non-compliance with the Landfill Directive, and also of failing to achieve the high level of national co-ordination required for fully integrated waste planning.

### **3.5 The Planning Process**

arc21, SWAMP and the NWRWMG are required to review and update their Waste Management Plans this year and subsequently at intervals of no more than five years. The reviews must address detailed facilities and locations for the management of municipal waste and include specific provision for the management of all waste streams. The reviews must also, pending full application of the new Strategic Environmental Assessment, demonstrate compliance with the Best Practicable Environmental Option framework drawn up by the DOE to provide a framework for waste management planning in Northern Ireland.

A key obstacle to effective and timely waste management planning and the development of waste management facilities has been the complexity of the planning process. Full implementation of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) will entail the transfer of many development control and development plan functions from central to local government. Central government will retain some functions, in particular the handling of large applications which have a national significance beyond the council area where they are located. The ongoing Modernising Planning Processes programme initiated by Planning Service will improve accessibility and speed up the planning process; however, this may still not be sufficient to expedite the processing of major waste infrastructure applications in time to enable compliance with Landfill Directive targets. The Waste Infrastructure Task Force has liaised closely with Planning Service to address this issue, notably through its proposed Programme Delivery Support Unit.

Accordingly, it is recognised by the Task Force that there is a body of work to be undertaken to streamline the planning process relative to waste infrastructure, given the current risk of non-compliance and the implications for the public purse. We consider that this could be one of the objectives of the Strategic Waste Board in terms of delivering the Strategy, with a working group dedicated to planning. This work should build on considerations emerging in other administrations, for example, the recent Energy Review and the impending outcome of the Barker Land Use Planning Review.

## **4. PROCUREMENT OF WASTE INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **4.1 Long-Term Structural Arrangements**

Local councils have statutory responsibility for the collection and disposal of waste, and for meeting landfill diversion targets. In recognition of the challenge posed by the financing and delivery of large waste facilities on the scale required to meet enhanced landfill diversion and recycling targets in future years, the Waste Management Advisory Board identified a need to consider a single waste management authority for the whole of Northern Ireland. To inform the debate on this issue, the Department of the Environment commissioned an Assessment of the Advantages and Disadvantages of a Single Waste Management Plan and a Single Waste Management Authority. This document has been used extensively by Sub-Group 1 of the Task Force to develop three possible options for the structural organisation of Northern Ireland's waste collection, disposal and planning functions, which it then evaluated for their capacity to deliver infrastructure. Paragraphs 4.1.1 to 4.1.3 below set out how legal and procurement responsibilities would be assigned under each option, and the advantages and disadvantages attached thereto.

#### **4.1.1 Option 1 - enhancement of the current arrangements**

This option maintains and develops the current structural arrangements. Legal responsibility for waste planning, kerbside recycling, household collection and disposal would remain with local councils, as would procurement responsibility for recycling, collection and waste disposal facilities and the waste planning function. Improvements recommended by the Task Force and the three Waste Management Groups would be incorporated into the existing system, including, for example, the establishment of a joint committee to procure major waste disposal facilities for the three Waste Management Groups. Such an approach does allow for additional support for the Waste Management Groups, and would enable them to procure more efficiently. It is unlikely, however, that the decision-making process would accelerate sufficiently under this option to facilitate the financing and delivery of major facilities in time to meet targets, or help local councils to address the challenge of siting these facilities. Other issues which would also need to be resolved include the difficulties presented by local councils having individual responsibility for meeting NILAS targets, and equitable distribution of resources. All of this renders Northern Ireland very vulnerable to failing to meet its obligations in respect of EU compliance.

#### **4.1.2 Option 2 – A Single Waste Disposal Authority for Waste Planning and Waste Disposal**

This option proposes the establishment of a Single Waste Disposal Authority, with responsibility for waste planning and waste disposal on a regional basis, including the procurement of disposal infrastructure. Its responsibilities would encompass all wastes, including municipal waste, commercial and industrial waste, construction and demolition waste and hazardous waste. Local councils would retain their statutory responsibility for waste collection. Such a structure would allow the retention of local expertise in waste collection, whilst

relieving local councils of the burden of major procurement contracting, freeing them to focus on improving service delivery. (While there is no definitive distinction between what constitutes major and minor infrastructure, 'major' is taken here to denote mechanical biological treatment and energy from waste plants.)

The establishment of a regional authority with clear accountability for its performance would raise the profile of waste as a major infrastructure issue, and the availability of specialist procurement skills and increasing purchasing power would enhance private sector investor confidence. A regional authority with statutory responsibility for waste disposal and waste planning, as well as the powers necessary to meet disposal targets, would facilitate integrated waste management planning and effective public/private sector partnerships, and provide a mechanism for compliance with the Northern Ireland BPEO as well as its Strategic Environmental Assessment successor. It must also be acknowledged, however, that the establishment of such an authority would require enabling legislation, staffing and funding, and we cannot afford to lose momentum as we move towards target dates for landfill diversion.

#### **4.1.3 Option 3 - A Single Waste Disposal Authority for Waste Planning, Waste Disposal and Waste Collection**

This option proposes the establishment of a Single Waste Disposal Authority for the whole of Northern Ireland, with responsibility for waste planning, waste disposal and waste collection. This single authority would have responsibility for all waste management operations and targets, including powers of direction as to where and how waste should be presented for disposal. Local councils would retain no waste functions. This option carries the risk of losing local experience, and distancing local populations from waste issues and from any responsibility for their resolution. Nonetheless, Option 3 shares some of the advantages of Option 2; there would be advantages in an authority with sole statutory responsibility for waste disposal as well as the powers necessary to meet disposal targets, and clear accountability for its performance. It would have the capacity to act in the best interests of Northern Ireland as a whole, and to provide greater clarity regarding central government funding and other funding options. As with Option 2, enabling legislation for the establishment of a single authority would take time to introduce.

#### **4.1.4 Preferred Option: A Single Waste Disposal Authority for Waste Planning and Waste Disposal**

Following extensive discussions within the Waste Infrastructure Task Force and with the three Waste Management Groups, and after examining responses to the recent consultation on the Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland, the indications were that the most preferable of the above options would be Option 2, a Single Waste Disposal Authority for Northern Ireland. Councils are keen to retain collection functions at the local level, as indicated in the local government response to the "Towards Resource Management" consultation document. The Task Force therefore examined this option in more detail and identified three routes by which it might be taken forward:

- A)** By establishing a District Council-driven Authority, perhaps a joint committee under existing legislation or a special purpose vehicle (some form of arms-length company), or a new central service body delivered in the context of implementation of the RPA;
- B)** By establishing a new Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) along the lines of existing regional QUANGOs such as the Housing Executive or Health Boards;
- C)** By establishing a new central government body, perhaps an executive agency of the Department of the Environment .

The Waste Infrastructure Task Force considers B and C unattractive for a number of reasons. First and foremost, both would result in a district council function being moved towards central government, and would thus run contrary to the ongoing RPA. It would also be difficult to build a case for establishing another Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) when other options are available.

All of the routes identified would require legislative changes. Option C, however, seems to present a number of particularly complex legal difficulties. Because a Single Waste Disposal Authority located within the Department of the Environment would be both managed and regulated by the Department, this approach is unlikely to be acceptable in terms of either transparency and accountability or the spirit of the RPA.

Establishing a Single Waste Disposal Authority for Northern Ireland owned by and managed on behalf of local councils appears to be the most attractive way forward. Northern Ireland's local councils have delivered considerable improvements in the more sustainable management of waste in recent years. A Single Waste Disposal Authority in the hands of empowered and revitalised post-RPA local councils would be in a strong position to build further on these improvements and deliver the European and national targets that Northern Ireland must meet.

The Task Force considers that the role of local Government must be clear and that there must also be clarity in the commitment from the government as regards funding.

#### **4.1.5 Governance of a Single Waste Disposal Authority for Waste Planning and Waste Disposal**

There are a number of possibilities for how such an Authority could be constituted and organised:

- Existing legislation would allow for a Northern Ireland-wide joint committee to be established, though this may be more appropriate as a transitional structure than as the end result.
- Councils could establish a special purpose vehicle or company charged with managing the disposal of waste and capacity planning at a regional level.

- Implementation of the RPA and the potential creation of centralised functions within local government to deliver services on behalf of all post-RPA Councils raises the possibility of new governance and service delivery models being developed as part of the implementation process. It might also be appropriate for central government to have broad representation within any new governance structures, to reflect the partnership approach to waste disposal and waste planning between central and local government and to share risk. The Task Force acknowledges that much more work needs to be done to identify and evaluate fully all the options available for the structure and functions of any new delivery model.

The Task Force considered the possible governance arrangements for the SWDA and highlighted a number of other issues:

- If an SWDA is felt to be the most appropriate way forward, it must be up and running within an appropriate timescale
- Appropriate government support must be provided for such a body
- Legislation will be needed, which will take time to draw up
- There must be clarity as to whom any SWDA will be accountable

#### **4.1.6 Impact of Local Government Reform**

Notwithstanding the above points, the Task Force acknowledges that consultation with local government and the Waste Management Groups has raised significant differences of opinion amongst both council officers and elected members as to whether Northern Ireland would be best served by one SWDA or by two, serving the east and west of the province respectively, and indeed whether a new waste disposal authority is necessary at all. We acknowledge that there needs to be further consultation on the structure, and governance and title of any such authority, and further examination of the possible impact on competition and monopoly issues of a single authority in which all waste infrastructure and waste management sites would be vested.

Further consideration of any move towards a SWDA for Northern Ireland might therefore best take place in the context of, in parallel with, and as a fully integrated element of the wider RPA process. There are a number of practical reasons for this suggestion.

- Avoidance of duplication of work and ensuring a coherent approach
- Political overview within the wider process and application of the same high level principles to all functions
- Addressing complex technical and legal issues such as transition of contracts
- Establishment of a waste disposal authority would be better taken forward in the context of and as part of wider considerations of the issues in other areas of district council responsibility.

The Task Force is mindful that on the one hand, there is a need to move forward if the revised structural arrangements necessary for the provision of major infrastructure are to be in place in time to meet landfill diversion targets, while on the other, there needs to be further dialogue to address

and reconcile current differences and difficulties. The majority of Task Force members support the establishment of a SWDA, and this was also the preferred option of a majority of the elected members and local government officials who participated in the Local Government Information Day. There is also general consensus on the need for any development in this regard to take place in the context of the Review of Public Administration. What is less clear at this stage is the precise form such an authority should take. We recognise that there is a substantial body of work necessary to clarify the precise function and competency of any proposed waste disposal authorities, and to define the functions and competencies that would remain with local councils. **Given the pressures of meeting landfill diversion targets, this work should be progressed as a matter of urgency.**

**The way forward we are proposing allows time for these issues to be addressed. It also provides a mechanism whereby those councils which wish to move in the direction of establishing a waste disposal authority to act on their behalf are not denied the opportunity to do so. In addition, it will allow time for these issues to be considered in the context of the wider RPA-driven programme of modernisation, reform and restructuring of local government and, in particular, in the context of the Partnership Panel between central and local government which has emerged from that process. We recognise that the final decision on whether and how to establish a Single Waste Disposal Authority rests with the Minister; we urge the Minister to have due regard to the views of the local government sector in doing so.**

#### ***4.2 Recommendation 1 – Long-Term Structural Arrangements***

**Given the pressures placed on the legislative timetable by the RPA, and the need to ensure that no option is excluded from full consideration, by time or other factors, the Task Force recommends the preparation of legislative proposals that allow for the creation of one or more waste disposal authorities within local government, facilitating the introduction of the preferred structure(s) once outstanding issues have been resolved in consultation with local government. We further recommend that the Department of the Environment (DOE) continues to work with key stakeholders to resolve issues identified by Task Force members.**

#### **4.3 Short-Term Structural Arrangements**

A high level of integration of resources, infrastructure and policy initiatives will be crucial to achieving fully sustainable waste management in Northern Ireland. This integration must occur on several different levels. Central government and local government are already working together and this relationship is continuously being refined, but, to fully integrate resources, it is vital that the three local government Waste Management Groups develop an enhanced relationship, fostering co-operation at local government level.

Sub-Group 1 explored what changes could be made to current arrangements to enable the three Waste Management Groups to meet these objectives, and the following paragraphs set out the areas in which the Groups have identified scope for greater co-operation.

#### **4.3.1 Review of Waste Management Plans**

In fulfilment of their constituent Councils' statutory obligations under the EU Waste Framework Directive and the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, each of the three Waste Management Groups in Northern Ireland is obliged to produce a Waste Management Plan setting out arrangements for the wastes arising within its constituent councils' boundaries. The three Groups are currently reviewing their Plans and will be publishing revised Plans later this year. They have identified the following as specific areas in which there is scope for greater co-ordination, either as of now or in the near future:

- There is significant potential for sharing information, research and ideas in order to ensure that the three Waste Management Plans complement each other
- Whether Groups share a common consultant or each employ separate consultants, there is scope for joint working on the production of twenty year Waste Management Plans
- Agreement has been reached to allow the Groups' consultants to liaise directly with each other on modelling and scenario planning

#### **4.3.2 Strategic Environmental Assessments**

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (the 'SEA Directive') was transposed into domestic legislation through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (NI) 2004. It requires environmental impact assessment of plans and programmes prepared for a wide range of land and water use which are deemed to have significant environmental impact and which set the framework for future development consent of projects and proposals.

All future reviews of Waste Management Plans will be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs). Guidance on carrying out SEAs is widely available, and there are clear advantages to the three Waste Management Groups co-operating in their production. Potential benefits include:

- Cost savings through co-ordinated tendering process
- Standardised approach to environmental issues
- Consistent application of SEA toolkit

The Task Force has discussed the issue of SEAs and considers that it may be too late in the current review cycle to discuss the coordination of SEAs in respect of Waste Management Plans. This may be more appropriate at the next five year review

### **4.3.3 Practical Harmonisation Issues**

In a region the size of Northern Ireland, there would be significant benefit in harmonising operational matters. Areas in which Waste Management Groups can explore and evaluate the merits of enhanced partnership working include:

- Collection systems – bin colour, bin replacement schedule, bin collection frequency, etc
- Vehicle and equipment design
- Data collection
- Training of management and frontline staff

After discussing the potential for harmonisation with local government, the Task Force felt that there were considerable benefits in working together, but noted that an incremental approach may be necessary and that local government would need to be aware of potential difficulties arising from e.g. monopoly suppliers. It also felt that a comprehensive audit and research surveys should be performed prior to any harmonisation.

### **4.3.4 Data Collection**

In addition to taking a joint approach to data collection, the three Waste Management Groups (WMGs) could also take a joint approach to information gathering and consultation, where the results can bring benefits beyond a single WMG area. Issues which could benefit from joint public consultation exercises, surveys or research include:

- recycling behaviour
- waste compositional analysis
- dissemination of information
- new policy initiatives

The Task Force also identified a need for greater consultation by Departments with the Waste Management Groups, to ensure that terms of reference for research commissioned by central government benefited from their knowledge of the operation and application of data-gathering exercises.

### **4.3.5 Collective Procurement**

Experience from elsewhere in the UK, Republic of Ireland and beyond teaches that significant economic and operational benefits can arise from collective procurement initiatives. The scope for joint procurement could be further enhanced by progress in the review of Waste Management Plans and in the harmonisation of operational matters. Joint procurement initiatives could range from procurement of bins to the procurement of major service contracts, with associated collaboration in areas such as

- Preparation of business cases
- Public Relations
- Risk transfer
- Stakeholder management
- Project planning

The Task Force acknowledges local government advice that further research needs to be undertaken in a number of areas to support the successful implementation of potential initiatives, notably:

- The planning and coordination required for effective establishment of joint procurement
- The basis for cost sharing arrangements e.g. gate fees, cross-subsidy, postalisation (allocating costs to districts on basis of post codes), equalisation, transport costs, and achieving equity
- User charging
- The difficulties and risks caused by local government budgets being set annually while private sector involvement requires long term commitments
- The lack of central government funding
- Legal restraints on agreement between councils
- The variety and range of collection processes
- The variations in NILAS targets set for each council

#### **4.3.6 Waste Prevention**

It is essential that a single initiative focusing on waste minimisation and recycling and recovery is organised for Northern Ireland as a region. The three Waste Management Groups could build on the integrated approach set out in the Department's Framework for Waste Prevention, and draw on the experience of WRAP, Envirowise and other agencies to draw up and promote a series of integrated actions aimed at marketing waste prevention. Areas in which such actions could promote behaviour change include:

- dissemination of information and guidance
- reward schemes and other recognition of good practice
- voluntary targets
- community action
- stakeholder partnerships
- leading by example
- demonstration projects

#### **4.3.7 Barriers to Co-operation**

The Task Force recognises that the lack of certainty about levels of funding and government support in both the short and long term is a major barrier to co-operation. Other significant barriers identified during consultation include:-

- a. Statutory responsibility for production and implementation of Waste Management Plans resting with individual councils and thus enabling a single council to veto agreement
- b. Protection of assets by councils/groups
- c. Competition regarding position on league tables, etc
- d. Cost implications and difficulties in agreeing a formula for equalisation of costs for rural councils
- e. Disparate levels of investment in waste management by individual councils/groups
- f. Major and minor political differences

- g. Inadequate liaison between the regional groups and the DOE particularly as regards funding and changes to the funding regime. Much more effort has to be made to enable central and local government to understand each other's needs.
- h. The financial burdens which the implementation of issues highlighted as priorities in the new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland will impose upon councils and Waste Management Groups. These issues include the provision of waste treatment facilities and education and awareness raising initiatives.
- i. Transport costs
- j. Planning
- k. The gap between local preferences and regional and national requirements
- l. Issues of specification

Officers of the three Waste Management Groups have convened under the auspices of the Waste Infrastructure Task Force in order to try and progress opportunities for collaboration and address some of the barriers identified above. The Groups will continue to meet for this purpose.

#### ***4.4 Recommendation 2 – Short-Term Structural Arrangements***

**The Task Force recommends that the DOE encourages the Waste Management Groups to address the barriers to co-operation they have identified, and that it works with them to establish enhanced mechanisms for improving liaison between central and local government on issues such as data collection, research and funding. We also recommend that the Department takes steps to ensure that local government's interests are represented when other Departments propose actions which impinge on waste management issues.**

## **5. LOCATION, TYPE AND COST OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

Prior to identifying the mix of funding required to address Northern Ireland's infrastructure deficit, Sub-Group 2 had first of all to focus its attention on the total costs of that infrastructure, currently estimated to require in the region of £300 million capital investment as well as increased operating costs. The Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) produced by the DOE in June 2005 provides a framework for identifying the optimum mix of technologies required to meet EU landfill diversion targets, and includes a high-level regional assessment to identify possible numbers, capacities and indicative locations for the necessary waste infrastructure. It is not part of the BPEO's role, however, to determine the likely cost of providing and operating that infrastructure and what options exist for paying for it, taking into account the key issue of affordability. The work undertaken by Sub-Group 2 of the Task Force has been focussed on building on the work of Sub-Group 1 to supply that essential data.

### **5.1 Financial Modelling of Northern Ireland's Management Waste Costs**

The Task Force has commissioned a cost model with the capacity to adapt itself to a range of different scenarios. The model is based on data from a number of sources, notably collection cost data provided by the Waste Management Groups and the consultants' own previous experience in the financial modelling of waste management strategies, and can be readily modified to include revisions to that data. The cost model provides three core capabilities.

#### **5.1.1 The Cost of Waste Management**

The cost model gives the cost of waste management under a range of different scenarios for Northern Ireland as a whole and for each of the three Waste Management Groups:

- Under the first scenario, it shows costs if all waste treatment necessary to comply with BPEO requirements is managed through service contracts, with local authorities paying private sector contractors for managing their waste disposal (this approach is usually referred to as the 'gate fee' approach, because the authorities pay a gate fee to the private sector contractor, based on throughput, for the use of the contractor's facilities).
- Under the second scenario, the model demonstrates the impact on costs for Northern Ireland as a whole and for the three waste management group regions, if any of the regions pursue variants of the BPEO.
- Under the third scenario, the model measures the impact of the introduction of variable charging on overall costs, 'variable charging' being a mechanism whereby households are charged in some proportion to usage of waste services, whether by weight, by number of waste containers, by level of residual waste or a combination of all these elements.

### **5.1.2 Flexibility of Cost Model**

The second core capability of the model lies in its flexibility. As more region-specific cost data becomes available, and regional strategies are refined and contracts agreed, the model can easily be adapted further to reflect the impact of those revised costings.

### **5.1.3 Calculation of Gate Fees**

The model's third capability derives from its use of worksheets to allow indicative gate fees to be calculated for all new waste treatment units. Based on best available capital and operational cost data, the model can calculate what the necessary level of gate fee would be per tonne of material to ensure that all future capital and operational costs are fully recovered.

## **5.2 Paying for Northern Ireland's Waste Management Costs**

The cost model provides data for anticipated waste management costs under a range of scenarios. What it does not do is answer the difficult question of how those costs are to be met. As indicated in paragraph 3.3, local authorities in Northern Ireland are very different from their counterparts in the rest of the UK, both in the range of functions they exercise, and how those functions are funded through district and regional rates. Further, there has been no clear analysis to date that would enable us to assess objectively what proportions of the costs of providing and operating the new waste infrastructure we need should be borne by central and local government respectively, and further, what proportion of costs should be passed on to the electorate through the district rate or other charging mechanisms.

### **5.2.1 Comparative Analysis of Waste Management Funding**

In Towards Resource Management, The Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy 2006-2020, a commitment was given that the Department would 'consider funding options, including seeking parity with any arrangements in GB involving central government funding for waste disposal investment'. As a first step in fulfilling that commitment, the Waste Infrastructure Task Force has commissioned a Comparative Analysis of Waste Management Funding between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Comparative Analysis focuses on four specific areas:

- Local government structures including the responsibilities of the various tiers with regard to waste and the differing approaches to local government finance in England, Scotland and Wales
- The nature and structure of specific grants available for waste management in GB, including the Strategic Waste Fund in Scotland, the DEFRA Local Authority Support Unit Regional Support Fund to assist local authorities in England commence procurement, and Public Finance Initiative (PFI) credits in England

- Current levels of waste management expenditure across the UK and the differing approaches to central funding taken by the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Parliament and DEFRA
- Trends in the market and future proposals for waste management and for the financing of expenditure on waste in GB

### **5.2.2 Outputs from Comparative Analysis**

By breaking down the proportions of local authority financing in the four UK jurisdictions and calculating national and regional averages, identifying the levels of central government support allocated for waste in GB, and projected expenditure on waste infrastructure, the comparative analysis will furnish a data-based estimate of the proportion of GB net expenditure on waste from different funding sources. Combined with data on future projections for waste infrastructure and management, this will allow estimates to be made of the impact of increasing spending on waste management on NI councils' domestic and non-domestic rates.

In short, at micro level the comparative analysis will provide a general overview of local government and waste management structures in GB. At the macro level, it will also provide an informed, objective assessment of the potential 'Resource Gap' between present levels of NI local authority spend on waste disposal, and planned or required levels of spend, including the proportion of the gap that should be filled by central government if councils in Northern Ireland are to have parity on this issue with their counterparts in the rest of the UK.

### **5.2.3 Comprehensive Spending Review**

The Department of Finance & Personnel (DFP) will be undertaking a Comprehensive Spending Review for the period 2008-2011. On the basis of the findings of the Comparative Analysis of Waste Management Funding, the Task Force proposes that the DOE should submit for consideration by DFP in that Review a bid for central government support for waste infrastructure funding. It further proposes the DOE commences work on the business case which will form an essential initial component of that bid.

### **5.3 Recommendation 3 – Location Type and Cost of Infrastructure**

**The Task Force recommends that the Minister takes note of its ongoing work on Financial Modelling, and considers the implications of the findings of the Comparative Analysis of Waste Management Funding for the preparation of a full and detailed business case for central government support for waste infrastructure funding.**

## **6. PROGRAMME DELIVERY SUPPORT UNIT**

### **6.1 Strategic Context**

In considering the mechanics of the procurement process, the Task Force has been mindful of the importance of ensuring practical application of the lessons learned in implementing previous strategies. The new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland lays particular emphasis on key areas in which we must improve, including three areas of direct relevance to the work of the Task Force, namely:

- Effective leadership by Government in delivering the Strategy
- A planning system that supports the development of essential infrastructure
- Provision and funding of an integrated network of waste management facilities

#### **6.1.1 Government Leadership**

In the foreword to Priorities and Budget 2005-2006, the Secretary of State for NI refers to 'our commitment to the substantial investment needed over the next decade to facilitate the major improvements required to Northern Ireland's infrastructure'. The priority Government attaches to addressing our waste infrastructure deficit has been further reinforced by the designation of waste infrastructure procurement as a supported programme by the Strategic Investment Board. While the statutory responsibility for the collection and disposal of waste may rest at council level, the Landfill Directive targets are national targets, and Government has a responsibility to provide the support and leadership councils need if they are to fulfil their statutory role and Northern Ireland is to meet its national compliance obligations.

#### **6.1.2 Departmental Responsibility**

Government's responsibility to provide assistance to local government is encapsulated in the Aims and Strategic Objectives of the Department of the Environment, which include a commitment to 'support a system of Local Government which meets the needs of residents and ratepayers'. Residents and ratepayers are already facing significantly increased rates for water and other charges. In the context of these wider impacts, a further substantive increase to meet waste infrastructure costs would be met with widespread opposition and criticism. There is an onus on central government to support the procurement of waste infrastructure in a way that enables compliance with Landfill Directive targets whilst ensuring that the application of the 'polluter pays' principle takes full account of affordability and that the financing of the waste infrastructure is politically and publicly acceptable.

#### **6.1.3 Need for Departmental Support**

A key recommendation arising from the Task Force's work to date has been for the establishment of a Programme Delivery Support Unit (PDSU). The need for such a unit derives from the extent of the gap between the scale of procurement practices to date and the scale of the exercise confronting us,

estimated by the Strategic Investment Board to require a substantial capital investment of up to £300 million, and a concomitant increase in operating costs. The onus is on the Department to provide strong leadership in implementing and managing the step change involved in moving from the fragmented local procurement practices that have characterised Northern Ireland's waste sector to date, to the much more complex processes involved in the major procurement exercises that are required if we are to avoid the threat of infraction and associated fines. It is not our intention that the Department should assume the local authorities' responsibilities or duplicate existing resources, but rather that it should provide additional resources that can be used to support the work of the Waste Management Groups in delivering waste infrastructure. The key areas in which this support will apply are:

- Provision of direct resource for the benefit of the Waste Management Groups
- Facilitation of joined up working between local and central government
- Helping to convince the private sector that Northern Ireland is properly prepared for a co-ordinated programme of large scale procurements in the waste sector

#### **6.1.4 Form of Central Government support**

The Task Force considers the most appropriate form of support, given the narrow timeframe in which we must take action, to be a dedicated Programme Delivery Support Unit (PDSU). The importance of procuring major waste infrastructure and thereby avoiding EU infraction proceedings has been acknowledged by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), which has identified waste as an area meriting supported programme status, and hands-on SIB assistance. SIB is prepared to share PDSU costs with DOE. In addition to the obvious financial benefits of such an approach, this will also allow the Support Unit to benefit directly from SIB's extensive procurement experience. The activities of the Support Unit will be monitored and guided by an operational Steering Team of Senior Officials representing relevant stakeholder interests, including those of central and local government.

#### **6.1.5 Strengthening Local Government**

The PDSU is designed to be a "task and finish" unit to assist with pre-procurement and procurement-related activities, in particular assisting with the preparation of business cases and in negotiating funding solutions with central government, as identified in the new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland. Proposed individual contracts for staff will be fixed until December 2009, with the possibility of a one year extension. Any future Waste Disposal Authority is likely to have its own remit and powers to recruit its own personnel, and will not be obliged to assimilate PDSU personnel. Where continuity is required, this can be provided through the PDSU Steering Team, which can be maintained as necessary after the PDSU has been wound up, until other arrangements are in place in the context of the RPA.

The PDSU will not have the capacity to compromise or interfere with existing local government accountability structures. Rather, its resources will be there to be directly called upon and managed as needed by each of the three Waste Management Groups, to the extent that such resources are available and fairly allocated. PDSU personnel who are given assignments by or seconded to the Waste Management Groups will be directly accountable to the Groups for the inputs they provide.

## **6.2 Value for Money**

The PDSU will add value to existing arrangements in a number of ways:

- it will provide an 'internal' consulting service free to the local authorities and their Waste Management Groups, with the public sector interest a priority
- it will act as a bridge between local government contracting units and central government, particularly as regards facilitating funding for projects, accelerating appropriate decisions, and co-ordinating procurements for the benefit of Northern Ireland
- it will perform key tasks tailored to the actual needs and benefits of the Waste Management Groups, including helping to access the public sector land bank, accessing planning expertise, assisting with the preparation of business cases, and liaising with central government agencies to accelerate delivery
- it will accelerate the resolution of issues that need to be addressed in order to access central government funding and other central government services

It is proposed that the Unit's budget will be co-funded equally by DOE and SIB, and that SIB will support and work alongside the Unit as needed to help facilitate effective programme delivery in accordance with, and within the limitations of, SIB's remit to develop a sustainable investment programme for public sector infrastructure. It will be the Director of the Unit, subject to the oversight of the Steering Team, not the Department or SIB, who determines the deployment of the Unit's resources, on the basis of the needs of the Waste Management Groups at different stages of the procurement process.

### **6.2.1 Meeting Targets**

Councils (and their Waste Management Groups to the extent delegated to them) are the competent authorities for the collection and disposal of Municipal Solid Waste, the procurement of waste management infrastructure and services, achieving Best Value and meeting performance targets including bio-diversion requirements per the EU Landfill Directive. The Unit will sit within this context. It will **not** be a decision making body and will not impose a further layer of intervention. On the contrary, it will facilitate access to central government support by helping to identify and resolve issues to be addressed in order to obtain central government funding.

### 6.3 Staffing

On the basis of advice from the Strategic Investment Board, it is proposed that the Unit should have a dedicated staff, which could be a combination of direct hires and secondees from other organisations and departments. The staff composition, roles and responsibilities will change during the life of the programme to reflect the different needs at the various stages. It is suggested that a small cadre of core staff be put in place at the outset, with additional support from Planning Service, SIB and CPD personnel as needed. We have identified the following core posts as key to the successful establishment and functioning of the Support Unit:

Director
Project Coordinators with development expertise (2)
Dedicated planning practitioner
Commercial and Contracts Specialist
Financial Analyst
Admin/secretarial

### 6.4 Establishment of PDSU

There is broad support within the Task Force for the establishment of the PDSU, and a recognition that the sooner it becomes operational, the sooner it can help the three Waste Management Groups to expedite infrastructure procurement. The DOE and the Strategic Investment Board have acted upon this consensus and agreed a funding package and identified suitable premises for the Unit. The process of filling core posts is well underway, with the Unit on schedule to be fully functional early in 2007.

### 6.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Task Force proposes that the activities of the Support Unit will be overseen by an operational Steering Team which will include senior representatives of the Department, SIB and the three Waste Management Groups. The Steering Team will monitor the Unit's activities, check progress, expenditure and use of resources in the context of business strategy and objectives, and act as a forum for discussion and resolution of major issues pertaining to programme delivery, and resolve escalated issues related to cross functional working.

The Task Force has proposed that the Steering Team should comprise the following individuals:

- Stephen Peover, Permanent Secretary, DOE (Chairman)
- David Gavaghan, Chief Executive, SIB
- David Thomson, Treasury Officer of Accounts, DFP
- arc21 Senior Officer

- SWAMP Senior Officer
- NWRWMG Senior Officer

The Steering Team will commission a full evaluation of the work of the Unit within two years of its establishment.

The Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy 2006-2020 proposes the establishment of a new Ministerially-chaired advisory committee, the Strategic Waste Board, to co-ordinate and monitor the Waste Strategy Delivery Programme. The Board will be made up of senior representatives of all the key statutory organisations, and will include representatives of local government at both officer and elected member level.

There are concerns within the Task Force and local government generally that there is no proposal to include local government elected representatives on the PDSU Steering Team. The Steering Team will be a purely operational body, concerned with the practical administration of the Unit. It is the Strategic Waste Board to which the Steering Team will report, which will provide the forum for consideration, discussion and monitoring of strategic waste issues. The Strategic Waste Board is arguably the more appropriate body for elected members to participate in. In addition, the creation of a wider statutory Partnership Panel between central and local government, as recommended by the Local Government Taskforce, on which local government elected members will sit, must be considered as part of the debate on the composition of the Steering Team. Further consideration will need to be given to this issue prior to the establishment of the Steering Team. Our recommendation is based on a genuine consensus between local and central government.

#### **6.6 Recommendation 4**

**We recommend that the Minister endorses the establishment of the Programme Delivery Support Unit, and approves the prompt establishment of the Strategic Waste Board.**

## **7. APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### **7.1 Members of the Waste Infrastructure Task Force**

Aiken, Peter	DOE Central Finance
Aston, Steve	DOE Environment and Heritage Service
Baird, Cllr Joan	Banbridge District Council
Briggs John	Director of Environment, Health and Recreation, Armagh City & District Council
Burke, Brenda	DRD Economics Branch
Burnett, Ricky	Waste & Policy Manager, arc21
Byrne, Graham	Operational Director, Southern Waste Management Partnership
Dolan, Paul	Strategic Investment Board
Ennis, Alderman George	Ards Borough Council
Ferguson, Mylene	DOE Local Government
Forbes, Ken	Director of Environment Services, Banbridge District Council
Francey, William	Director of Health & Environmental Services, Belfast City Council
Fulton, Cllr Winston	Larne Borough Council
Gilgunn, Tom	DFP, Central Procurement Directorate
Groogan, Cllr Patrick	Magherafelt District Council
Gunn, Philip	Departmental Solicitor's Office
Heaney, Stewart	DFP Central Procurement Directorate
Kelly, Dr Eugene	DOE Environment and Heritage Service
Kelpie, John	City Engineer, Derry City Council
Lewsley, Cllr Patricia	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Maye Ian	Director, Local Government Reform Unit

McBride, Cllr Tom	Strabane District Council
McCambley, Karen	Policy Officer, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
McGuigan, Cllr Sean	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
McIvor, Dr Mary	DFP, Central Finance Group, Supply II
McKibben, John	DFP, Central Finance Group, Supply II
McPherson, Cllr Robert	Coleraine Borough Council
Michael, John	Director Health & Environmental Services, Ballymoney Borough Council
Molloy, Cllr Francie	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
Molloy, Eamon	Development Officer, North West Region Waste Management Group
Moorhead, Heather	Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Quigley, Ciaran	Director of Legal Services, Belfast City Council
Quinn, John	Chief Executive, arc21
Rainey, Cllr Allan	Omagh District Council
Rea, Alderman Mervyn	Antrim Borough Council
Scott, Noel	DOE Planning Service
Small, Dr David	DARD, Farm Food and Environmental Policy

## Appendix B

### 7.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION DAY

Enviros was commissioned by the Environmental Policy Division of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to facilitate the Waste Infrastructure Task Force (WITF) Local Government Conference / Consultation Event for District Councils on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 06.

The aim of the Conference was to put forward and discuss proposals detailed in the Waste Infrastructure Task Force papers with the local government sector and to seek their representative views.

Questions relating to the Task Force papers were posed to delegate tables who were required to discuss and select a consensus response; Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or No Consensus. The key results of the table discussions are detailed below.

All tables were in agreement with the following;

- A high level of integration of resources, infrastructure, and policy initiatives will be crucial to achieving fully sustainable waste management in Northern Ireland.
- There are significant opportunities for collaboration between the waste groups and that these opportunities should be taken.
- A single initiative for Northern Ireland is required to promote waste prevention and behaviour change.
- Clarity is needed on the governance arrangements and other issues such as appropriate time-scale, government support, legislation and accountability of the Single Waste Disposal Authority (SWDA).
- The need for a substantial programme of investment in new treatment and recovery infrastructure and a substantial increase in operating costs in order for Northern Ireland to achieve its targets.

The majority of tables (75% or more) were in agreement with the following :

- Three Waste Management Groups should co-operate in producing Strategic Environmental Assessments (within an appropriate time-frame). The Three Waste Management Groups could also benefit from joint public consultation exercises, surveys and research.
- Harmonisation of the areas outlined by the Task Force would be beneficial; an incremental approach to harmonisation is necessary, and research should be carried out prior to harmonisation.
- Opportunities for collective procurement could be progressed as outlines in the paper.

- The collective procurement issues identified by the Task Force for further consideration. A number of additional issues were put forward by delegates.
- The SWDA should be for major procurement only; the role of local governments must be clear, and there must be clarity in commitment from government regarding funding.
- A move towards a SWDA might best take place as a fully integrated element of the changes within the wider Review of Public Administration (RPA) process.
- The proposed additional delivery resource, the Programme Delivery Support Unit (PDSU), should facilitate local government efforts but not assume direct responsibility or decision making. Procurement planning and permitting expertise would also contribute to the effective operation of this delivery resource.
- Clarity is needed regarding the accountability of the PDSU; there is a need to ensure transfer of skills to local government, and there are additional areas within local government where they could lend support.
- The proposed rationale for the PDSU and the limitations on the remit.
- The proposed activities of the unit involving SIB and CPD.

70% of tables agreed with the following;

- The skills level and capacity within Northern Ireland Local Government are currently limited in relation to this type of complex procurement and additional support would be highly beneficial for pre-procurement and procurement activities.
- The proposed remit of the Steering Team and the core activities of the unit.

More than 47% of tables either arrived at no consensus or disagreed with the following;

- The proposed composition of the Steering Team and the proposals for staffing and running of the Unit.
- The proposals for the siting and funding of the Unit and that SIB should support and work alongside the Unit as required.

A District Council Driven Authority was the most favoured SWDA option at 88%. However the constitution and organisation of the SWDA did not have such strong agreement with 41% favouring a Northern Ireland wide joint committee, 21% favouring a council established special purpose vehicle, 21% a new governance and service delivery model and 17% arriving at no consensus.

Table discussions allowed a general table consensus to be gained; individual voting papers gave a more detailed view of the individual opinions expressed.

It was agreed that the report of the conference should be circulated to local councils for review and consultation with other elected members prior to submission to the Minister.