



SW FSB Waste Policy





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The content comes from a series of focus groups held by FSB members across the SouthWest. The figures come from an online survey carried out by the FSB with its SW members in November 2006.

The FSB would like to see:-

- 1. Small businesses offered practical and simple assistance to recycle.**
- 2. Small businesses offered practical assistance to work together to combine waste streams and reduce unit cost.**
- 3. Schemes to 'match' waste producers with businesses that can use such waste as a resource. To be effective, such schemes need to be well thought out integrated processes that are affordable.**
- 4. Businesses to be free to choose from a well publicised list of registered private waste contractors.**
- 5. Access to civic amenity sites for small businesses**
- 6. More pressure on large businesses to reduce the packaging they demand from SMEs as well as use.**

The debate about 'Waste' has been prompted by several changes. Like many in the general population, small business owners are increasingly aware of their environmental impact and the need to dispose of waste appropriately and in an environmentally friendly way. 71% would like to be able to reduce the amount of their waste going to landfill. A further 20% would like to, but it would depend on the cost of such action.

Waste disposal is a cost on business. The FSB's recent survey on waste shows nearly 5% spending more than £2000pa and nearly 10% spending between £1000 and £2000 on waste disposal. 15% spend between £500 and £1000 and 25% spend up to £500 a year on waste disposal.

To keep waste disposal costs to a minimum, members reported a wide variation of activities from composting to Swindon Children's Scrap Store, from using waste as fuel to using it as packaging material or even bedding for animals.

The fact that as small businesses they had to pay more per unit than large businesses was also seen as unfair. It was recommended that assistance be given to enable small businesses to contract collectively for waste disposal, thereby bringing unit costs down to a level closer to that paid by large companies. 26% of small business considered this a possible solution, with a further 12% agreeing this for some items only. Such assistance, to be effective, is likely to include elements of education/awareness raising and negotiation to reduce 'minimum loads' to realistic levels as well as space and Health and Safety issues around waste storage. This would go some way to address the dissatisfaction amongst small businesses that they pay high levels of UBR, but get nothing in return.



20% of businesses currently have their waste collected communally. 26% of businesses would have their waste collected communally to enable recycling at a reasonable cost. However, only half of those whose waste is currently collected communally consider that communal collection would enable recycling by reducing costs.

61% of businesses wanted help with recycling. This was the biggest change most likely to reduce the amount of small business waste going to landfill. Other changes were encouraging other businesses to reduce the packaging they use (44%), matching waste producers with those who can use it (27%) and combining waste streams (21%). Comments attached to the survey show that many small businesses are already doing what they can. But as small businesses they are more like households in the quantities and types of waste produced. It therefore makes sense to enable them to 'opt in' to any domestic waste recycling schemes in existence. 20% would pay to be able to opt in and a further 39% would consider opting in depending on what the cost might be.

The FSB recognises that there are some organisations such as NISP, whose purpose is to match waste producers with businesses that can use such waste as a resource. However, members report that their scale of operation is not appropriate to SMEs.

While most members report that the collection of commercial waste is done privately, some do still enjoy free council services. Some members reported that their council had stopped them using the services of a particular private contractor, requiring them to use another. This 'approved contractor' was much more expensive and led to many businesses driving to a nearby town to use civic amenity sites instead. In the survey, 25% of businesses reported having 'no choice' in which contractor to use, a further 9% reported a limited choice.

There have also been reports of waste contractors coercing small businesses into paying significant sums of money for their services, in the misguided belief that certain extra legal requirements had to be complied with. These extra requirements are usually falsely cited by the waste carrier.

A few businesses report a business recycling service. When questioned about 'a duty of care' note etc, members report that it seems to be a question of will and wanting to recycle so the system is made to work.

However, there are so few business recycling services available in the SW, members generally thought that pro active funded work was required to introduce business recycling services. The pro active work should include business development work with private contractors so they are assisted to take advantage of new developments.

In the survey, some members were very angry that their council sent business cardboard waste to landfill instead of recycling it. Others were incensed that there is an efficient domestic recycling scheme but not one for businesses and businesses are not supposed to use the domestic scheme.



Civic amenity sites and their use is very mixed, with members reporting no problems in some areas and aggressive policing to exclude small businesses in others. In the survey, 58% of members did not use such sites, with 16% using them and 25% using them sometimes. 14% members thought it was legal to use the sites in their area with almost half not sure about the legal position. For most small businesses, their (potential) use of an amenity site is likely to be similar to or even less than that of ordinary household. As such the FSB considers such use should be permitted.

In many areas amenity sites are run by businesses who have paid the council for the privilege, providing a valuable service of keeping the site clean and tidy, while reselling dumped goods. In some areas this practice has been outlawed. So furniture and other goods which would have had a useful life are condemned to landfill. The FSB is in favour of continuing this practice, provided that the process of letting the contract is transparent and appropriate for likely businesses.

Members admitted to certain degree of scepticism about recycling as in some areas, carefully separated waste still ends up in land fill. Members were very aware of domestic waste being recycled while business waste went to landfill and condemned this as a nonsense. And as stated above 59% of businesses would be prepared to pay to 'opt in' to the domestic recycling provision.

Members welcomed the idea that what is waste for one business could be a resource for another, and applauded schemes to bring the two together. 27% supported this idea in the survey. Concern was expressed at marketing for the various schemes. It is so incompetent; it is almost as if they want the schemes to fail so they can keep setting up more. Members were of the view that properly established and marketed schemes would succeed and not need continual reinvention.

In common with other sectors of the population members were concerned about over packaging and associated costs of disposal, 44% in the survey. Despite talk about putting pressure on big business to reduce its use of packaging, members were concerned that this does not appear to be happening. Examples cited were Computer equipment and HD TVs. 13% of businesses wanted help with reducing the packaging other businesses demand.

Vivienne Rayner

18th July 2006

Revised 18th August 2006 following comments from Celwyn Richardson and from the London Office.

Revised January 3rd to incorporate results from Waste Survey.

Amended 10th January to incorporate Pete Ashton's comments

Amended 5th February to meet some of Terry's comments.

Amended 19th February to meet comments on 'totters'