

Resources and Waste Targets Expert Group

Meeting minutes – 20 August 2021

Attendees

Expert panellists: Paul Ekins (Chair), John Barrett, Margaret Bates, Raimund Bleischwitz, Peter Hopkinson, Lucy O'Shea, Phil Purnell

Apologies: Jacopo Torriti

Other attendees: Defra group officials and representatives from the EA and WRAP

1. Discussion on resource productivity target breakdown and technology policies

- 1.1. A presentation was given by Defra detailing the forthcoming macroeconomic evidence project to analyse potential pathways for increasing resource productivity, as well as Defra's proposed approach for breaking down the resource productivity target, and an identified gap in the potential policy pathways addressing technology and innovation levers.
- 1.2. News of the macroeconomic evidence project was well-received by the experts. It is expected that work will begin in September and that the project will have a duration of around 2 months. This analysis will be for internal purposes, with the possibility of subsequent publication. The experts were familiar with work that used a previous version of the same macroeconomic model, and expressed the importance of understanding any developments or updates to the model since this earlier work. The experts expressed their enthusiasm to support and input into the macroeconomic evidence project.
- 1.3. Regarding Defra's proposed approach for breaking down the resource productivity target, RWTEG were generally supportive of option 1 (a further breakdown of resource productivity by material group) as this would allow Defra to target environmental pressures associated with key materials that would be missed in a more aggregate indicator. The experts were in general agreement that this option would be feasible.
- 1.4. There was also expert support for option 2 (resource productivity by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) product group), which may have greater policy relevance. This approach may allow Defra to identify sectors where resource productivity is low, and look at the predominant materials in that sector. To make the link between the target and the circular economy more explicit, Defra could consider a breakdown between virgin and recycled materials. A combination of option 1 and option 2 was suggested where resource

efficiency could be based around a material group but the MRIO model could allocate this across SIC sectors.

- 1.5. The importance of linking supply chain with geographical, policy, and life cycle views was discussed as material flows can be incredibly complex. The experts were interested in use cases of how such targets might look like in particular industry areas.
- 1.6. A presentation was given by the University of Leeds detailing current work to identify and collate available evidence for several potential construction policies, which will feed into the macroeconomic evidence project.
- 1.7. The overview of the construction policy work was well-received by RWTEG, though issues around the terminology of 'embodied carbon' were raised as well as the need to look carefully at how buildings that need to withstand a lot of structural forces (and could therefore reasonably be expected to require more material) are differentiated from those that don't. The experts also raised the importance of differentiating between recovery and disposal.

2. Discussion on residual waste target breakdown and modelling policy impacts

- 2.1. A presentation was given by Defra detailing a proposal for the residual waste target scope (to amend the scope to all waste sent to landfill, incinerated, or sent for energy recovery (including waste sent overseas for energy recovery), excluding major mineral wastes such as soils - as opposed to the previously explored scope of residual municipal waste only). Proposed approaches to breaking down the residual waste target by material and potential methods for modelling qualitative policy impacts were also presented
- 2.2. The suggestion to change the proposed target scope to all waste sent to landfill, incinerated, or sent for energy recovery (including waste sent overseas for energy recovery), excluding major mineral wastes (hereafter referred to as 'excl. MMW') was generally well-received by the experts. It was agreed that a material-based scope makes sense in the context of monitoring progress on individual materials that are of particular environmental concern.
- 2.3. The experts requested additional information on which European Waste Classification (EWC) codes would be included or excluded in an excl. MMW scope, but also which EWCs would be used to define different materials. Some material groups such as WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) are made up of multiple materials such as metal, plastics and glass, for example, and some further consideration may be required.

- 2.4. The experts were interested in the composition data that would be required track progress on specific materials. The most recent national level [residual municipal waste composition](#) study available was conducted by WRAP in 2017. The experts noted that they would expect composition to have changed even since 2017, with some local authorities introducing food waste collections, for example. There is a current lack of more robust composition data. Defra would need to look to introduce the collection of regular composition data through which to more robustly report progress against individual materials.
- 2.5. Defra presented initial modelling work of the possible impacts of the collection and packaging reforms (CPR) upon a municipal residual waste baseline, as well as literature reviews conducted by WRAP into the possible costs, benefits and impacts of further potential policies. The literature reviews were generally well-received by the experts, though they raised the need to be clear on the assumptions around complementary policies and for more evidence on any increase in fly-tipping, waste crime, or recycling contamination that may associated with potential regulatory policies.

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