

## Petition: P-05-773 Don't Fill Landfill

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Hydref 2017  
Petitions Committee | 3 October 2017

### Research Briefing:

Petition number: P-05-773

Petition title: Don't Fill Landfill

Text of petition: We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to either issue new black wheelie bin stickers (see example below) or printed wheelie bins which urge households across Wales to consider the bin's contents before leaving it on the kerbside for collection.

We feel that by explicitly describing the bin as a 'landfill' bin, this will serve to reinforce consideration for the items contained within it. We have included some factual information about the amount of time certain everyday items will stay in landfill if not recycled. We think this is very powerful and may improve Wales' commitment to recycle and therefore meet our targets for the future.

Ultimately, we want to encourage people to recycle more as well as help to reduce the amount of recyclable goods that end up in landfill.



Fig 1. Example wheelie bin sticker

## Background

The Welsh Government published its [Towards Zero Waste](#) strategy in June 2010. The strategy sets out a long term framework for resource efficiency and waste management to 2050. It identifies the outcomes the Welsh Government wishes to achieve, sets high level targets and lays out a general approach to delivering targets and other key actions. The strategy sets a goal for as **close to zero (<5%) landfill as possible by 2025**, with an ambition of zero waste by 2050.

From April 2018, **Landfill Disposals Tax (LDT)** will replace Landfill Tax in Wales. Like the predecessor Landfill Tax, LDT will be a tax on the disposal of waste into landfill and will be charged by weight. It will be payable by landfill site operators, who pass on these costs to waste operators through their gate fee. Landfill Tax has been a significant driver of improved environmental behaviour; encouraging greater prevention, re-use, recycling and recovery of waste.

Wales has the highest recycling rate in the UK, the second highest in Europe, and the third highest in the world. The Welsh Government put in place recycling targets for all of Wales' 22 local authorities in a bid to increase recycling. Authorities had to recycle 58% of their waste by 2016–17, rising to 64% by 2019–20 and 70% by 2024–25. The figures are reviewed every three months and added to a rolling 12-month provisional total. The latest figures are for the 12 months to the end of March 2017, with the final data released in October. [Provisional data for the 12 months to March 2017](#) (published in August) reveal an increase of 4% on the previous year's recycling rate of 60%. The figures showed all but one local authority – Blaenau Gwent – met the current 2016–17 target. The best performing local authority was Ceredigion, recycling 70% of its waste and hitting the 2025 target nine years early. Although Blaenau Gwent missed the 58% target, its 57% recycling rate was an increase on the 49% seen a year earlier.

### **Black bag/residual waste**

One of the aims of the Welsh Government's waste strategy is to reduce the amount of residual waste produced by households. Many local authorities in Wales have introduced restrictions on the amount of black bags that can be put out for collection, and black bag waste is collected less frequently than recycling (usually every 2–3 weeks) to encourage more recycling. The [latest Welsh Government statistics \(January to March 2017\)](#) show that more than half of local authorities in Wales reported a decrease in residual household waste generated per person, compared to the same period in the previous year. Residual waste per dwelling also decreased from 111 to 106 kg per dwelling.

According to figures quoted in the Cabinet Secretary's letter to the Committee, in 2015–16 more than 300,000 tonnes of municipal waste (black bag/residual waste) were sent for incineration with energy recovery and fewer than 290,000 tonnes were sent to landfill. **She states that this demonstrates the limitation of an approach based on labelling bins as being for 'landfill' as increasingly the contents are being sent to incineration with energy recovery.**

## Welsh Government action

In her letter, the Cabinet Secretary agrees that more needs to be done to persuade people to better separate their wastes, in order to ensure that less recyclable and food waste ends up in residual waste bins.

A Welsh Government Task and Finish Group of officials and representatives of Local Government has agreed that a new behaviour change initiative is needed, with the aim of diverting as much recyclable material as possible out of residual waste and into recycling containers, including food waste caddies. The Cabinet Secretary states that the initiative is currently in the design stages, and she hopes it will commence in 2018. The letter outlines there are many aspects to behaviour change, including:

- Providing the right collection infrastructure for residents to effectively separate recyclables and food waste from non-recyclable wastes;
- Providing guidance on how these services should be used and raising public awareness about the need to use them; and
- Providing effective enforcement against those who persistently fail to perform their civic duty to separate materials for recycling.

She goes on to say that several Welsh local authorities have placed stickers on wheeled bins advising that food waste should not be deposited in them, and that this has been found to increase the amount of food waste collected separately. With regards to stickers on bins more widely she states:

It may be that placing stickers on bins will have a role as part of future initiatives, however, there is so much more to persuading people to recycle effectively.

## National Assembly for Wales action

Most of the discussion on landfill within the Assembly has centred around the Landfill Disposals Tax (outlined above). In 2014, the Environment and Sustainability Committee undertook an [inquiry into recycling in Wales](#). The focus of the inquiry was on how to improve recycling rates and practice in Wales, and it did not specifically address the issue of residual waste. However, the Committee concluded that:

A combination of good communication and engagement combined with a reduction in residual (“black bag”) waste collections can further improve recycling rates. Whilst financial penalties could play a role in the future, it would be premature to consider their introduction until other avenues of encouragement have been exhausted.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.