

## Warwickshire Waste Partnership - 8 December 2009

### Food Packaging Regulations and Materials that cannot be Recycled

#### Report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy on behalf of the Officers Group

##### Summary

An overview of the food packaging regulations.

##### Recommendation

That Members note the contents of this report.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Members asked for a further report at the last committee on the actions being taken to support the reduction in food packaging and what items cannot be recycled.
- 1.2 There are three drivers supporting this agenda:-
  - (i) Food packaging regulations.
  - (ii) The Government's agenda to support packaging companies to reduce the amount of material they produce.
  - (iii) Warwickshire Waste Partnership Waste Minimisation Strategy and targets.

## 2. Food Packaging Regulations

- 2.1 The Packaging Waste Regulations were introduced in the UK in 1997 to meet the requirements of the European Directive on packaging and packaging waste. To achieve current targets, the UK needs to recover about 4.6 million tonnes of packaging waste each year. This can be achieved through recycling, composting, or incineration (with energy recovery).
- 2.2 A series of UK targets have been set by Defra for each year up until 2010. Since the EU Directive is a "producer responsibility" measure, it is up to packaging producers to meet the costs of achieving these targets. The regulations require

producers with more than £2million turnover and supply and import over 50 tonnes of packaging, to recover and recycle packaging waste in proportion to the amount of materials they handle. Businesses that are obligated must register annually with the appropriate Regulatory Agency, i.e. Environment Agency for England.

- 2.3 The producers have to comply by registering directly with an appropriate Regulating Agency and by committing time and resources to discharge their own legal requirements, or as most will do, join a government approved compliance scheme which will take over the legal obligations on their behalf.
- 2.4 All EU Member States have targets set by the EU on packaging recycling and recovery. The 2008 targets were, recycling 55 per cent and recovering 60 per cent of packaging across the year.

There are specific targets for a range of recyclable materials and the UK has met or exceeded all its targets:-

- (i) Paper: 79.8 per cent recycled (target 60 per cent).
- (ii) Glass: 61.3 per cent recycled (target 60 per cent).
- (iii) Metal: 56.9 per cent recycled (target 50 per cent).
- (iv) Plastic: 23.7 per cent recycled (target 22.5 per cent).
- (v) Wood: 78.5 per cent recycled (target 15 per cent).

### **3. Waste Recycling Action Programme (WRAP)**

- 3.1 To support the waste reduction agenda, the Government set up the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP). The aim of this organisation, which is supported through landfill tax, is to work with parties to prevent waste, promote recycling and develop markets for valuable products. Most of the high level work on reducing waste is being driven by this organisation.
- 3.2 They have set up a voluntary agreement (Courtauld Commitment) with all the major grocery retailers and brand owners which is leading to new solutions and technologies so that less food, products and packaging ends up as household waste. These signatories have agreed to work with WRAP to achieve the following targets:-
  - (i) To design out packaging waste growth by 2008 (achieved: zero growth);
  - (ii) To deliver absolute reductions in packaging waste by 2010;
  - (iii) To help reduce the amount of food the nation's householders throw away by 155,000 tonnes by 2010, against a 2008 baseline.
- 3.3 The Courtauld Commitment is under review with UK Government, as well as current and prospective signatories, and proposed new objectives will be announced in 2010. It is likely to continue to focus on packaging and food waste reductions but to be expanded to include waste in the supply chain – in manufacture, distribution and back of store. It may also consider alternatives to weight-based measures, such as carbon or recycled content.

- 3.4 The Innovation Fund was launched by WRAP in November 2004 and there have been six Rounds to date. It aims to reduce household waste through supporting research and development projects that focus on packaging optimisation and design innovation and reducing food that households throw away.
- 3.5 The following are completed projects that WRAP is supporting:-
- (i) Trials of lightweight glass bottles and jars. Project partners include Faraday Packaging, British Glass, GTS and Coors Brewers, producers of Grolsch beer.
  - (ii) Trials of lightweight easy open ended steel food cans by H J Heinz and Impress Group BV and the development and trial of lighter can bodies.
  - (iii) Setting new benchmarks for lightweight polyethylene terephthalate (PET) drinks bottles by Esterform for a range of carbonated drinks brands.
  - (iv) Trials of re-usable 'Carrierpacs' for home delivered kitchen worktops for B&Q. The Co-operative's innovative tomato puree packaging makes the need for outer cardboard tubing packaging redundant. This product is now in store after successful trials.
  - (v) Trials of thinner gauge salad bags by ASDA, Kane and Eco3.

#### **4. Waste Minimisation Strategy**

- 4.1 In 2007 all Warwickshire Councils approved a Waste Minimisation Strategy, to run until 2015 with a target of reducing waste by an average of 1.25% per year. Since the launch, a number of different campaigns have taken place, some of which have supported reducing the amount of packaging we produce, such as the smart shopping campaign.

#### **5. Packaging that Can and Cannot be Recycled at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) or by the Districts**

- 5.1 At the Household Waste Recycling Centres plastic bottles, cartons, paper and cardboard are collected.
- 5.2 Polystyrene and plastic bags are not collected. Recycling polystyrene was considered but the process would be very time and energy consuming. The lightweight bulky material would also mean containers would be filled quickly with little weight. Plastic Bags are not recycled as it is preferred to encourage re-use. This material is, again, very lightweight and can be easily contaminated.
- 5.3 High density plastics are only accepted at Hunters Lane. The possibility of this being extended to Burton Farm is being investigated. HW Martin (who manage Shipston, Wellesbourne, Cherry Orchard, Stockton, Grendon and Princes Drive) are unable to recycle high density plastics as it is not financially viable.
- 5.4 The District and Borough kerbside collections are all able to collect cans and tins, paper, plastic bottles (except NWBC, only at bring banks), cardboard

(except NWBC, only at bring banks). Rugby are able to accept cartons, foil and high density plastics. Stratford collect cartons and are looking to extend their collection to include foil and high density plastics after Christmas. Warwick also accepts foil.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The food packaging regulations put the responsibility on the packaging producers to meet the costs of achieving targets set by Defra.
- 6.2 Waste Recycling Action Programme (WRAP) gives support to packaging companies to reduce the amount of material they produce.
- 6.3 The Warwickshire Waste Partnership's Waste Minimisation Strategy and targets are working towards reducing food waste packaging.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The Food Packaging Regulations, and work from WRAP, reduces the amount of material going into the waste stream, thus supporting the reduction of disposal costs.

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### **Background Papers**

None.

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