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**Our ref:** RFI 6754  
**Date:** 22 August 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: METHODOLOGY FOR REPORTING RECYCLING**

Thank you for your request for information about our methodology for reporting recycling, which we received on 17 July. As you know we have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I enclose a copy of the information you requested:

- WasteDataFlow November Newsletter (November 2013)

I also address, below, your questions on the calculation methodology of “waste from households”.

The “waste from households” calculation is not the calculation we will be using to calculate individual local authority household recycling rates in November. Local Authority household recycling rates will be published in November for the 2013/14 financial year based on the previous National Indicator calculation known to local authorities as the “Ex NI192”.

The National Indicator calculation has been widely used by local authorities for many years and captures a broader scope of waste than “waste from households”. This calculation will be made available as the “NI192” report on the WasteDataFlow portal. It is unchanged from previous years. It is used by many local authorities to report their local recycling rate, and for local strategic planning purposes, discussions with contractors, and to compare themselves with other local authorities.



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**

I believe of particular importance to you is whether or not compost from MBT plants is included in the recycling rates that we publish. Compost from MBT plants is not included in our aggregate national recycling rate based on "waste from households". It was included in our aggregate national recycling rate based on "household waste". It is not included in the aggregate local authority recycling rate. It is included in the individual local authority household recycling rates based on "Ex NI192".

We will continue to keep how we report recycling under review.

### **Question 1: Why was the calculation methodology changed?**

Commission Decision 2011/753/EU (The Decision) allows a choice of four options and calculation methods for the calculation of the target on municipal waste pursuant to Article 3(3) of the Decision.

The target on municipal waste is set out at Article 11(2)(a) of the revised Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC (the Directive). This requires the preparation for re-use and the recycling of waste materials of at least 50% by weight by 2020 for at least paper, metal, plastic and glass from households and possibly from other origins as far as these waste streams are similar to waste from households.

Each Member State must use the calculation method set out in Annex 1 of the Decision that corresponds to the re-use and recycling option that it has chosen to apply the target to from the options set out at Article 3 (1) of the Decision.

The UK currently applies the target to the third option set out at Article 3 of the Decision: "the preparation for reuse and the recycling of household waste". This means that we must use calculation method 3 contained at Annex 1 of the Decision and use national data to report on the recycled amount of household waste. "Household waste" is defined at Article 1(1) of the Decision as "waste generated by households".

We apply the target to option 3 because we have more robust data than we for the other options. The other options for calculation methodologies contained in the Decision are based on the recycling of specific materials and/or municipal waste. To report on these would we would need to make estimates based on occasional studies and non-evidence-based approximations.

The "waste from households" calculation was introduced in May 2014 for statistical purposes to provide a harmonised UK indicator for each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to provide us with a consistent approach to report recycling rates at UK level. It is a better fit with the EU definition against which we are reporting than the calculation we previously used of "household waste".

We will continue to review how we report UK recycling to the Commission against the 2020 household waste recycling target.

## **Question 2: What is the legal basis for the change in calculation methodology?**

This question is largely addressed under Question 1. In summary, one of the options available to us to report on recycling as laid down in Article 11(5) of the Directive is to report on household waste (Article 3(3) of the Decision); and "household waste" is defined as "waste generated by households" (Article 1(1) of the Decision). The Directive does not further define "household". We consider that the new "waste from households" calculation will better meet this option than the calculation we previously used of "household waste".

## **Question 3: When and how was the change notified to or consulted on with Local Authorities and other stakeholders? Please provide copies of the information/emails provided to Local Authorities/stakeholders as part of this process? Please detail who the consultation group were, its members and identities?**

WasteDataFlow is the web-based system that we use for reporting on municipal waste generation and waste management by local authorities. All local authorities use WasteDataFlow. The underlying data is also used by local and central government, WRAP, the waste industry and the public.

The WasteDataFlow User Group is made up of volunteer WasteDataFlow users from local authorities, intended to represent a range of types of authority and government regions. Members commit to liaise with colleagues in their area within the WasteDataFlow community to pass on information, gather responses and provide collective feedback to Defra, the Environment Agency and the WasteDataFlow managing agent. The WasteDataFlow User Group is the mechanism through which Defra Statistics discusses changes to WasteDataFlow. The User Group meets usually twice a year.

Minutes of User Group meetings are published on-line and are available through the WasteDataFlow portal website. The WasteDataFlow portal is the communication mechanism for Defra Statistics. News, newsletters, news releases, and WasteDataFlow User Group information, are published on the portal. Whilst specific local authority users have special permissions to add data, the portal is available to all local authorities to follow.

Details of WasteDataFlow and the User Group, including User Group Terms of Reference and Minutes, are available at:

<http://www.wastedataflow.org/htm/partners.aspx>

The move to the "waste from households" calculation was raised at WasteDataFlow User Group meetings.

The "waste from households" calculation was first applied provisionally in September 2013 to report recycling at UK level for 2010, 2011 and 2012. The first formal Defra publication was at England level in May 2014.



**Question 4: Please provide details and copies of the questions asked of the consultation group, how long they were given to respond and copies of their responses**

Please see response to Question 3.

**Question 5: Please provide details of and copies of the relevant impact assessments for the change?**

An impact assessment was not carried for this change in calculation methodology. It is estimated that the change to the new "waste from households" calculation would result in a small increase to the UK recycling rate from 43.6% to 44.4%. Furthermore as stated above the "waste from households" calculation is not the methodology that will be used to calculate individual local authority household recycling rates in November. Rather, these will be based on the previous National Indicator calculation or Ex NI192.

Statistical changes to the calculation methodology only affect the way the UK calculates its recycling rate for the purposes of EU reporting. In other words, "waste from households" is a statistical calculation aimed at a fit-for-purpose UK level indicator of recycling. It does not affect the range of materials that local authorities can collect for recycling.

The "waste from households" calculation may need to be supported by additional measures to better capture the full range of recycling activity at local authority level.

**Question 6: Please confirm which of the Commission Decision 2011/753/EC Annex I methodologies the change corresponds with and which, prior to the current change, Annex I methodology reporting methodology was used?**

Prior to the change, Calculation method 3 at Annex 1 to Commission Decision 2011/753/EU was used: "Preparation for reuse and recycling of household waste". We are still using Calculation method 3.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs, and in keeping with the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the address below.

Yours sincerely

  
**Defra FOIA and EIRs Team**  
[Informationrequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Informationrequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Annex A**

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## **Annex B**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our website.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF