



National Waste Strategy: Scotland

Western Isles



Public consultation on the
Western Isles Draft Area Waste Plan

Introduction

Not surprisingly, Scotland is undergoing radical change in the way waste is managed. Waste production is increasing, and the traditional solution of dumping in landfill sites is no longer acceptable. The Western Isles cannot afford to ignore these issues. We must respond positively to avoid spiralling waste costs and maximise the local benefits of changes taking place.

This document summarises the main aspects of the Western Isles Draft Area Waste Plan – a detailed document outlining proposals to reduce waste production and increase the proportion of the area's waste that is recycled or recovered in some way.

The Western Isles Plan is one of eleven being produced across Scotland as part of a process outlined by the National Waste Strategy: Scotland in 1999. The Strategy was produced to meet increasingly tight legislative controls on waste, and to help Scotland move away from its current reliance on landfill disposal. Eleven Waste Strategy Areas (including Western Isles) have been identified, each of which must assess the Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) and incorporate this within a detailed Area Waste Plan. The final Plans are due to be published in November.

Definition – What is Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO)

Best Practicable Environmental Option is a description of the most effective system for dealing with an area's waste in the long term. BPEO decision-making is systematic and consultative, and based on a comprehensive assessment of the environmental, social and economic impacts of alternative waste management systems. BPEO is intended to minimise adverse environmental impacts and maximise area benefits at acceptable cost

The Western Isles Draft Plan sets out a detailed vision for waste management over the next twenty years. It proposes a radical solution to reduce waste to landfill, but is flexible enough to respond to developments such as new technology and changing legislation. The islands face unique problems in waste management, in particular the exceptionally high costs of collection and transportation. It is crucial that the changes taking place are harnessed to benefit the local community and economy, rather than having an adverse effect. The cost of waste management is inevitably rising, but there are also exciting opportunities for a more self-sufficient, secure future, with waste management making a positive contribution to the islands' economic and community life.

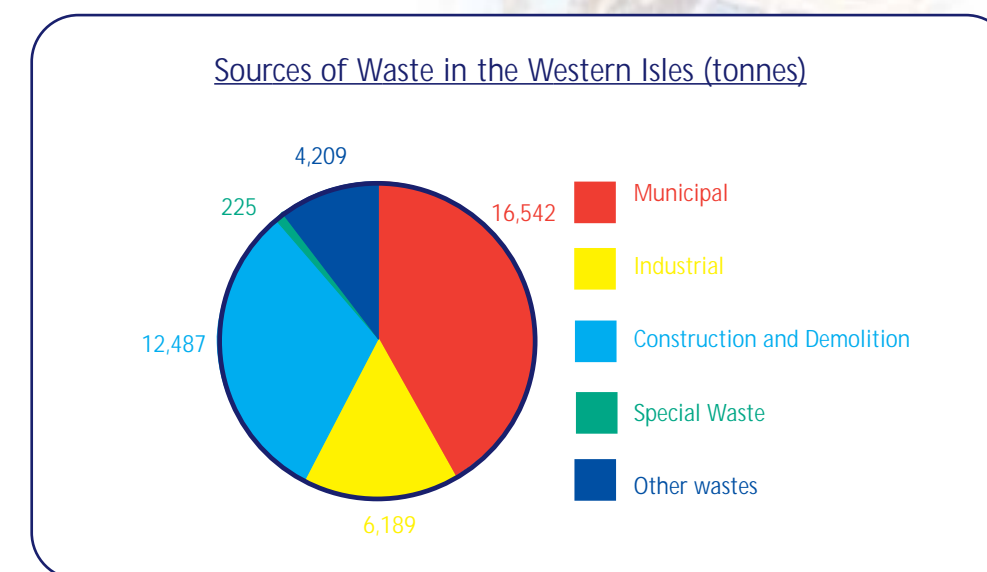
Few private waste companies operate in the Western Isles, and the Comhairle handles almost all the waste produced. It is therefore extremely important that everyone in the community, including local businesses, are involved in this process and have an input to developing the long-term solution. While the Plan's main focus is on municipal solid waste (MSW) – waste collected from households and commercial premises – it also includes measures to tackle industrial and other wastes, and there are important opportunities for joint working across sectors.

Please take the time to fill out the questionnaire attached at the back of this document, where you can also find details of further information.

Waste Management in the Western Isles

What waste?

The Western Isles area produces over 40,000 tonnes of waste each year. The main components of this are MSW, inert construction and demolition wastes, and industrial waste, almost half of which is from the fish industries.



Where does it go?

The majority of this waste - over 70% - currently goes to local landfill sites, including virtually all the area's MSW. The main exception is construction and demolition wastes, which are either recycled or exempt from waste management licensing. Most of the industrial waste is landfilled, although some is also exported.

To begin the move away from landfill disposal, the Comhairle has recently introduced a number of new recycling schemes in the Isles. Based primarily around the main town of Stornoway, these include aluminium can, scrap metal, glass, paper and plastic recycling facilities. The high cost of transporting waste throughout the islands and across to the mainland means that the long-term benefits of these schemes rely on making sure the waste is processed and used locally. A number of projects are underway to increase local capacity for recycling waste.

The existing recycling schemes are targeted exclusively at householders and depend on individuals taking responsibility to sort their waste into different types and transporting it to their nearest local site.



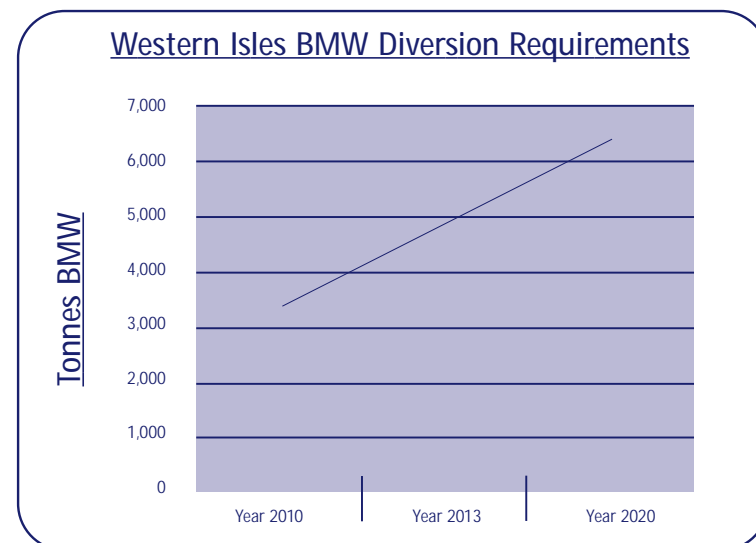
The Need for Change

Protecting the Environment

Almost all of your waste still goes to landfill sites, and this damages the environment. Landfill sites cause pollution and represent an inefficient use of limited natural resources - the more waste we produce, and the less use we get from it, the quicker these resources will run out. Furthermore, the processing, transport and use of resources in itself causes pollution that could be avoided by reducing waste. We need to conserve resources such as minerals, oil and timber, and reduce the pollution and energy use associated with the way we deal with waste.

Complying with the Law

In response to these concerns, new laws are being introduced to increase waste avoidance and waste recovery. One of these - the EU Landfill Directive - requires a gradual phasing out of landfill disposal of biodegradable MSW or BMW (paper/card, garden and kitchen waste). The Directive sets ambitious targets that require the amount of this type of waste going to landfill to be reduced to a minimum of a third current levels by 2020. This represents a huge challenge to the Western Isles, and allowing waste production to grow will simply add to this.



Enhancing the Local Community and Economy

A reliance on landfill brings little benefit to local communities or the economy. There are major cost-benefits associated with business waste minimisation, and the recycling/recovery of waste can present opportunities to diversify and develop new business. Local community groups often benefit from recycling schemes, developing local skills and raising funds to enhance community life. The Area Waste Plan has a vital role to play in addressing all of these issues and maximising benefits to the Western Isles area.

Watch Out for the Rubbish Revolution

Nothing short of a revolution is required to address these issues NOW and move away from landfill to a more sustainable future. There really is no option but change - and every waste producer has a vital role to play. New techniques are required to recycle and recover more waste, and this will inevitably mean rising costs. It will also mean major changes in the way waste is collected, with sorting waste into different types becoming the norm at home and at work. Making sure these changes bring positive benefits to the area will require a concerted effort right across the community.

Decision-making in the Western Isles

The Process

The Draft Area Waste Plan for the Western Isles was developed by the Western Isles Waste Strategy Area Group (WSAG), a partnership led by SEPA that includes the Comhairle, Western Isles Enterprise and a range of other local groups. The Group is intended to represent all those with a stake in the future management of the area's waste.

The WSAG developed and assessed five strategic options for managing MSW over the next twenty years, then agreed on the BPEO. All the options were assessed against a broad range of national environmental, social and economic criteria, and promoted widely among the local community to generate feedback.

The Options

Each of the five options included measures to both minimise the quantity of waste produced in the islands, and increase recycling of glass, plastic, paper and metals. The principal difference between the options was the reliance of each on a distinct solution for handling the majority of the areas waste. The solutions proposed were:

- OPTION 1 – Continued use of local landfill sites
- OPTION 2 – Development of a new Energy from Waste incinerator to produce power
- OPTION 3 – Development of a new centralised composting plant
- OPTION 4 – Development of a new centralised anaerobic digestion plant
- OPTION 5 – Export of waste to the Scottish mainland

The options were described in terms of their products, their costs and their potential impact on the area's continued requirement for landfill disposal.

The BPEO Decision

BPEO for the Western Isles has been assessed as either, or a combination of, Options 3 and 4, with a preference for anaerobic digestion – this has the added benefit of producing a valuable local energy supply. The decision was based on the following conclusions:

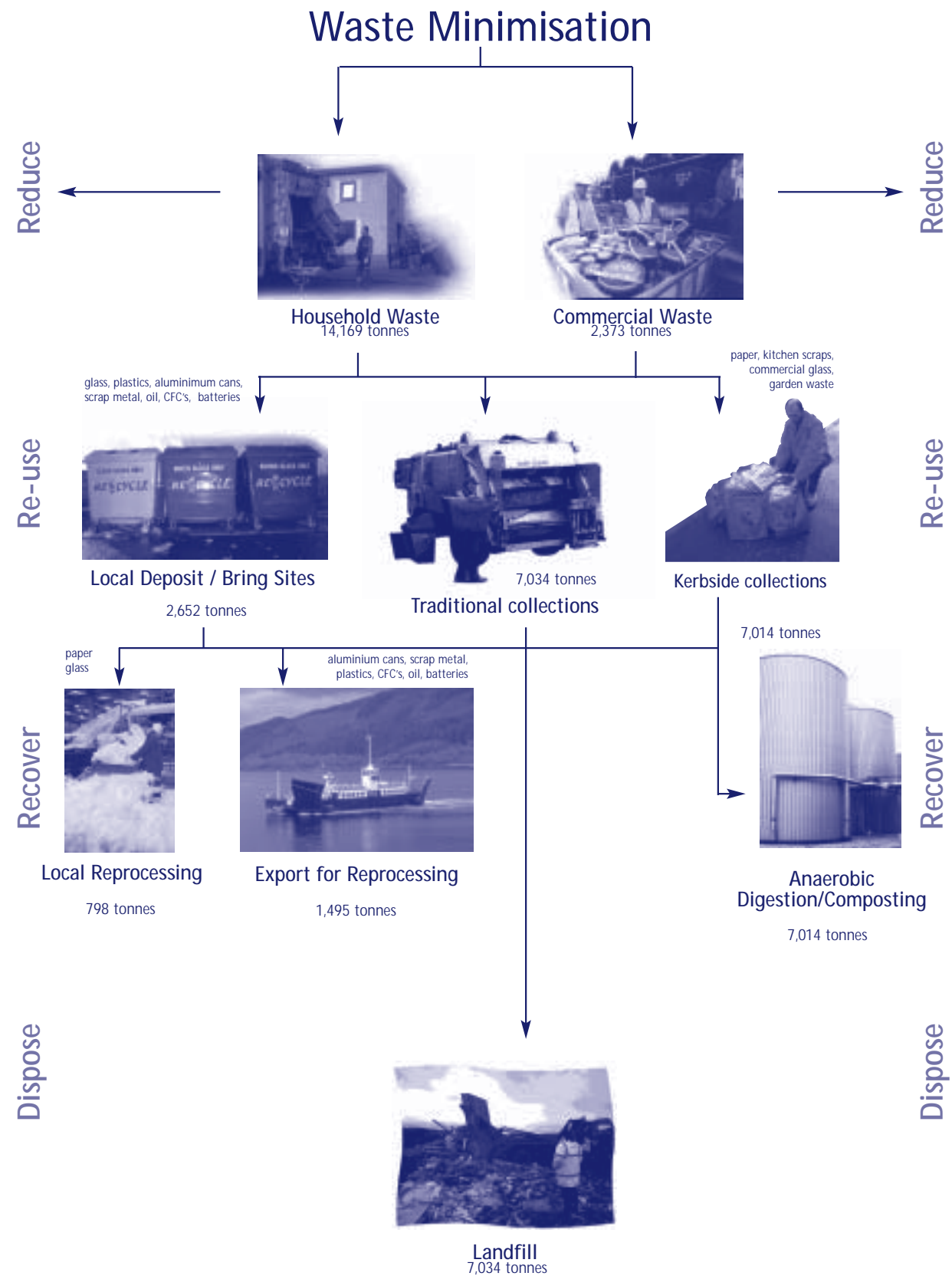
- Both Options will provide an effective means of meeting legal requirements;
- Both Options will generate a valuable product for improving local land;
- Both Options have on balance more benefit to the local economy and community;
- Both Options have potential to assist local industry sectors recover more waste;
- Both Options received strong support among the local community





What is the Proposed Western Isles BPEO?

The schematic below illustrates the overall structure of BPEO.



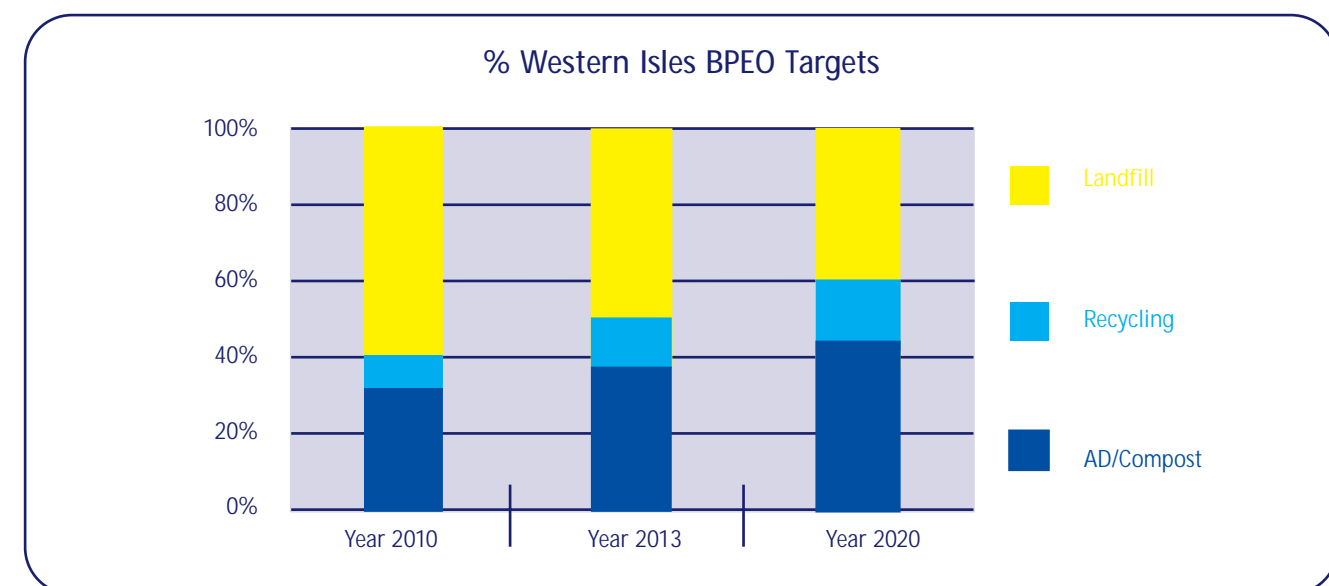
The main developments proposed by the new system are:

- Minimisation (avoidance and reduction) of MSW at source through provision of practical support, education and awareness-raising, and home composting;
- Increased re-use and refurbishment of waste;
- Household/commercial segregation and separate kerbside collection of biodegradable MSW ie paper, card, kitchen and garden waste;
- Recovery of collected biodegradable MSW via in-vessel anaerobic digestion and/or composting;
- Increased collection and recycling of metals, glass and plastic and other wastes via an improved network of local deposit sites, particularly in rural areas, and increased support for community-based recycling schemes;
- Landfill disposal of residual wastes.

Definition - What is anaerobic digestion/composting?

In-vessel anaerobic digestion and composting are containerised processes that enhance the breakdown of wastes by natural micro-organisms. Composting focuses on micro-organisms that thrive in the presence of oxygen, and anaerobic digestion on those that thrive without. Both processes produce a valuable product that is used to enhance soil productivity and plant growth. It is likely that both will play a role in dealing with the Western Isles' waste.

The chart below summarises the BPEO targets for recycling, anaerobic digestion/composting and landfill disposal as a percentage of the total MSW produced each year. Overall, the BPEO represents recovery of nearly two thirds of the area's waste, almost all of which will be used to produce a local benefit of some kind.



Western Isles Action Plan and Timescales

One of the crucial parts of the Western Isles Draft Area Waste Plan is the Action Plan – this identifies responsibilities and timescales for making things happen on the ground. Some of the key actions are:

By 2004

- Develop and seek funding for a full-time Waste Minimisation Officer post to provide advice and support to communities and businesses in the WSA;
- Develop and implement guidance on MSW minimisation;
- Expand the existing 'bring to' system for dry recyclate to include the remote parts of WSA;
- Develop partnerships with local industry to encourage waste minimisation among local businesses;
- Develop the use of financial incentive schemes to encourage community-led recycling initiatives;
- Research the suitability of alternative in-vessel anaerobic digestion systems;
- Research the suitability of alternative source-segregated BMW collection systems;
- Develop and apply a BPEO methodology for non-MSW wastes.

By 2007

- Implement segregated kerbside collection of household and commercial biodegradable wastes (paper, card, kitchen and garden waste);
- Work in partnership with the Scottish Waste Awareness Group (SWAG) to support local implementation of national promotion and education campaigns.

On-going

- Promote home composting in remote areas and investigate opportunities for local discount schemes for householders;
- Support development of local business opportunities in re-use and recycling;
- Develop existing and new opportunities to expand local markets for glass, paper, and construction and demolition wastes;
- Monitor and report on progress against the Action Plan and BPEO targets.

Making it Happen

Funding

Many of the developments within the Draft Plan can be taken forward by making better use of existing resources and the facilities currently in place. However, delivering the Western Isles BPEO will require substantial additional funding other than that currently in place, in particular to develop new segregated collection systems and an anaerobic digestion/composting plant.

In collaboration with the WSAG, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar will make a bid to the Scottish Executive's Strategic Waste Fund, around £50 million and is available to local authorities across Scotland over the next three years (the Fund will also be continued beyond that). A number of other potential funding sources exist and each of these will need to be investigated on a project-by-project basis.

Participation

Ultimately, the success of the Western Isles Plan will depend on all local waste producers taking an active role and participating in its implementation – householders, businesses and community groups alike. Only by working together will the Area Waste Plan proposals and targets become a reality.

Future Role of the WSAG

The existing WSAG will be required to develop and work closely together in future to implement and monitor the Plan. Funding and development of the local authority Implementation Plans will require the ongoing support and input from all members of the Group.

Representatives from the WSAG will meet regularly to support implementation of the Plan and monitor its progress throughout the year, and review its contents in light of national developments.



Give Us Your Views

It is critical that everyone who produces waste in the Western Isles is supportive of the final Area Waste Plan and BPEO for the area. Without this support the Plan simply won't work. The Waste Strategy Area Group wants to know what you think of the Draft Area Waste Plan, in particular the BPEO and the Action Plan.

Please fill in the attached questionnaire (overleaf) and return it to the address below. Please note that the consultation period ends on 31 August 2002

Your comments will be used to finalise the Area Waste Plan that will be produced in late 2002.

The full Western Isles Draft Area Waste Plan is available on request from:

FREEPOST
Islands Waste Strategy Co-ordinator
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Dingwall Office, Graesser House
Fodderty Way
Dingwall IV15 9XB

Tel: 01349 860 364
email: westernisleswaste@sepa.org.uk

It is also available from your local SEPA office and Council Waste Management Services.

The document can also be downloaded from the SEPA website at:
www.sepa.org.uk/nws/areas/westernisles.htm

Other documents available on request include:

- The National Waste Strategy: Scotland
- Western Isles Waste Options Paper



QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

1. Who are you responding on behalf of (please tick as appropriate)

Individual Community organisation Business Other

2. Will you sort your paper/card, kitchen and garden waste for separate collection?

YES NO

If not, then why not?

3. Will you sort your metal, plastic and glass waste and take it to a local recycling centre?

YES NO

If not, then why not?

questions continued over page



4. Are you happy with the Western Isles Draft AWP proposals ?

YES NO

If not, why not?

3. What do you like about the Draft Plan?

4. Are there any other actions you would like to see included?

5. Any other comments?

