

Waste Management Plan for the Midlands Region

Executive Summary for County Westmeath

1. Introduction

The local authorities of the counties Laois, Longford, Offaly, Tipperary (NR) and Westmeath have prepared this Draft Waste Management Plan in compliance with the Waste Management Act 1996 and the Waste Management (Planning) Regulations, 1997. In its National Policy Statement, entitled "Changing Our Ways" which was published in October 1998, the Department of the Environment & Local Government favours waste management planning by local authorities on a regional basis and this initiative by the Midlands local authorities supports the policy.

The Draft Plan has regard to all non-hazardous wastes generated within the functional areas of the five local authorities. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a framework for the management of these wastes in the Midlands Region in accordance with current national and EU waste legislation/policy. Under the Waste Management Act, 1996, the Plan is subject to review five years after its adoption. The Draft Plan will be put on public display for a 2 month period before the Plan is finalised. The adoption of the Waste Management Plan is a reserved function of the Elected Members of each of the local authorities involved. The Plan, when adopted, supersedes and replaces all previous Waste Plans prepared by the participating Local Authorities under the European Communities (Waste) Regulations, 1979, and where appropriate, the European Communities (Toxic and Dangerous Waste) Regulations, 1982.

The Midlands Waste Management Plan is generally based on the Midlands Waste Management Strategy Study (1999) and which was noted by the Elected Members of the five midlands local authorities in April 1999. The objectives of the Strategy Study covered technical, environmental and financial aspects as follows:-

- *It assessed the current situation within the region with regard to the quantity and nature of wastes generated in the region.*
- *It recommended an integrated waste strategy for the future management of these wastes in accordance with up to date legislation, emerging environmental policies and technologies.*
- *It recommended the financial means of implementing the recommended strategy.*

The management of hazardous waste is the remit of the Environmental Protection Agency which is required under Section 26 of the Waste Management Act to prepare a National Hazardous Waste Plan. The Proposed Plan has been published and has undergone a period of public display at various locations around the country. It is expected to be revised and finalised in early 2000.

2. County Westmeath in a Regional Context

Westmeath is one of the northerly counties of the midlands region and is bordered by counties Offaly, Meath, Cavan, Longford & Roscommon. County Westmeath has a population of 63,314 (1996 Census), which represents approximately 24% of total population of the midlands. There are a total of 19,216 households in the county and the average occupancy (i.e. number of people per household) is approximately 3.3. This figure is slightly above the national average of 3.1. County Westmeath is bordered in the west by Lough Ree on the River Shannon, a valuable tourist attraction for the town of Athlone. Locke's Distillery and the Kilbeggan Races are also important places of interest in the south of the county. Mullingar,

the county's administrative centre, is located close to a number of scenic lakes, including Lough Owel, Lough Derravaragh and Lough Ennell.

The main transportation routes through County Westmeath are the N4, which connects Dublin to Sligo/Castlebar, the N6, the route from Dublin to Galway, the N52, from Kilbeggan to Dundalk and the N55, connecting Athlone to Cavan. Two of these, the N4 and N6, are National Primary Routes and are heavily-trafficked roads. These routes traverse the county in an east - west direction. The other main transportation routes, the N52, and N55 traverse the county in a North-South direction. Rail is an important mode of transport in county Westmeath as it is served by two of the country's main rail lines. The train station at Athlone is an important node on the country's rail infrastructure as the station serves as the junction between the Dublin - Galway and the Dublin - Ballina lines. The Dublin - Sligo route also passes through Mullingar.

3. New National Waste Policy

The Government approach to waste management, as set out in a Policy Statement on Waste Management ('Changing Our Ways', October 1998) by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, is to reduce national dependence on landfill, and to aid local authorities in a transition to a modernised integrated waste system. The importance of the regional approach to waste management is underlined. Support is also expressed for increased private sector involvement. The policy sets out the national targets which will apply to waste management by local authorities. The new waste recycling/ diversion from landfill targets can be summarised as follows:-

- *Diversion of 50% of overall household waste away from landfill*
- *Minimum of 65% reduction in biodegradable waste consigned to landfill*
- *Development of waste recovery facilities employing environmentally beneficial technologies, as an alternative to landfill.*
- *Recycling of 35% of municipal waste*
- *Recycling of at least 50% of Construction & Demolition waste within a 5 year period with a progressive increase to at least 85% over 15 years*
- *Rationalisation of waste landfills with programmed and sustained reductions in numbers leading to an integrated network of some 20 state of the art facilities incorporating energy recovery and high standards of environmental protection*
- *80% reduction in methane emissions from landfills*

These new national targets are to be achieved over the next 15 years and are intended to fulfill our obligations under EU legislation.

4. Regional Approach to Waste Management

The Waste Management Policy Statement by the Department of the Environment and Local Government entitled 'Changing Our Ways' (October 1998) encourages local authorities to adopt a regional approach to Waste Management Planning. This is a progressive move from the traditional scenario where waste management was organised by individual local authorities independently. The Waste Management Policy Statement highlights the following benefits from adopting a regional approach:-

- *A viable framework in planning and volume terms for the development of integrated and innovative waste management solutions, facilitating segregating collection and incorporating organic waste composting, other treatment technologies and residual landfill.*
- *A favourable climate for the creation of beneficial partnership arrangements between local authorities and the private sector.*

Waste Management Strategy Studies have been completed for all of the counties in Ireland whether on an individual or regional basis and the Department of the Environment and Local Government intends to undertake a national review of all of these studies. Waste Management Plans have been completed recently for Dublin, and Draft Plans are currently on public display in Connaught, the North East and the Limerick/ Clare/ Kerry region. A Draft Waste Management Plan for County Kildare was adopted in late 1999.

5. Development of the Midlands Waste Management Plan Policy

As part of the Midlands Waste Management Strategy Study, a number of integrated scenarios were modelled in order to assess and determine the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) for the Midland's waste over the coming 15-20 years. These scenarios represent a combination of different recycling targets, the possible introduction of thermal treatment with energy recovery, leading to landfill disposal of residues only. The three scenarios modelled were as follows:

- **Scenario 1:** *Achieve maximum realistic recycling, and continue with landfill disposal.*
- **Scenario 2:** *Achieve national and EU targets for recycling, and introduce energy recovery by thermal treatment of combustible wastes.*
- **Scenario 3:** *Achieve maximum landfill diversion through implementation of maximum recycling and thermal treatment of combustible wastes*

The scenarios were selected based on the factors which are likely to influence future waste management in the midlands region including the mandatory EU and National targets for recycling.

The three scenarios were compared on the basis of technical capacity, environmental acceptability and cost. A detailed modelling exercise was carried out to determine the cost and environmental impact of each scenario. The environmental assessment had regard to factors such as global warming, acidification, photochemical ozone formation, and nitrification.

In comparing the scenarios it was found that waste management options favouring *high levels of recycling combined with thermal treatment* were required to meet the requirements of the new waste policy. Scenario 3 of maximum landfill diversion through implementation of maximum recycling and thermal treatment of combustible wastes is the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) most likely to provide a robust sustainable Waste Management System for the region in accordance with legal and practical requirements.

Further policy elements dealt with in the Strategy Study included the need for local authority programmes for waste minimisation, both at household level and among businesses and industries. Recommendations also focussed on the need for increased staffing resources within the Environmental Sections of the local authorities in order to fully implement the new waste policy.

6. Plan Objectives

The objectives of the Midlands Inter-County Waste Management Plan are as follows:

- *To fulfil the obligations of the local authorities under the Waste Management Act (1996) in accordance with the Waste Management (Planning) Regulations 1997.*
- *To reach the targets set by the Department of the Environment in the National Waste Policy Statement "Changing Our Ways", October 1998.*
- *To reinforce the support of the midlands local authorities for the government's regional waste management policy as expressed in the Midlands Waste Management Strategy Study.*

7. Content of the Plan

The content of the Draft Midlands Waste Management Plan is in accordance with the format required by the Waste Management (Planning) Regulations 1997, as follows:-

- *Part 1 – Preface to the Waste Management Plan.*
- *Part 2 – Present Position regarding Waste Management.*
- *Part 3 – Anticipated Developments over the Period of the Plan.*
- *Part 4 – Waste Management Policy.*
- *Part 5 – Implementation of Waste Management Policy over the relevant Period.*

8. Public Consultation

An extensive public consultation process was carried out during the formulation of the Midlands Waste Management Strategy Study in 1998/ 1999. This included advertisements in all local newspapers seeking submissions from the public, the circulation of a briefing document to public representatives, official bodies and interest groups, and media interviews and briefings. Meetings were held with interested parties including the waste collection companies in the Midlands. Submissions received at this stage were incorporated into the Waste Management Strategy.

Following the approval of the Elected Members, the Draft Plan will be put on public display for a statutory period of two months when further submissions will be invited from the public and other interested parties. A public information programme will be carried out during the public display period. This programme will consist of public exhibitions, newspaper advertisements, local radio articles, leaflets, questionnaires and meetings with local environmental groups. Submissions made during this period will be considered for inclusion in the final plan where appropriate.

9. Existing Waste Management Situation in the Midlands

The overall waste generation in the region is outlined in the table below for the main categories of municipal waste.

Quantities of Waste Arising in the Midlands Region

Waste Type	Amount (tonnes per annum)
Household (collected or delivered)	85,289
Commercial	31,785
Industrial (including sludges)	110,000
Construction / Demolition Waste	145,000

Other significant waste streams include agricultural waste (including slurries, manure, spent mushroom compost) which amounts to almost 10 million tonnes per annum, and ash residues generated from power stations (106,000 tonnes/ annum). The purification of water and wastewater treatment also generate significant quantities of sludge requiring disposal.

Waste collection is mainly carried out by private sector firms, with Westmeath County Council and Athlone Town Council still operating collection services. Approximately 72% of the households in the region avail of a regular waste collection service. There are up to 30 private companies involved in waste collection in one or more counties in the region.

Between the five midland counties a total of 34,000 tonnes of waste is recycled annually, the principal material is scrap metal (over 23,000 tonnes), followed by paper/cardboard, glass and plastic. There are 27 public bring banks in the region, these contribute approximately 500-600 tonnes per year of waste for recycling, mostly glass, textiles and drink cans. A kerbside collection scheme has been in operation in Nenagh and Thurles, where up to 400 tonnes of these materials have been recycled annually.

A number of private sector companies operate waste transfer stations, some of which have basic waste recovery/ sorting capacity. The local authorities have also granted a number of waste permits to operators of car dismantling facilities.

There are five waste disposal sites in the region for municipal waste, all operated by the local authorities. These are Ballydonagh and Marlinstown landfills in Co. Westmeath, Derryclure landfill in Co. Offaly, Kyletalesha landfill in County Laois, and Ballaghveny landfill in Tipperary N.R.. Waste Licence Applications have been made to the EPA in relation to each of the above sites. There is no landfill in County Longford, waste is exported to other counties both in the midlands and in other regions. The current intake of waste at the local authority landfill facilities is outlined below

Quantity of waste requiring landfill disposal in 1998

County	Non C/D Waste Estimated Tonnage Landfilled 1998
Laois	32,000
Longford (transfer station)	15,000
Offaly	40,000
Tipperary N.R.	30,000
Westmeath	40,000
Midlands Total	152,000

Expenditure on waste management in the region amounts to £4.6M annually, while income from gate fees/ collection charges amounts to £ 2.1M, less than 50% cost recovery.

Plan Policy - County Westmeath

10. Waste Minimisation Policy

The following measures have the greatest potential for furthering waste minimisation in the local Midlands context and shall be introduced:-

Within the Local Authority:

- *A policy of education and training of staff within the local authority as to the philosophy of waste prevention/ Minimisation and how this can be achieved shall be introduced.*
- *Internal waste audits within local authority shall be carried out. The possibility for implementation of an Environmental Management System based on this audit will be pursued.*
- *Graduated environmental charges, which have the potential to support waste minimisation, offering cost savings for waste reduction, thereby giving an incentive to producers to reduce waste will be introduced where feasible.*
- *The Packaging Regulations, which have a potential for waste minimisation and increasing recycling, shall be enforced.*

At Household/ Community Level:

- *An Environmental Education Officer shall be appointed in each local authority to promote and foster waste minimisation at source in communities, schools, etc..*
- *The Environmental Education Officer will foster a partnership between the public and the local authority through personal communication and a high public profile. Support will be given to organisations active in public environmental education as part of the local authorities Local Agenda 21 effort.*

At Industry Level:

- *A Regional Industrial Waste Minimisation Officer shall be appointed, jointly funded by each of the five Midlands local authorities.*
- *The Regional Industrial Waste Minimisation Officer shall promote waste minimisation and cleaner production within all industries with particular focus on small to medium sized enterprises (SME's). This will be done through personal industry visits, information brochure, demonstration programmes. The formation of groups within industrial estates or meetings initiated by the Regional Industrial Waste Minimisation Officer is envisaged. Industries shall be encouraged to undertake waste audits and eventually implement environmental management systems.*
- *The local authority, through the Regional Industrial Waste Minimisation Officer, shall involve other interested groups such as the regional authority, Industry Representatives, trade unions and environmental groups in support of the demonstration programme and industry initiatives.*
- *More initiatives for increasing environmental and waste minimisation awareness in SMEs will be introduced. Training material for identification of Waste Minimisation opportunities through systematic audits and encouraging Cleaner Production shall be developed as a follow-up to the waste management strategy.*

11. Waste Management Policy

The recommendations of the Midlands Inter-County Waste Management Strategy Study, as noted by Westmeath County Council and the elected members of the other midlands local authorities shall form the basis for the Midlands Waste Management Plan. The waste management infrastructural developments with regard to County Westmeath shall be as follows:-

Waste Collection Policy

- **Waste Recycling Centres** will be established at Mullingar and Athlone where public can bring recyclables such as glass, plastic, textiles, oils, batteries, fridges, furniture etc.
- **A Door to door collection** of recyclable goods such as glass and plastic and packaging shall be introduced in the region's larger towns (i.e. Separate bin for household packaging waste). These will be provided in Athlone, Mullingar and Moate.
- A high density system of **bring banks** run to a higher standard shall be introduced in rural areas not served by door to door collection.
- **Dual-Collection of organic household waste** (i.e. separation of organic or food/ garden waste in the home using a separate bin) will be introduced in towns with greater than 500 households, i.e. Athlone and Mullingar and Moate. Organic waste shall be recycled at a biological treatment plant within the region.
- Westmeath County Council shall provide information and collection facilities in the County for **household hazardous waste** as required by the (proposed) National Hazardous Waste Plan (EPA).

Waste Recycling Policy

- **Materials Recovery Facility** will be established where the goods collected from the door to door collection and the bring banks can be sorted and prepared for recycling. Location yet to be established.
- **A Biological Treatment Plan** shall be established in the region for treatment of organic waste collected through the separate collection system. Location yet to be established.
- **Green Composting Plant** for composting of garden waste in Mullingar.
- A recycling facility for **Construction & Demolition waste** will be established. These could be sited at the existing landfills in Athlone and Mullingar.

Energy Recovery Policy

- **Thermal Treatment** of combustible waste with energy recovery shall be introduced at a plant within the Midlands. Location yet to be established.

Residual Waste Disposal Policy

- *In the Short-Medium term (up to 2006), a programme of rationalisation of landfills in the region will be implemented. Marlinstown landfill (Mullingar) and one of Kyletalesha or Derryclure landfills shall be closed pending the realisation of the new waste collection and recycling systems outlined above. The Midland local authorities will continue to operate three sites (Ballydonagh, central site and Ballaghveny) until thermal treatment is put in place.*
- *Long term (2006-2014) – Following the introduction of thermal treatment (target date 2006) it is envisaged that one landfill site will be sufficient to service the residual disposal requirements of the five midland counties.*
- *The local authorities will move to implement a consistent landfill gate fee at all local authority sites in the region and may also implement restrictions on disposal for certain recyclable waste streams.*

Funding Policy

- *Costs shall be recovered using the 'Polluter Pays Principle', whereby all waste producers-households, commerce, industry etc. share the burden of managing the waste.*
- *Partnership with private sector operators shall be pursued where possible in the provision of proposed facilities.*
- *Costs shall be shared by the five local authorities on a regional basis.*

Further detailed policy in relation to Agricultural waste, former waste disposal sites, sludge management, market creation for recycled products and hazardous waste is contained in the policy section of the (Draft) Waste Management Plan.

12. Implementation of Waste Management Plan

Implementation of the Waste Management Plan will lead to a significant increase in the responsibilities of the waste (environment) services section within each local authority. The workload will increase in the following areas:

- **Establishing new collection methods** and planning/ constructing **new waste facilities**
- **Waste Regulation** - ensuring that the policies of the Council are adhered to by all waste producers, requiring public information, inspections and enforcement. Furthermore there are a number of new waste management regulations which each local authority must implement.
- **Data Collection and Waste Statistics** - regular review of performance in relation to waste arisings, recycling rates must be maintained by each local authority. Information must also be supplied to the EPA.
- **Public Service Role** - the Waste Plan recommends a high level of public service through better publicity and information services, responding to public queries and complaints, and providing assistance to particular interest groups such as the commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors.

In light of these increased responsibilities and in order to ensure an effective implementation of the Waste Management Plan, the following summarises the policy on organisational requirements within each local authority.

Re-Organisation within Local Authorities

- *A Waste Services Department shall be provided within the Local Authority.*
- *An Environmental Education Officer (1no.) shall be employed.*
- *Waste Regulation & Planning Officers shall be employed.*
- *A Regional Industrial Waste Minimisation Officer (jointly funded with other counties) shall be employed.*

Waste Steering Group

Implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plan will require close co-operation between the five participating local authorities. This will be implemented by a Waste Steering Group which will be representative of each local authority within the region.

The role of the steering group will include:

- Co-ordination of implementation of Regional Plan
- Development/ Procurement of major regional facilities
- Liaison with Official Bodies and neighbouring regions and local authorities
- Preparing an Annual Review of Waste Management and assessment of performance in relation to targets

Targets

The overall target of the proposed strategy for the combined household, commercial, industrial and construction/demolition waste stream is to achieve 46% recycling, 37% energy recovery through thermal treatment and 17% disposal to residual landfill in the year 2013.