

Waste and Energy Discussion document for SWAPU meeting on May 2nd

Waste

This is divided into 2 sections – one for businesses whose core activity is waste, its treatment, recycling and disposal, and the other is everyone else.

General Section

The service provided by local councils for businesses varies from place to place. It would be very helpful to know what service your council provides.

For example, hotels and public houses are often mixed business and residential in that the owner lives on the premises. In these cases, the residential part should get some element of 'free' collection and the business part is expected to pay. However, in some parts of the SW, the local council regards all waste from such premises as residential. Which council? Up to what level?

What do members think about this? Is it right for different councils to decide what level of service they should offer, or should all councils offer the same? Remember, it is actually the council tax payer who will be paying for extra services to business premises.

Since the 80's, business people have been able to use a private collection service. Does anyone use one? Why have they chosen to use a private collector? How much is it by comparison?

Does anyone have problems getting waste removed? What is the problem – cost? Need to pre book? Need to pre sort?

Does anyone feel guilty about throwing out waste such as cardboard, paper, glass, anything else, that at home can be separately collected and recycled?

Are there any areas where there is a recycling service for businesses similar to that available for residential?

It has been suggested that what is waste for one business might be raw material for another. Are there any schemes to enable 'matching' between such businesses?

Anything else members think is an issue generally about waste?

'Special' section for members whose core business is 'waste

My awareness of your problems is limited. If they are not adequately covered in this section, please let me, Vivienne Rayner SWAPDO, know details of your business issues.

Most if not all waste businesses are regarded as 'bad neighbours'. This means they are often in out of the way places away from houses and sometimes other business. Is this the case? Does it cause problems – with recruitment for example?

Compared with many other land uses, waste businesses need large areas of land. If they are to remain competitive, this land needs to be cheap. As waste businesses need to be near centres of population, land occupied by waste disposal businesses then becomes extremely attractive to residential developers as a brownfield site. If the business owns the land, at least they get the benefit of the higher price. If they rent their premises, they are left without. Has this been a problem or is it currently a problem for you?

Given the 'bad neighbour' image, finding new premises can be very difficult. Has this been your experience? The FSB is working to ensure that the new Regional Spatial Strategy recognises the vital importance of the waste industry to recycling and reducing the amount going to land fill, by making it easier for such businesses to find premises. But to take effect, the RSS needs to be reflected in the Local Development Plan or Frame work or Document. Is your local council paying attention to the needs of waste businesses in its review of local planning?

It is not just site allocation but positioning of sites. If people have to travel too far to reach a site, they will fly tip in stead. Accordingly, waste transfer sites need to be within a certain distance of the community they serve. Are the sites identified by your local authority close enough to your market, or are they risking an increase in the level of fly tipping?

The very structure of the waste industry means that many small waste businesses are forced to be customers of large businesses, with whom they compete. Disposal of toxic or hazardous waste is an example of where the small businesses may have to use a large business with whom it competes. We have had reports that large companies can make life very difficult for their smaller competitors in the way they run their facilities. For example, a large concern in the SW has one of the few facilities for disposal of asbestos waste. A small business wishing to use the facility has to book in giving advance notice. They are then given a 'time slot' of 30 minutes within which to book in to dispose of their load. If they miss that slot they have to re book. Often this means waiting several days. But, asbestos movements have to be logged with the Environment Agency beforehand and asbestos can only be kept on a registered site. The inflexible nature of the system operated by the large firms, by its very nature, makes it hard for small waste firms to avoid breaking the law.

Have you, or any of your colleagues, experienced problems of this nature with larger waste businesses? What were the problems?

Increasingly waste businesses have to have a qualified person on their staff. Have you recruited someone with the right qualifications or did you train someone? How easy was it to recruit? How easy was it to find appropriate training?

Do you have any other comments about problems specific to your business as a waste disposal/recycling business?

Energy

Businesses depend to an increasing degree on energy. Some of us remember the 3 day week and working in the corridor with battery powered calculators, but the shops were still open. These days a 3 day week would close the shops as their tills would not work and there would be health and safety issues too. I am told that there would be problems accessing and using the internet as well, especially if you use broadband.

So energy, especially electricity, is much more important to most small businesses than it was 30 years ago. Is this true? How do power cuts affect you? How do they limit your ability to conduct your business?

In the SW we have very few power stations. Our population is also very spread out. So if a link in the National Grid goes down, there are fewer ways to bypass it than there are in built up areas. If you have just moved to the SW from elsewhere, are you noticing more power Cuts and voltage reductions (or brownouts), than you used to. If you have always been in the SW, are you noticing more problems with the power supply? How often do you have a power cut now? How often do you have a voltage reduction?

Other forms of energy are getting more expensive. Also, now that we are once again having to import gas, we are becoming more dependant on other countries and the infrastructure of other countries for our energy. Is this of concern?

When the FSB has raised these issues, one of the reactions has been to ask what our members are doing to reduce their use of energy. Have you made any changes in the way your business operates to reduce your use of energy? If you have not made any changes, can you say why – is it that it would cost too much, that it would damage the business, that you don't have the spare time to think about that, that you don't know what you could do? Any other reason?

A recent report by John Loughhead of the UK Energy Research Centre stated that the gap between the electricity we want to use and generating capacity

available will increase to 20% over the next 10 years. Do you believe this?
What do you think should be done?

Various agencies seem to expect the FSB to push the 'save it' message at our members. We have taken the view that it is for those agencies to put the information where businesses will look when they want it. What do you think? Have you looked for information on reducing your energy usage? Where did you look? Did you find anything of help? What was it?

How do you think the Government and other agencies should keep you informed on ways to save energy?

In the recent Regional Economic Strategy discussion, the FSB said the SW Regional Development Agency concentrated too much on big projects such as the wave power hub and that it should encourage, enable, assist more smaller local projects. Does this make sense to you?

We also asked the RDA to look at all forms of renewable energy and not limit its activities to a few. What do you think?

It has been said that the best way to promote more energy/fuel efficient ways of doing things is to ensure that the people who install and repair such equipment are up to date with the latest developments. The reason offered is that it is these people who give the advice and information at the time it is required and have the greatest influence on a consumers' choice.

What do you think? Should public money be used to ensure that the private sector has a) the product knowledge b) the skills to install and repair?

Are there any forms of energy we should be pushing SWRDA to promote? Are there any forms of energy we should be urging SWRDA to ignore? Why do you say that?

Vivienne Rayner
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