The purpose of this investigation is to consider the actions which Aberdeenshire Council has taken for the minimisation of waste and the reduction of landfill and to investigate what more could be done and is intended through potential improvements for the future.

A couple of years ago there was a presentation to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee on waste. We have moved on greatly since then. The targets set are challenging and in short are to reduce landfill and to recycle more. The landfill site known as the Crows Nest at Banchory is coming to the end of its life. We are currently reviewing tenders for future waste treatment and disposal options. The aim is to increase waste recycling including the range of waste which we recycle. There are limits however due to market availability. Aberdeenshire Council have been very careful in the products they have recycled and have thereby avoided the trap of stockpiling waste. Waste Officers play a very important role within Aberdeenshire in relation to educating the public about recycling including home visits. We have been particularly successful in making contact with difficult to reach groups in north Aberdeenshire including migrant workers who reside there and who perhaps do not
have English as their first language. Although we have been very good, there is a long way to go. A big issue is finance. At a recent seminar the clear message was that all Councils had secured quick wins on the relatively easy matters but that they would need to be creative and invest heavily in order to get to the next stage. There are certainly challenges, therefore, for the Council looking ahead. There is a very controversial planning application on the go establishing an energy from waste plant and various discussions currently on-going on other waste plants.

Keenan Composting at New Deer who take garden waste from our sites have installed a new plant to deal with food waste. They already have contracts from Aberdeen City Council and Moray in relation to this. There may be capacity for Aberdeenshire Council to also use this service in the future. Most householders perceive that waste is a local authority responsibility rather than their own. We need to change this perception. I would add that we have come a long way since 2004 when I took up my post.

Before we start hearing the presentation from Jack Clark, I would like to declare my interest as a member of the Waste Management Working Group. Is everyone happy with me sitting in on the current session?

I do not see a problem.

We have had similar issues with Scrutiny and Audit Committee before and it has not been a problem.

Presentation

Background to Strategy Development
Aberdeenshire Council had four operational landfill sites all operated under a Council Resolution. When SEPA came into existence waste management licences were required for operation of the landfill sites and the Council Resolution was no longer valid. The landfill sites were only licensed for two years by SEPA. This was mainly because they were not contained sites. There was leakage into the soil and groundwater, a process known as dilute and disperse. SEPA wanted all the sites to have mineral linings. Significant capital was required to do this. Aberdeenshire Council came up with a short-term strategy to allow waste to continue to be disposed of and at the same time came up with a detailed plan. Quite a lot of waste went to a private site at Tarbot Hill from Aberdeenshire. Unfortunately, because of a lack of planning permission for this site, Aberdeenshire Council would not be in a position to continue using it for more than two years. It was agreed with SEPA to pre-treat the waste which would have the effect of reducing the amount of the waste and removing most of the pollutants which would reduce the problem with leakage. Consequently there was an agreement to reduce the lining specification required on the landfill site Brandon Howe and this reduced its cost. For this and the other landfill sites development cost for the improvements required by SEPA were potentially £6,000,000. Aberdeenshire Council appealed to the Scottish Executive whereupon SEPA then agreed to allow the licence granted to Aberdeenshire Council for Pitdrichtie to continue for five years rather than two. The two compost plants one at Mintlaw and the other at Inverboyndie helped. A third was required at Banchory. A bid was put into the Scottish Executive for funding from their Strategic Waste fund. In order to gain access to any funds Aberdeenshire Council required to submit a bid. This bid needed to be compliant with the Councils Policy and the Area Waste Plan. The Council published their Integrated Waste Management Strategy in 2001 and this was put before the Infrastructure and Service Committee. Last year the I & S Committee agreed not to review this strategy but rather look into what to do in relation to residual waste. An Area Waste Plan was developed between Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray in 2003. This was instigated by the Scottish Executive who had set up eleven different regions throughout Scotland and wanted a plan for each which in turn would create a National Waste plan. Any bid for funds required to comply with the National Waste Plan. Our plan was submitted to the Scottish Executive in 2002 and agreed in 2003. We also had our bid agreed in 2003 with the Scottish Executive. In 2004 we started the tendering procedure with a
Prequalifying Questionnaire for residual waste disposal. Meanwhile the Scottish Executive then confirmed that they would like all authorities to regroup. Between 2004 and 2008 the North of Scotland Strategic Options Review Group (NOSSOR) came into being. NOSSOR put before the Scottish Executive a Strategic Options Case and if this was agreed we could then move on to a business case. If the Scottish Executive approved the business case, they would make funding available. A report was produced in 2006 in which it was agreed that there would be two new energy plants one in the Highlands and one on the border between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. The Scottish Executive reviewed the proposal and suggested that it would not be acceptable due to the high cost. It was then agreed to split the groups into two, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council in one group and Moray and Highland in the other group. The Scottish Executive confirmed that a new strategic case was required. In terms of this, 50% of the waste required to be recycled, 25% could go to landfill and 25% would require treatment. A new administration then came in as a result of the general election in Scotland. With the new devolved administration, there was a change of direction and new targets. There was a preference for smaller plants and local solutions. No Strategic Outline Case or business case was required and there was no additional funding for residual waste. The Scottish Government set new targets of 70% recycling, 25% energy from waste and 5% landfill. In 2006 there was a short-term tender for centre and north’s’ residual waste. It was to be a three year contract with an option to extend for a further three years. In 2007 the tendering process started, with a view to replacing the Crows Nest landfill site as it was getting near capacity. In 2008 there was no choice but to suggest to Aberdeenshire Council that we amend the scope of the tender so it would cover all residual waste not simply that from the Crows Nest. This is where we are at at the moment. We are currently considering the bids in relation to the tender.

The Integrated Sustainable Waste Management Strategy made the following commitments.

(1) To take up the challenge of the National Waste Strategy in reducing annual waste arising. In order to achieve this, we have developed an implementation
plan on the theme of waste reduction. An example of this is that wheelie bin collections are now only once a fortnight rather than once a week.

(2) To follow the Waste Hierarchy for the management of the waste that is produced. In order to achieve this, a Waste Implementation Plan has been developed along the principles of the hierarchy.

(3) This is a commitment to continue to enhance “the bring system” of recycling where appropriate. This is a system where members of the public bring their waste to various sites for recycling. We now have within Aberdeenshire around 160 sites and have increased the range of materials we recycle including the introduction of paper recycle.

ACHIEVEMENTS

• Commitment 3. Continue to enhance the bring system of recycling where appropriate.
The commitment is to extend and develop the Civic Amenity, recycling and Disposal facilities throughout Aberdeenshire. In that connection we have built new sites at Stonehaven and Laurencekirk, replaced the sites at Fraserburgh, Banchory and Peterhead and are replacing the site at Ellon. We are also looking to build a new site in Ballater and Portlethen and are reviewing the remaining sites. We have increased the types of waste which can be recovered for recycling which now include wood, scrap metals, rubble, garden waste, engine oil, batteries, electrical goods and cardboard. We have also strategically placed recycling facilities in locations which avoid specific journeys for recycling.

This is to reintroduce measures to encourage and increase the number of participants in home composting. This came about as a result of a public attitude survey in 2002 where a report by Paisley University indicated that 55% homes with home composting was the ideal percentage. Aberdeenshire Council already had 36%. Aberdeenshire Council had provided an officer to act as Community Liaison Officer in relation to home composting. The post of Community Liaison Officer was funded by the landfill tax. The Master Composting Scheme was set up jointly with Moray Council and Aberdeen City Council which ran from August, 2003 to July, 2005. In Aberdeenshire 3,577 composters were sold which were 577 more than the target. The master composting scheme was continued by Aberdeenshire Council alone from 2005 through to 2007 when additional 6,740 units were sold. In 2007 Aberdeenshire Council joined the WRAP Home Composting Scheme which has continued until August, 2009 during which time another 11,576 composters were sold. WRAP (Waste Resources Action Programme) was originally set up by DEFRA in England and Wales. The Scottish Government took an interest and became involved in funding home composters. Aberdeenshire Council has now met its commitment of 55% coverage.
(6) This is to assess all Waste Management policies and practices against the criteria of the Proximity Regional Self-Sufficiency, the Polluter Pays principles, Best Practical Environmental Option, and Sustainable Development. Because of this commitment, Aberdeenshire Council does not provide free garden waste disposal as it runs against the Proximity Principle. Basically such waste should be disposed of at home through the use of composters. Their use also encapsulates the principle of polluter pays on the basis that householders require to pay £15.00 for the composters. In addition there are no transport costs or air pollution issues and the use of composters is a Sustainable Development. Their use also fits neatly into the Waste Hierarchy. If the waste was collected, this would increase the waste which Aberdeenshire Council would require to dispose of, not reduce it. If householders do not want to use composters, there are household waste and recycling centres and some summer weekend facilities that garden waste can be taken to or they can pay for a special uplift.

(7) This is to develop systems of recording statistics in order to identify trends in waste production and improve waste management decision making. We have employed a Data Officer and installed additional software packages to our routine system. Furthermore, national reporting requirements are shaping the future of data capture.

(8) This was a landfill tax award scheme but this is no longer applicable.

(9) This is to establish an ongoing programme of awareness raising initiatives for both the general public and private businesses. In particular we have employed a Waste Promotions Office who specialises in marketing and promotions. We are also part of Grampian Waste Aware Campaign Group along with Aberdeen City Council and Moray Council which aims to educate the public through various campaigns including television advertising and mail-shots. For every campaign we have a feedback questionnaire and generally have found that the public respond best to newspaper articles. We also endeavour to use pictorial images rather than written information which
assist those who do not speak English well. In relation to achievements we attend public events, talks, education events, community council meetings and initiatives at the kerbside to encourage separation of recyclate.

Achievements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Events</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Talks</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerbside</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Council</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Waste Show</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td><strong>127</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(10) This is to research the potential for and implications of introducing a segregated waste collection service in a pilot project. This was undertaken several years ago in the Stonehaven/Portlethen area. There are now approximately 70,000 households on kerbside collection of recyclables and 30,000 rural properties on a four weekly paper collection.

(11) This is to work with other groups in developing and implementing a programme of awareness raising. This includes working with Scottish Waste
Awareness Group to develop promotional materials, working with the Waste Resources Action Programme in promoting home composting, real nappies and battery collection. There are now several Community Groups involved in community composting.

(12) This is to provide guidance and information to householders on waste reduction through Area Waste Officers and practical information in the Waste Aware Guide. This is a guide in a hardback folder which was sent out to all householders in the Grampian area.

(13) This to apply the polluter pays principle to domestic waste producers by charging for special collection of bulky household waste. Charges are made in line with this commitment for bulky household waste, fridges and freezers and garden waste. This is in terms of statutory powers which the Council has.

(14) This ensures the polluter pays principle applies to all trade waste customers receiving a Council Waste Management Service. Full cost recovery is set against trade waste collections.

(15) This is to provide guidance and information on waste reduction to Aberdeenshire Council’s trade waste customers. This is done through the employment of a Trade Waste Advisor.

(16) This is to continue to support and participate on the North East Waste Management Partnership. The Trade Waste Advisor attends all BPNE meetings and is on their Steering Group.

(17) This is to support the ReMaDe Scheme for identifying potential markets/use for recovered materials. Currently, ReMaDe are reviewing our kerbside service. The review is partly funded by the Scottish Government.

(18) This is to continue the promotion of “buy Recycled” and lead by example through the Green Purchasing Policy.
Aberdeenshire Council set itself the following targets in relation to the Integrated Waste Management Strategy (2001):-

1. To have maximised the potential of home composting by the year 2010. We have reached this target.

2. To achieve 25% recovery of domestic waste by 2001/2002. This target was a bit ambitious. By 2006, 25% of domestic waste was being recycled.

3. In the short-term (up to 5 years) sustain the indicated 0% growth in annual waste arisings by continuing existing efforts through the “bring system” and restart home composting. Inevitably as the number of new properties increase the amount of waste created increases. Furthermore, there are year on year fluctuations in the amount of waste due to external factors e.g. the weather which are outwith our control. It will take several years for a proper overall assessment of this target to be possible.

4. A 1% per annum reduction in waste arisings for the medium terms (5 – 10 years) achieved through waste awareness raising and behaviour modification. Again, it will take several years for a proper overall assessment to be made in relation to this target. It requires to be done on a per household basis, discounting commercial waste and taking account of new properties.

5. For the long-term (10 – 15 years) we aim for reduction in waste arisings of 2% per annum.

6. To reduce the total waste produced us as a Council by 5% by 2005, in accordance with the National Waste Strategy. We now have an Officer in post who works on audit in order to assess the Council’s overall waste. We are working with schools to ensure optimum recycling there. We will have a better indication next year as to what extent this target has been met.

7. By financial year 2002/2003 to have revised the present charging system for trade waste. We have already revised the charging system so that it is on the
basis of full cost recovery. Consequently we have many more traders recycling now in order to avoid the higher charges imposed for disposal of residual waste.

(8) To assist business to achieve a reduction in quantity of commercial waste by 3 -5 % by 2005 through the provision of information and advice.

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**TARGETS**

- National Recycling & Composting Targets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target 1</th>
<th>Target 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a Council we have a lot to do before we hit the 40% target for 2010. It is difficult to be sure how the Scottish Government expect a 70% target to be met for the year 2025. After much lobbying through COSLA, the Scottish Government have agreed that rather than a 100% of the 70% target being met from kerbside reduction in waste a target of 80% has been set.

PB

What analysis lies behind these figures? In other words what are they based on?

JC

We have been trying to get this information through COSLA. The targets are difficult to rationalise e.g. cannot reach the 70% target from kerbside collection as some of the waste does not come from the kerbside. As I understand it the Scottish
Government asked SEPA what was achievable in theory. SEPA confirmed that a 70% target was achievable in theory. This is not the case however in practice.

CG

I would add that recycling is voluntary at the moment; there is no compulsion or penalty for not recycling. There is ongoing discussion about this south of the border, including discussion as to whether penalties should be imposed when people do not recycle. Politically there is reluctance to go down this route particularly as the public’s perception at the moment is that waste is the responsibility of the Council. At a recent seminar there was much consternation regarding the demanding targets set by Central Government when local authorities have such limited power.

IR

I would add that the targets originate from the EU who have also set the various timescales. Each country has discretion to decide how to reach these targets. The Scottish Government has decided to impose the obligation to meet the targets on the local authorities.

PB

There is clearly a bit of an anomaly here in that there may be an unavoidable reduction in recycling if there is an initial reduction in the use of resources. For example, retailers already are conscious of reducing the amount of cardboard they use in their packaging.

JC

Yes, there is a big on-going campaign to reduce waste, which retailers have taken on board. Also, producers of electrical goods are taking on responsibility for recovering all goods, in other words taking away obsolete goods. Consequently they are making their goods last longer and easier to repair. The targets, however, are aspirational. [The baseline in relation to the targets is taken from the year 1999, so we need to recycle 25% of the 1999 figure and (so on and so forth).] There is no statutory obligation to reach the targets, unlike the position in England.
There is a statutory obligation to remove biodegradable waste from land. “The Challenge” in relation to the diversion of biodegradable waste demonstrates this (below). If we do not meet the targets set, we could potentially incur a penalty.

The area at the bottom of the chart shows how much biodegradable waste can be landfilled. Included at the top of the chart is waste growth. At the moment, the Scottish Government has suspended the imposition of the Statutory Penalties. There is also a landfill allowance trading scheme which means that if excess biodegradable waste is landfilled there is a facility for purchasing a third party’s surplus. The potential penalties had the scheme not been suspended by the Scottish Government are shown below.
Financial Penalties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target Shortfall Tonnes</th>
<th>Penalty Amount £ per Tonne</th>
<th>Potential Penalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>7,159</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td>£178,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>10,600</td>
<td>£50</td>
<td>£530,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>11,045</td>
<td>£150</td>
<td>£1,656,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>£150</td>
<td>£2,025,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meeting The Targets

- What we have done.
- Introduced kerbside collections for urban properties.
- Issued wheeled bins in South.
- Increased materials collected at Recycling Points.
- Increased materials collected separately at HWRC.
- Change the type of collection service and the vehicles used to service the collection of residual waste.
- Introduced paper collections for rural properties.
- Major campaigns on waste awareness.
- Introduced subsidised home composting.
- Encouraging community composting.
- Tendered residual waste.
Meeting The Targets

Short Term

• Kitchen Waste Trial
• Recognition for reduction in BMW content of outputs from the MBT process.
• Continued targeted publicity campaigns
• More separation at HWRC
• Prepare submission for additional funding to move towards the 40% recycling target.
• Reviewing Trade waste collections to encourage more recycling.
• Joint working with Aberdeen City

In the longer term the target is to have only 5% landfill waste and 70% recycling. This is very difficult to achieve and the latter is very expensive. The only way would be to have compulsory recycling and there is no political will by the Scottish Government to do this.

Questions

AA

Has there been a high up-take in the paper collections in rural areas?

JC

Yes. There has been 60% participation. Kerbside it is sitting at 50%. I would explain that not everyone puts out the containers for collection every four weeks given the large capacity. There has also be very little contamination, mainly brown cardboard so contamination has not been a big issue.

FH

Do you have figures for the tonnage for business and domestic waste? Tonnage is good to know rather than the percentages.
There is 153,000 tonnes of municipal waste. We do not divide business and domestic waste but have sampled in the past to check percentages. Roughly 17 – 18,000 tonnes come from commercial waste.

I would stress these figures only represent what we collect, not the total waste. Commercial and industrial users can use private companies to pick up their waste rather than the Council.

Am I right in saying that we only need to look at the waste the Council collects?

Yes, that is right

Local farmers from what I gather are keen to take the by-products from the Keenan Composting Plant at New Deer as it is very beneficial as fertiliser. It also reduces the requirement to buy nitrate fertilisers which can cause run-off problems. Does Keenan’s have excess capacity and are there any plans to have more of these sites?

Keenan’s do have capacity to expand their system but need a contract to go ahead. Of course, all our garden waste contracts require to be put out to tender. The same applies if we decide to recycle kitchen waste.

Kitchen waste from the Banff area already goes to a local farmer in Fordyce.
There seems to be an increasing desire from residents to take on allotments. If we could allocate more allotments for new houses, this may help with composting as not all houses have gardens for their compost. It would also be good to have a composting area at allotments so that individuals could take their garden waste there for composting, particularly if it was local.

Yes, we are aware of this and will take account of it in the Local Development Plan. It’s easier if you know there is a demand. I do know that developers are willing to do this. This is how the Community Composting Scheme works. Certainly for allotments we could build in composting land. Keenans have confirmed that 15 – 20 farmers in a 20-mile radius take their product and use it. In effect it is the proximity principle working backwards in that the waste to be recycled is taken from a wide area but ultimately is dispersed locally. Keenans have 12 cylinders installed for use at the moment. Their planning permission covers 20, however, so there is capacity to extend.

I know that in the Stonehaven area people are actively looking for land to use for allotments but there does not seem to be any suitable land available.

I appreciate that we cannot ask you for specifics as to who is tendering for the new waste contracts but could you give us an idea as to what types of waste disposal systems are being proposed?

We have had five solid tender returns. Four are utilising the same method, mechanical biological treatment (MBT) but operating in different ways. For example one will use MBT and produce compost while others use MBT as a pre-treatment. In terms of the tenders, we have asked that the bidders look at the targets that have been set, and offer solutions to meet the targets and also take the liability for any penalties which may need to be paid.
Plasma gasification was referred to in the Public Enquiry last week. Is this likely to be relevant?

Ultimately what is produced must be deliverable. Therefore, we will only invest in what has been proven to work. Plasma gasification is not currently in use nor has it been scaled up so it’s not viable at the moment.

Has plasma gasification been tried in other countries?

No, not as far as I am aware although I don’t know for sure.

The primary purpose for any party taking on the tender is to reduce waste is that correct?

Yes.

It may be useful if we have a future session on the different technologies.

Yes, that may be helpful as background information although it may be worth waiting until the tender process is over so that we could give information on the actual preferred tender.

At the next Waste Management Working Group meeting the intention is to go over the various technologies under consideration in the tenders.
Could I ask if you have any figures on the amount of food waste which is thrown out from supermarkets?

Unfortunately we do not have figures for this. There is a group of big retailers/supermarkets who are looking into composting food waste and also into reducing their packaging. They have been very good on reducing packaging. So far no statutory restrictions have been imposed on this.

It has been mooted that targets should be set for recycling and waste reduction for commercial enterprises. In the current economic climate however there is resistance to any increased costs for businesses. The regime therefore in relation to the recycling and waste reduction for business is not as rigorous as that in relation to municipal waste. 20% of all waste is municipal, so there is four times as much waste outwith municipal waste.

Food waste is a big issue for both shops and restaurants.

All supermarkets are caught by packaging regulations. There is a legal obligation to recycle and reduce packaging.

There is great confusion in the public domain in relation to recycling plastics. We can recycle milk cartons but not yogurt cartons or tetra pack.

Tetra pack is very difficult to recycle due to its nature. It is also very expensive to recycle. The nearest recycling plant is in Scandinavia. Tetra pack themselves promote recycling of their own products but they only provide us with bins to collect
the packs. That being said Tetra packs form a very small part of the overall waste, approximately 0.05%. Yogurt cartons create a major problem. The Scottish Government has undertaken to try and promote the establishment of a plastic recycling plant in Scotland. There are a few who deal with low grade plastics.

**IR**

We endeavour to keep the waste within the UK. Most plants are in England and Wales. If we decide to recycle mixed plastics we would need to be prepared to send the waste abroad to for example to China or India. Currently we are getting good prices for the waste that we recycle at the moment. If we co-mingle, we will get a lower price.

**FH**

I believe that there is a high tech recycling plant somewhere in the Dumfries and Galloway area.

**JC**

Yes there is a plant down there and which dries out waste through an MBT process. This is similar to the processes being offered in terms of the tender bids.

**CG**

I know that 9 out of the 10 Greater Manchester Councils have come together and entered into a contract with a private company who have state of the art separation plants. The cost here is huge but of course, is divided amongst all the Councils.

Waste is a fascinating subject and always generates lots of questions. Please note that we can come back at any time and answer your questions. Some issues however are beyond us to answer. It is admirable that the Scottish Government has set high targets for recycling/reduction of waste but we are concerned with the advice they get some times. Civil Servants sometimes have difficulty in relating to the practicalities involved. I note that there are no External Advisors for this investigation and if it would help at all we can put together queries for Scottish Government and SEPA Officials.
Many thanks for that.

However successful we are in recycling/reducing waste, there will still always be a requirement for some landfill. Will there be access to such a facility in the future?

This will be answered by the tender documents which include a requirement for disposal of anything which cannot be recycled. Ideally such disposal must be within the 5% target.

I was reading recently that the Dutch incinerate 62% of their waste and have only 2% landfill.

The Scottish Government has set a target of only 25% of waste that can be incinerated. This is to discourage the incineration of recyclable waste.
Conclusion

• Major challenges ahead
• Lots still to do
• Increasingly more difficult to achieve the high targets
• It will require modifying the behaviour of the public and business to accept and take responsibility for the waste they produce.
• We are making progress
The purpose of this investigation is to consider the actions which Aberdeenshire Council has taken for the minimisation of waste and the reduction of landfill and to investigate what could be done and is intended through potential improvements for the future.

| CL  | I am the Principal Waste Officer for Central Aberdeenshire. My job involves managing refuse, recycling and household recycling. When the Policy and Strategy people set policy, I ensure that waste is collected in the manner prescribed by them. |
| IM  | I am the Principal Waste Officer for the North area of Aberdeenshire Council and carry out the same function as Claire but my job also includes involvement with the two closed landfill sites at Banff and Mintlaw and the two waste treatment plants. |
| AS  | I cover southern Aberdeenshire Council and carry out the same functions as Ian in this area which includes the active landfill at Crows Nest. |
| FH  | 1. Tell us about your job and what it involves in being the middle man between Council waste policies and strategy and the residents of Aberdeenshire. |
| AS  | I have a very interesting role. My primary function is to provide a service to the public. There is a public perception that once rubbish is put out, it becomes the Council’s responsibility. The Council’s policy is to encourage the public to recycle more and we provide boxes and bins to enable this. It’s our responsibility to ensure that the service runs smoothly. From our point of view there is not really a major problem with being caught between the Council and the residents in relation to the Council’s waste policies and strategy on the basis that the policy is not determined by us but this role is part of the Policy Teams function. Our concern is primarily with the actual collection of refuse. |
| PB  | I understand that there has been a backlash in Stonehaven as a result of the changes in the waste collection. It has gone from no restriction on the waste being collected and with collections being weekly to fortnightly with restrictions imposed. |
| AS  | Physically, there are areas in Stonehaven where there are no places for the bins to be placed which has created an operational issue. Consequently, we still require to pick up black bags in some locations and require to do this weekly. We are trying to get a solution to this. Because of this issue, people perceive that there are two services in one town both a weekly collection for some areas and a fortnightly for others. |
| CL  | There are no black bags in Central Aberdeenshire but the control of the bins is the big problem. Diamond Lift Bins cannot be purchased easily in rural areas so consequently their bins can be too small. We do not have the resources to tackle this problem. In the North there is a better service because we have more Officers there. There are only two Officers for the whole of Central. Due to the time commitment involved, it is difficult to speak to the community. |
| PB  | Clearly, this is a serious issue. Is it a deliberate decision to have an uneven spread of Area Officers? |
| CL | For various reasons there was a decision made to give more resources to the Peterhead and Fraserburgh areas. |
| IM | There is also a problem trying to ascertain the number of residents in a particular area where there are multi block tenancies. If there are insufficient numbers of bins then we have a huge increase in side waste which we cannot pick up and this becomes a waste problem for some other part of the service. For example, bins for communal use in flats are an issue in that if they are left in a building they are regarded as a fire hazard whereas if they are put outwith the building they become a Police issue due to obstruction. It is also very difficult to obtain data on the number of residents in flats in order to ascertain the waste requirements. |
| AS | Yes, communal bins are a problem. There are isolated pockets of flats where communal bins are used. This is not ideal because no one takes responsibility for them and they tend quite often to be overflowing or have waste left at the side of them. |
| IM | Really, everyone should have their own bin and as part of Planning we need to ensure that there is sufficient room for bins. |
| CL | They also tend to be used for large items e.g. mattresses and when this happens there is no room left for normal everyday rubbish. |
| NC | What ratio has been set, if any, of bins to occupants? |
| CL | It has been set tentatively at 6 but if there is a genuine problem with a 14 day collection we will look at this. We tend to send out a waste diary so that the occupants can keep a note of their waste to ensure none of it can be recycled. We also check the bin to see if all recyclables have been taken out of the bin. If there is still a problem, another bin will be supplied. |
| IM | There should be provision for storage and I believe our colleagues in policy and strategy are already looking at this. |
| TF | What are your views on the issue of educating people on recycling but then not having local recycling depots to take their rubbish to? |
| AS | We are trying to get local facilities such as mini recycling points (MCR’s) in as many places as is practicable so that this is not a problem. If we cannot provide a service in a local area we need to deal with that. |
| IM | It is difficult to find a location for mini recycling sites sometimes so we need to be able to still service these areas. |
| AS | Mini Recycling sites can be contentious. They are perceived as being noisy and they can also lead to fly tipping e.g. when a new site was set up in Newtonhill, we had a problem within 2 days of its opening in relation to fly tipping. |
| TF | If for example there had been complaints about noise and the recycling depot still goes ahead do you find that noise is still an issue or this is simply a public perception? |
| AS | This type of problem is dealt with by our policy and strategy colleagues. We simply deal with taking away the rubbish from the sites. I do believe however that this is not such an issue in reality but would need to check with our recycling team. |
| FH | Is there a policy and timetable in relation to emptying mini recycling sites? |
| CL | There is no set rule. The Policy Team says where a recycling site is to be located. We
check that it is suitable and then we service it. Every site is different. Some are used more than others. We have discovered through practice for example that supermarket sites need emptying after the weekend.

**FH**

Is waste at the mini recycling sites segregated well?

**IM**

Yes, it tends to be but there is a problem with the public putting rubbish at the side of containers rather than in the actual containers.

**AS**

Plastics are a problem. People assume that all plastics can be recycled so we have tetra pack, yoghurt and margarine tubs put in for recycling when they can’t be recycled by us.

**FH**

Are these non-recyclable items dumped by Aberdeenshire Council once they are collected?

**AS**

No. We segregate the recyclate and we pay for haulage to send it to other places which can deal with it. For example with cardboard the company we have a contract with would send any loads with high levels of contaminants away to another company to be separated and we would lose out on the payment.

**FH**

How many loads get rejected due to contamination?

**AS**

I’m not sure of the total. Everything is sent somewhere but it may be the case that we get no money for it. Kerbside collections are monitored very closely so there is very little contamination. There is more contamination at the mini recycle sites but it is not major.

**FH**

Is there a case for sorting of waste prior to recycling?

**AS**

If there was major problem with this we would hear about it from our colleagues in the recycling team. There is a slight problem with paper and brown cardboard contamination as the brown cardboard needs to go to a separate place in order that it can be bleached.

**IM**

There is a myth that we send recycled items to landfill but this is not the case. One lorry will do cardboard and paper and another lorry has 4 compartments dividing up glass and cans.

**CL**

The problem with contamination has been resolved slightly. When the rural bins are emptied, if there is brown cardboard there we don’t take it away. Previously, we were told simply to put it back in the bin so it tends to sit there which is not ideal. It has since been agreed, therefore, with the Policy people to supply red bags so that rejected material is put into the red bags with full instructions on how to recycle it. If the brown cardboard stays in the red bag, it is easier for us to process next time so that we can pull it out at the lorry stage or before it goes into the recycling lorry rather than when it arrives at its destination.

**NC** 2. **What aspects of the current recycling and waste policies do you think are successful and what aspects could be improved?**

**IM**

We are trying to monitor and improve all the time. For example, there were food trials in the North last year and this year in both rural and town areas we are trying weekly recycling in order to collect more materials for recycling.

**CL**

Most of what we do is successful as the recycling ratio has increased tremendously. We have an average ratio for kerbside recycling. It is difficult to offer recycling to all households but we do this quite successfully. The rule of thumb is that there requires to be 200 households or more in an area before we offer recycling in order to make it cost efficient. We could however go lower than this. It is a balancing act. We need to take account of overtime and other associated additional costs. We have redone the routes in order to allow extra capacity and in doing so can perhaps divert to smaller communities for recycling.
| **AS** | We have discovered however that the public don’t like change even if it is improving the system. They like to stick with the same routine. |
| **IG** | People don’t like constant change they need to know what they system is. |
| **AS** | We don’t particularly like change either but tend only to change the system if there is a very good reason for doing this. |
| **IG** | I can accept this but if there is too much change you lose the goodwill of the public. |
| **IM** | The Scottish Government have set very challenging targets. We need to change in order to try and meet these. |
| **AS** | We have opened new household recycling centres and the recycling has been very successful. |
| **IM** | In the North there are some small part-time sites. We need really to have bigger sites that have consistent opening times across the shire. We need to look at this. |
| **CL** | It is controversial however to remove facilities from some communities. The part-time sites in my area are completely inappropriate e.g. there are health and safety issues due to traffic problems. They are only open 2 days in the winter and for 2 days and 2 evenings in the summer. It may perhaps be more efficient to close the Insch site and service this area elsewhere and thereby re-distribute this resource. Really all sites should be open at uniform times so people know where they stand. They should be open for 7 days of the week. This may mean shutting some facilities but we need rationalise the service. It needs to be fit for purpose. |
| **IM** | A lot of the waste can potentially be recycled if it is taken to a bigger site. On the smaller part-time sites such as Whitehills none of the waste taken there is recycled, whereas at Peterhead 60% is recycled. The larger full-time HWRC’s have a full range of facilities allowing more of the material to be recycled. |
| **TF** | You mention that the rule of thumb for recycling requires 200 houses. Is it not the case that it is 300 houses? |
| **CL** | Yes, that’s right it is 300 houses in a rural area. |
| **TF** | Is it possible to put 2 small communities together in order to make this 300 figure and thereby provide a recycling service? |
| **CL** | We can include adjoining areas if they are near current routes. It’s a bit of balancing act if we put in more resources in order to increase our service, we need to watch that we don’t over subscribed the routes so that we have too much recycling to deal with. |
| **AS** | If we discover that a route is regularly over subscribed we need to look at extra resources. If we put in extra resources we then have more capacity and we can then add another area but this can lead to the same problem in that the service becomes over subscribed. |
| **CL** | We are at this point with Central. |
| **AS** | We need also to consider potential new housing developments because operationally we need to be able to deal with these these require extra resources. |
| **IM** | Actually refuse is easy to estimate but kerbside recycling is not. We have no control over this. |
What is the position in relation to food waste? Can it all be recycled?

The processor cannot manage plastics, jars or cans only the biodegradable bags we provide. People have liked the food waste project. It has meant that the public realise how much they waste and some of them have reduced their food waste accordingly.

I know that some people think the more they put in for food recycling the better, as they think they are doing a good service.

Generally, the food waste project has gone very well and the public have had a good response to it.

An advantage is that taking food waste out of the refuse means that bins will not smell so much so the 14 day collection is not such an issue.

There are only 2 food waste recycling sites, one at Fordyce and one at New Deer. This is an issue.

Do recycling centres handle big household waste? Do we have a contract for dealing with these items?

Both big and small sites deal with them. Yes there is a contract. We don’t get money in return for these items but we do save on landfill tax so in effect we probably break even.

Do people throw out electrical items with refuse?

When the material comes to the plants metal items are removed. This is much less of a problem now as people are aware of the need to recycle these items.

If rates of recycling increase from 40% to 70% would it help if you had a bulk transit site to dump off the recycling items and go back and collect more.

Operationally this is very costly. The silo containers are taken off the lorries with forklift trucks so we would need to have forklift trucks there to do this. We would also need a lot of space to facilitate this and to obtain the necessary waste management licenses.

40% recycling is not enough and we should be driving up recycling targets as much as we can.

Central is well served with recycling.

If participation went up, we would need to look at increasing our service.

What are you doing to increase the rate of recycling?

We do not have control over this.

We need to examine this.

This is more of a policy issue and therefore would not be dealt with by the Waste Officers.

We need to be more rigid on the 2 bin system and ensure that items that can be recycled are recycled and not put into the refuse bin.

We have covered this quite a bit already. We ourselves do not need to deal with this challenge. It is the Policy and Strategy people who have this issue to deal with.
**CL**

We do not always apply a single policy on all aspects of waste as the urban and rural areas differ quite substantially.

In North and Central people buy their own bins whereas in the South, the Council supply the bins. We also cannot offer the same services to the rural and urban areas due to logistical issues and costs.

With regard to composting bins my problem is that Angus Council provide green bins for garden waste whereas Aberdeenshire Council do not provide these but do provide composting bins. Has this been successful in relation to recycling garden waste?

**CL**

It has been successful to a degree. I have seen a lot of composting bins in use.

**IM**

It is better to deal with garden waste at source. If we collect garden waste we have to deal with its disposal which has cost implications as it would raise our waste horizons.

**CL**

Human nature is such that if we were to give people bins for gardening waste, they would simply put their garden waste in there rather than re-use it through the composting bin.

**AA**

There is an operational issue in relation to having the bins or recycling boxes in a location where they can be collected.

**IM**

Yes, we need big enough vehicles to carry the waste but small enough to access properties in order to pick up the waste. This is an issue.

**FH**

Looking towards the future, new housing developments should have allotment areas allocated as these are becoming popular. If people had garden waste and there was an allotment composting area surely they would be able to take it there?

**IM**

We already have community composting areas.

**FH**

But not for new housing developments. This has not been promoted?

**CL**

This is a very good idea. I have experience seeing this working in other areas.

**TF**

4. **How has the contact centre’s involvement with public concern about waste issues impacted on your role?**

**CL**

It has made my job much easier. There was more pressure on our admin support staff and us in the past to deal with public queries. Due to the contact centre, much of our time has been released to deal with other things. The reporting and monitoring of complaints has been great.

**AS**

It works very well if the person at the contact centre is knowledgeable. Perhaps not so well if this is not the case.

**IG**

Do you respond to every case?

**AS**

The contact centre filter out everything they can deal with and pass on any thing they can’t to us.

**AA**

5. **What more could be done to engage with the residents of Aberdeenshire to promote greater engagement with, and ownership of, the management of residual waste?**

**TF**

For clarification purposes what is residual waste?

**CL**

Anything that goes into the refuse bin.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AS</th>
<th>It should in theory only be stuff we cannot recycle or reuse in some way.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IG</td>
<td>I was reading recently that Glasgow City Council invested in 3 auto cleaving machines. What do you think of that proposal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>We have not considered this as a Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Even if we did use auto cleaving or some other system of recycling we would still need to find a market for the recycled items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>To consider whether the auto cleaving of waste to energy is an option is really the wrong approach, in my opinion. We should be asking ourselves what do we need to achieve and what are the issues. Once we know this, we can look at what systems are available to achieve our aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>The Scottish Government has set a ceiling on systems such an auto cleaving and only 25% of waste can be dealt with by new technologies on new sites by 2025.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Aberdeenshire Council will look at all the options when considering the tenders which have been recently put in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>We need to consider whether we want to go down a stick route or a carrot route. We need to look at the experiences of other councils in the UK and ascertain what approaches have been successful. We need to consider whether we should use legislation to enforce recycling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>How do we get people to take ownership of their own rubbish?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>The best way is to get to everyone to go to the Crows Nest landfill site on a site visit in order to see what is involved in landfill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FH</td>
<td>The perception is that residents feel the Council should be responsible for rubbish as the residents have paid their Council Tax. We really all own the waste as we are all responsible for making waste and residents need to appreciate this and be responsible for this especially when 60% are not recycling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td>We are very aware of this. Although not costing the public at the moment, our rubbish will cost us all in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>If I could just mention a point in relation to the collection of asbestos. Our sites accept asbestos from residents and we have trained staff to deal with this. Residents from Aberdeen City also use this facility and we are obliged to take it from them. We are not obliged however to take it from traders. Sometimes, traders do not let on that they are traders and we are left in difficult position. We turned down a trader yesterday who had one tonne of asbestos. It was not on the basis that we could prove that he was a trader but simply on the basis of the nature of the asbestos. The disposal costs are very high for this. I feel that we should not have to deal with the City's waste. We do get a lot of traders who say they are residents. We need to ask residents to be more vigilant when they are using traders and ensure that they are registered waste carriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FH</td>
<td>One area we need to get smart on is hitting fly tippers really hard. We need to report any fly tipping to the Police. As we try to drive up recycling targets, clearly any trader who is refused access to recycling sites will simply fly tip.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The purpose of this investigation is to consider the actions which Aberdeenshire Council has taken for the minimisation of waste and the reduction of landfill and to investigate what could be done and is intended through potential improvements for the future.

1. TF  Tell us about your job and what it involves in being the intermediary between Council waste policies and strategy and the residents of Aberdeenshire.

   PW  My job title is Waste Management Officer, Education and Reduction. This is a bit of a misnomer in relation to my remit. I lead a team who deal with trade waste on the customer and policy side so for example I deal with new businesses, charges, etc. There are two Recycling Officers as part of the team and they deal with the various recycling points, any complaints and the sale of recycled items. My team liaises with the community through various schemes, e.g. the nappy scheme, the community composting scheme. My team deals with the promotion and marketing aspects of waste so that it is mostly on the strategic side. Other officers deal with the implementation of the waste policies which is outwith my remit. We also liaise with S.W.A.G. (Scottish Waste Awareness Group), and ensure that the Council is following the relevant standards.

   DR  There are four basic elements, purchasing and accountability monitoring and licensing issues relating to closed and active landfill sites, recording and analysis of waste data and general waste disposal issues. My team’s remit includes compliance with regulation, procedures and policies and develop waste disposal infrastructure across Aberdeenshire.

   MD  I manage a team which develops strategies, e.g. the food waste collection and monitor their success. I also manage a team of eight Area waste officers (AWOs) who are involved in matters such as visiting householders who have issues with the fortnightly collections (as passed on by the call centre). They help people who cannot cope with the fortnightly collection for instance if they have a baby in nappies and cannot fit all their waste into a bin, the AWOs will encourage them to recycle more and if necessary, provide extra bins. They also assist people who require help in relation to waste collection – such as disabled or elderly people who cannot put the bins out, AWOs arrange for the crews to collect these bins from the door, not the kerbside. There are also
two Compliance Officers who form part of my team. They will fine people if necessary for fly tipping. There is a slight cross over with Pam Walker on the education side of things as I manage the Waste Promotions Officer who manages the events and the waste aware bus - we are involved in schools education, talks to WRI, etc. There is also a new computer system being installed and I have someone in at the moment dealing with that.

PB How big a problem is fly tipping?

MD Fly tipping is not that bad. We have served six or ten fixed penalty notices. There are a few pockets where there are particular problems. We have engaged in quite a lot of preventative work, e.g. we put on stickers at recycling centres reminding people that any waste that is not left within the recycling receptacles would be regarded as fly tipping.

FH I understand there is a problem with the dumping of tyres.

MD Occasionally yes. It tends to be garages that do this. We have worked with SEPA on a bigger investigation into this problem and it was a bit of an issue in the North.

DR We do accept tyres from householders as waste provided this right is not abused.

SD Who deals with education then, is it Matt or Pam?

PW The officer who has the budget for publicity lies within my team. He deals with the press office and the overall campaign. This is communicated to the implementation team who form part of my team and Matt’s. There is a cross over.

IG Am I right in saying that there is ignorance within business organisations as to what they can recycle? Have there been any campaigns to introduce leaflets?

PW We reviewed the trade waste service and a report went to the Waste Management Working Group about this. One issue was the level of awareness. We asked traders about the level of their awareness. It became apparent that they were not aware as to what they could do. We have produced two trade waste information leaflets and these have been distributed. New trade customers should all receive a copy of these leaflets and we intend to send out the same leaflet to everyone when the waste notices go out. Work is ongoing to increase awareness within the business sector.

2. RT What aspects of the current recycling and waste policies do you think are successful and what aspects could be improved?

DR The household waste recycling centres and the mini recycling points are well used. We have progressed Capital Plan projects for new facilities and
upgrading existing sites. The kerbside recycling has been a great success. Five years ago there was 10% recycling. This has trebled now. The home and community composting is mostly done by WRAP. There has been a 55% uptake on this with 50% of households in Aberdeenshire having gardens.

**MD**  
I agree with Donald. All aspects are successful and everything has improved in some way. The older household waste recycling centres need to be improved. They are outdated and too small dating back to the old District Council sites. We need bigger sites in order to facilitate the number of containers required for the range of waste to be recycled.

**PW**  
With regard to the household waste recycling centres, there is certainly an issue regarding older sites. There is also an inequality of provision across the Shire. Some areas have more provision than others. The issue is how to fix that. Also, small weekend temporary sites can cause issues with regard to fly tipping and insufficient provision in relation to size and the variety of waste that can be recycled. The recycling points are very successful even though we offer kerbside recycling. Some of the waste may come from trade waste. The sites are busiest at the weekend so are more difficult to service fully when we work Monday to Friday. There are budget issues with regard to sending staff out at weekends.

The introduction of fortnightly refuse collection has had a huge effect on the mindset of the public. Any teething issues have now settled down and it has had a very positive impact on the amount of waste that is now recycled.

**RT**  
I understand that recycling sits presently at the low to the mid-30% despite major increases in the Council’s efforts. Where would further increases come from?

**MD**  
From a little bit of everything. Recycling now sits at 35%. Rolling out the food waste programme to 30% of households would give a 2% increase in recycling. There is also a plan to move recycling from a two week to a one week cycle for urban areas. This would give a further increase of 6% or 7%. There is also planned to be an increase in the paper recycling by issuing blue boxes to replace the paper sacks. This is forecast to give an increase of approximately 1%. In total, these initiatives should take it up to 45%. Anything above 45% will be difficult to achieve and expensive. With regard to the household waste recycling centres, the good sites do very well, 65% of what is collected is recycled. We are let down by the smaller, older sites where less separation is possible and consequently less recycling happens. We need to rationalise the HWRC provision, close the smaller older sites and replace them with bigger sites which accept a full range of materials and serve a wider geographical area, but it will cost a lot of money to do this.

**TF**  
How do you see the Council resolving the Auchenblae and Luthermuir situation when the Council do not own land there?

**PW**  
The trouble is we don’t have a magic wand. The current site is at the football
pitch in Auchenblae which is not ideal but it is a site and is close to the village. Luthermuir is more difficult but our officers are in close discussions with the community council regarding this and we will reinstate a site as soon as a suitable location can be found. There really is not a lot we can do. One route would be asking a developer in relation to a planning application at Auchenblae to provide the Council with a bit of land for us to use for recycling. We are trying to facilitate this as soon as possible. The Luthermuir Site was in a pub. The new owners did not want it there. There are discussions over other locations and as soon as something comes up if it is appropriate then we will take it.

FH Have you budgeted for improvements?

MD We are working on the food waste project at the moment and re-routing vehicles to accommodate this.

DR There is a Capital Plan meeting tomorrow to discuss budgets. The current budget allocation we have is not enough. An application has been made for more funds and Raymond Reid will bring this forward at the Team Leaders Group meeting tomorrow.

FH Which companies are to handle the food waste?

MD Grays at Sandend and Keenans may be used. We will need to go to tender. The contract will cost around £150,000.

DR Anything that costs above £105,000 needs to go to public tender.

Weight is a critical fact in the statistics. Rubble, earth and timber have been added to the sites as waste that can be recycled.

JMcR Are these waste items included in the Council’s reclamation policy at Fyvie?

PW When we talk about waste, we only count municipal waste so waste that goes to a third party direct is not included. The materials recycling site at Mintlaw does not count as the Council is not collecting it and it often comes from industrial sources. We are going to estimate, however, what element of this is municipal waste.

SD Is there a big gap between the cost of collecting waste and what you receive from selling it on?

PW We do make a loss certainly overall. It is difficult to assess exactly what this is, as there are so many variables.

IG A lot depends on the public desire to recycle. A lot of people don’t want to know.

MD Area Officers carry out door to door checks to see who is recycling what. We do a lot of statistics on that. Officers also go door to door to encourage
recycling. We have had a good response. A third of whose who weren’t recycling are now. It is a slow process. There are only eight Area Waste Officers and a lot of residents to get round. We also have shows at public gatherings. Currently we are not able to fine for not recycling or for the amount of waste that is being put out. We can only fine for fly tipping. We can cut down on non-recyclers through door to door knocking.

PW We also do surveys and give the public an opportunity to comment.

FH I have asked before about recycling from our schools and was told an exercise is on-going about this.

PW An officer has been employed over the last two years looking at this, schools as well as all Council buildings. She has done a lot of work. Many people say they were not recycling because of the lack of containers inside the buildings. A secondee has been taken on who went round offices and schools to look at the container issue. There will be a range of two or three containers for all Council buildings. A tender went out for the containers a couple of weeks ago. Officers are currently evaluating the tenders and these will be purchased by the end of March. The containers will be going out to all schools and council offices over the Spring and Summer. The Scottish Government’s zero waste fund is providing the finance for this. It is difficult to get data from Council Services regarding waste, e.g. the green waste from landscaping services, construction waste, etc. They need to provide us with the information so that we have a proper baseline. We need perhaps an online reporting system. With regard to the containers, they should be out around the Spring/Summer time across the area.

NC Did you get any answers from people saying that they take their own recycling to depots when you do your door to door enquiries?

MD Yes. This makes it hard to determine how much recycling is done. 10-15% of the people we asked said that they take their own recycling to centres. There are a few people who live on main roads so putting out recycling waste is an issue there. A trolley has been developed which fits recycling boxes on top of each other. It is more robust and waterproof for these open locations. Unfortunately, it costs £20 each, so we’re working out criteria of when and where we issue these.

AA How does the food recycling work?

MD 23 litre bins are used which are lockable so vermin proof. In addition, a kitchen caddy is issued which sits in the householder’s kitchen and is lined with a bag which is then put out in the big 23 litre bin outside. In the rural areas we can effectively do the scheme for little cost as we will buy new lorries which permit waste to be put in the back and food in the front.

FH Do you take all food waste?

MD Yes, any food. There is printed on the outside of the bin what can or cannot
be put in it. We also intend to issue laminated cards containing this information. No packaging can be put in it.

PW We also intend to have a press campaign.

MD In the trial that we carried out there was very little contamination.

RT Do you think the industry will grow fast enough to absorb the amount of recyclables?

PW There is already a commercial requirement to recycle packaging. It is a market issue but not simply restricted to the UK but the global market. There is much more recycling done outside the UK. The UK is obviously favoured for recycling purposes but if there is a glut, the excess goes for export. It depends on the economy.

TF Is Tetra pack a big problem?

PW It is perceived as a problem but only forms 0.02% of the waste stream. In my opinion it is a lot of money to spend for little gain. Tetra pack themselves have not helped to facilitate recycling. It is still necessary to send Tetra pack to Sweden to recycle. We do recycle Tetra pack but only 11 tonnes last year. Tetra pack will not provide more banks for recycling purposes. In short, the public want it but it is not economically viable and does little towards meeting our targets.

FH What pressure if any could be put on big companies not to use Tetra pack?

PW Tetra pack is cheaper to manufacture and easier to transport because it can be packed flat. It would be better in waste terms if the containers were plastic as there is more of it and it can be recycled more easily. Tetra pack is unlikely to go away as there are other economic factors that make it attractive to manufacturers.

3. NC What are the challenges in explaining and applying a single policy strand across the varied communities of Aberdeenshire?

MD We don’t really have a single policy strand because of the differences between rural and urban communities. For example, rural communities have one paper recycling bin only. There are many more containers in and more materials recycled in urban areas. Different social areas create issues where there is poorer housing/lower income, it can be more difficult. Also multi-occupancy accommodation creates its own problems. We have translated waste information into seven different languages and also published pictorial guides. We have often found that where there is a high population of migrant workers, they are not particularly interested in recycling.

PW I think the most important thing is the ability to explain to the public why we do something; provided we have back-up of the Council and can explain our case to the public, that is important. Also, the differences in the various
recycling centres are a bit of an issue. There is varying provision throughout the Shire which can create difficulties for officers in explaining why one community has a facility and another of similar size and make up does not.

**DR**

We need to consider the needs of an area, the area’s dimensions, the area’s infrastructure and social-economic aspects.

**MD**

The ownership of residual waste bins varies hugely throughout Aberdeenshire. For example, if people own their own bins, they may put out two bins which create an issue. Also, if the Council supplied bins, there can be issues created by people taking someone else’s bin. This can cause problems with replacements.

**PW**

We have asked Management if we can tag bins. This would allow us to access information on refuse in a lot of different ways. Statistically, the information would be immense. We would need to change the mind set on this as there is a “Big Brother” attitude which prevails. If we could tag bins, this would be a huge asset management tool.

**FH**

If a lorry goes on its rounds in a set area, would it be possible to use weighbridges in order to weigh the lorry and see how much waste is produced?

**MD**

Unfortunately, the weighbridges are not in the correct locations for us.

**FH**

Would it be possible to use private weighbridges?

**PW**

We do do this at the moment but its not as good as tagging bins and would not give us nearly as much in depth information as on board systems would.

**NC**

Initially, the recycling boxes were tagged. This does not happen any more, is that right?

**PW**

Yes.

**MD**

Another issue where householders provide their own bin, is with regards to its size. If it is too big, the lorries cannot lift them. We need to tell new householders what size of bin is required.

**4. FH**

How is the process of deciding what should be recycled and where there should be reduction or other education campaigns carried out? How are the items to be recycled chosen, a sustainable market developed and an implementation strategy which assures real benefits applied?

**PW**

What we collect for recycling is driven by markets. We do this by and large through contacts, networking and through industry. We also engage with contacts at other local authorities. We need to look at what works by weight and value and how easy it is to collect.
The amount of plastic bottles that we collect is ten times more than it used to be so they are more viable to recycle. There has been a lot of discussion in the Council team about what sort of education campaigns we should run. The waste analysis results have also fed education campaigns. We see what’s in the bins and determine our campaign accordingly, e.g. if there have been a lot of electrical items left in bins, we will do a campaign on this. We have developed campaigns which have a theme across the board and know from experience that this is effective. We also get feedback from the public and from the recycling centres. It is constrained however by budget considerations. We also try and keep recycling in this country if possible.

The Waste Management Working Group’s preferences, is for our waste to stay in the UK. 90% stays in the UK. We also visit most reprocessors we deal with so that we can ensure that everything is done properly. We are unique in that. Most authorities do not have direct contact with the market but contact through agencies. We have a good reputation and have no problem getting items into the marketplace despite the recession. It also cuts out the middle man.

TF There is a myth that things are not separated when they are recycled.

PW The recycling lorry has four compartments and 4 bin lifts. It is very difficult to dispel this myth.

SD Is there a firm who disposes of suites, furniture, etc.?

PW A special collection can be arranged through the Council which is chargeable. Charity groups will collect furniture if it is in a reasonable condition.

5. IG What more could be done to engage with the residents of Aberdeenshire to promote greater engagement with, and ownership of, the management of residual waste?

PW In the last five to six years we have done radio and TV ads, events, door knocking, leaflets, monitoring and adventising trailers. The key thing is that we need to ensure that we keep doing this and justify a budget for it. Waste is not at the top of people’s agenda but we need to ensure that they keep it in mind.

DR People can easily opt out. The public need fresh information.

MD We need to change people’s perceptions. Once the public have worked with the food waste people they realise how much food they are wasting. I think it requires a combination of high level PR and the personal stuff, by which I mean interaction with the public through direct dialogue and other schemes.

SD Do you think a policy of name and shame would be a good idea?

MD No. It’s an interesting idea, but not something that would work on the ground.

PW It has been suggested that we put out information when the Council send out
their council tax invoice but there is also competition for this and is perhaps not the best way to send information as people may not view it positively when it arrives with a bill.

AA Would it help if we were to educate children?

PW There is certainly an element of that – pester power. We used to concentrate on that by going into primary schools. We found it doesn’t really have a long term effect. It doesn’t give the desired results. It is better to approach older kids and adults.

DR We are dealing now with more single occupants and not so many families.

MD Single occupants create more waste. I do think that educating schoolchildren is a good idea as well as the older children and adults. There is room for a school programme to instil good recycling behaviour. It is better now because it is backed up with recycling bins and collection points. In the past these were less widely available so although we educated people, the facilities were less available. Now we educate and we have a better supply of recycling facilities, be that centres and points or the kerbside service, so the education has more effect.

AA TV programme/campaigns do work, e.g. with regard to food waste?

TF We need to engage with residents at all the recycling places.

IG The furniture re-use scheme known as Green home was a great success in the Buckie area.

MD That was not cheap to run and did not divert a lot in terms of recyclable materials.

PW Large grants were required to sustain it.

FH Mini-recycling sites are often full. Are there telephone numbers to let the council know about this?

PW Yes, there are waste line numbers on the recycling containers.

FH It’s just a case of keeping an eye on this.
Thursday 28 January, 2010 Committee Room 2, Woodhill House, Aberdeenshire Council

10.15 am  Presentation by Jack Clark, Waste Manager (Environment) on Waste Treatment Systems

Present:  Councillors Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Cullinane (MC), Duncan (SD), Fleming (TF), Gray (IG), Hood (FH) and Thomas (RT).

Officers:  Jan McRobbie, Corporate Improvement Officer (Scrutiny & Audit) and Jackie Buchanan, (Committee Officer).

The purpose of this investigation is to consider the actions which Aberdeenshire Council has taken for the minimisation of waste and the reduction of landfill and to investigate what could be done and is intended through potential improvements for the future.

Waste Treatment Systems

The waste management industry has seen much change in the short-term and has in particular experienced major changes in last 10 years. Waste as an issue is moving more and more to the forefront particularly in light of the legislation that has come into being. Waste management systems now treat waste and are intended to recover more materials for re-use and limit the amount of waste going for disposal. These systems can also be used to render difficult waste safe. Because of the push to recycle waste, there is a great need to find a usable product from the waste. If you produce an output from waste, you must find someone to buy it. Although, the product comes from “waste”, it is still someone’s raw material source and as such, needs to be of a minimum quality, sufficient to meet the requirements of the purchaser. This end market development requirement has slowed down the development of waste treatment systems.

Waste Treatment Systems

- Recover materials for re-use
- Limit amount of waste for disposal
- Render difficult wastes safe
- Produce a useable product

In relation to establishing a waste treatment plant, there are Risks involved which require to be managed.

- Financial. It is necessary to show that the business venture is going to work in order to get the finance for it. Any backers, whether financial institutions or otherwise need to see a potential return.
• Commercial Viability. It must be shown that the business venture will make money. This can be affected by Acceptability, which is shaped by the following:-

• Public attitudes,
• Legislation - this can also affect whether the process is viable.

In Scotland, only 25% of municipal waste can be processed in Energy from Waste Plants, the remaining 75% of the overall waste being processed would need to be commercial waste. Commercial waste providers, however, cannot give long term commitments in relation to providing their waste for processing. This creates a bit of a problem. In order to obtain finance for Energy to Waste Plants, it will be necessary for contracts to be in place for commercial waste so as to show the availability of a guaranteed future income stream.

• Regulatory

It is necessary to apply for a permit and the Regulator needs to be satisfied on numerous points.

• Planning

Planning consent is also an issue. Planners tend to look at land use whereas for the purposes of waste treatment systems, the Council looks at materials used.

• Political

Very much depends on what local politicians want. This is a very important factor in determining the type of treatment facilities which would be considered.

Another issue is deliverability.

• Contractor. The number of contractors who can build waste treatment plants is limited and some will not work in the UK as the return is better in Europe and North America. Also all local authorities in the UK are vying for the same contractors and geographically as we are situated in the north of Scotland, our location is not ideal.

• Expertise. There is a requirement to ensure that contractors are experts in their field.

• Timeframe. Certain techniques are not viable due to timeframe issues. Time is required to get permits, get planning, build the plant etc. Such timeframes must fit in with the targets that have been set with regard to the diversion of waste from landfill.

• Reliability. The contractors must be reliable so that they deliver what’s promised.

• Targets. There is the requirement to meet waste targets set by the government.
Waste Treatment Systems

- **Risk**
  - Financial
  - Commercial Viability

- **Acceptability**
  - Public Attitudes
  - Legislation
  - Regulatory
  - Planning
  - Political

- **Deliverability**
  - Contractor
  - Expertise
  - Time Frame
  - Reliability
  - Targets

Scottish Government Targets: EfW 25%  landfill 5% recycle 70%

**Systems**

Biological and Thermal systems are the two main types. With regard to Biological systems, the most obvious is In-vessel composting. We are talking about residual waste.

Another biological treatment system is Bio-Drying. This system allows the drying of waste (60% of municipal waste is moisture). Because of the nature of this process, there is a limit as to the type of waste that you can treat because the waste is heated to a high level in order to dry. Once dried out, it is automatically taken to a sorting system which sorts out glass, plastics and paper. What cannot be recycled is turned into a fuel. There is one of these plants situated in the Borders. There really is not a lot to see as no one would go in there because it is full of flies. It is not a complete solution as it needs a concrete purpose at the end as it has compost-like output.

Organic reduction is another type of Biological treatment system. It is a version of MBT (Mechanical Biological Treatment). It is similar to bio-drying. They take the rubbish out and separate it. They then take the organic material and compost it so it has a compost-like output. Unfortunately it doesn’t meet PAS 100. PAS 100 is based on source segregated garden waste and this sets the standard. It basically says that if you have pure garden waste and you can meet the PAS 100 standard you can use it anywhere. If, however, the waste does not meet PAS 100, then in Scotland, it will still remain waste so it cannot be used without permission. Municipal waste (i.e. mixed waste) is outwith the scope of PAS 100. This was done on purpose by the Regulator, SEPA.

In England and Wales agreement was obtained with the Environment Agency in relation to a minimum standard of output for such Biological treatment systems, on a case by case basis. In Scotland however we have an agreed a standard with SEPA so that we can use the municipal compost waste.

Aberdeenshire Council and Argyle & Bute Council were the only two authorities using such systems so SEPA came up with a standard. Unfortunately it is confusing and a bit messy. SEPA have produced an information sheet on stabilising waste. MBTs have suffered due to SEPA's approach.
Recently, however, there has been a move to promote MBTs as a recycling source separate
garden waste, paper and cardboard waste but it is not sufficient to meet the diversion
targets.

Inverboyndie Waste Treatment Plant was built in February 2000. In effect, we were 10 years
too early for the Regulators. Now such plants are becoming the norm. They are not
expensive to build and can deal with a whole range of waste. There is however a problem
with what to do with the output.

Systems

- Biological Treatment Systems
  - In-vessel composting
  - Bio Drying
  - Organic reduction
  - MBT

- PAS 100
- Animal By-Products
- LATs

Inverboyndie MBT

Process at MBT Plant

At the waste reception, inappropriate waste is removed. The bag containing the waste is
then torn open in a bag ripper. If we were to shred unseparated waste, we would have a
problem with materials, so we initially have a bag splitting system which tears open the bags. Anything below 70mm falls through and is sent to the composting tunnels. There are 2 in Inverboyndie and 3 at Kirkhill. The insulation keeps the heat in and there is a moving floor with air pushing through which allows maturation of the waste. It needs time to mature. The waste then goes for screening to remove plastic and bits of glass. Because of risks posed by animal by-products, the process is highly tested and the Regulators are very specific about what process must be used. Criteria were set in 2005. The criteria are not ideal. It came from DEFRA and is not wholly practicable. The criteria insist on 60° heat across the process. An even temperature cannot be achieved because in the centre of the waste, the temperature is always much higher than at the edges. The problem with the temperature being too high is that a lot of bacterial is lost. The bacteria are required as it breaks down the rubbish into compost. Our system is not designed to run it at a high temperature but at an optimum temperature. This creates problems for us. If we do not have a good counterbalance with carbon, the value of the compost is diminished. We need to be able to balance it and this involves not rushing the process, inherent qualities need to be maintained. If large amounts of waste are moving through the system, it is more difficult to manage it properly.

CB – Is DEFRA’s research flawed?

JC – The requirement to have such a high temperature is because of the desire to kill off pathogens in light of the BSE problem and the Foot and Mouth issue. It is based on how much heat is required to get through a bone of lamb. It was determined to be 60° for duration of 2 days. Academically, that is okay but this is not ideal in practice. Really, it is not the process which should count but the output. There is a need to test for pathogens, growing media and heavy metals. If these tests are satisfactory in relation to the output specification, that’s what should count. The rules are very prescriptive as to what system you can use. There should be a change in the rules as more MBT plants are being constructed. This will come about from pressure from the private sector. The number of people who actually operate MBTs are fairly limited but the operators so far will agree that the Regulators are in effect looking at the wrong end of things. If we do not stabilise the material, it will still have pathogens regardless of the DEFRA criteria and these can re-infect the material quite quickly. We ourselves have had some experience of this.

Currently, municipal compost is being considered as fuel for Energy from Waste plants as it is very good at burning. Mixed municipal compost and rejected materials are both very good fuel. It raises the question why bother with the compost process if at the end of the day you are simply burning it all.
The biggest potential market for none source segregated compost is landfill sites which require restoration. There is not at present a great market for garden waste as garden waste is not uniform by its nature and commercial users of compost need to know exactly what they are getting and that is uniform. Some source segregated compost goes now to landfill for restoration.

Market use/availability is the biggest thing that stops treatment schemes.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sample Source</th>
<th>Cu</th>
<th>Pb</th>
<th>Hg</th>
<th>Ni</th>
<th>Zn</th>
<th>Cd</th>
<th>Cr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsorted MSW</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1570</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inverboynie Mean</td>
<td>70.86</td>
<td>171.53</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>198.04</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>13.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inverboynie Median</td>
<td>58.15</td>
<td>121.00</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>21.79</td>
<td>180.0</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<td>Composting Ass</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPA (landfill)</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAS 100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above slide shows the heavy metal content of various wastes. It is includes the standard set by SEPA for landfill and also the PAS 100 standard. In theory, we can meet most standards but it depends on the actual sampling on the day. For example, if a battery is within a batch which is sampled and it is quite a small sample then the readings will be disproportionate. As there are not a lot of heavy metals in our waste to start with, it is not such an issue.

Another waste treatment system is known as Organic Reduction. This reduces the biodegradable content of waste. The regulations provide that we can only landfill so much biodegradable waste.

In Aberdeenshire, the treatment plants have a limit of 50,000 tonnes per annum of waste which can be processed at the two waste treatment plants. In the first 2 years 30,000 tonnes per annum were processed. Now it is 20,000 tonnes per annum. The reduction is because we are recycling 40,000 tonnes. Consequently, the amount of waste we put into the plants has reduced drastically. The dilemma is whether we should close the plants or compost our own garden waste there too. This needs to be investigated.

**Thermal Treatment**
Thermal Treatments

– Incineration
– Gasification
– Pyrolysis
– Plasma Arc
– Anaerobic Digestion
– Autoclaving

Anaerobic Digestion

This is a biological system but is included in the scope of thermal treatment. Everything that is not incinerated is now generally called Advanced Thermal system. Incineration is the most honest way of thermal treatment. In effect you burn it and use the heat to produce steam and electricity. There is a public attitude problem however. The public don’t like incinerators. It also acts as a deterrent to people recycling, if the plant is too big. This created a real problem in Germany. Because of the recession, they had much less waste to burn and they are now in fact importing waste. As the cost of burning is now cheaper than it was, commercial operators are now using that method of disposing of their waste instead of sending it to recycling waste plants. Perhaps this is just a short-term trend until the cost of incineration rises again.

There is a need to show that not only are we only burning residual waste but the size of the incinerator plant is correct and that we are not impacting on other systems, in order to obtain a permit in Scotland from the Regulators.

These plants are not called incinerators but are called Energy from Waste plants as this is publically more acceptable. The bad reputation which incinerators have is as a consequence of incineration not being done correctly in the past. It is being done properly now but the historic prejudice still stays.

Energy from waste plants are built on a moving incline system. It lifts the waste and moves it on to the next stage. It then falls off, is quenched, cooled down and goes to landfill. In theory if it were held longer in the combustion chamber and at a higher temperature, a more thorough burn would occur leaving little to quench. This is not practicable though. The Waste Incineration Directive provides that the waste should be heated to 850° for 2 seconds.

One system, known as Fluidised Beds, was originally intended for single waste schemes. It blows the material into an air stream. The waste then blows around inside a chamber. It is suspended and completely burnt. It is not really suitable for municipal waste as certain waste due to its nature and in the long-term would cause damage to the plant and equipment. An alternative is a Rotary Klin Waste System where rather than blowing the waste around inside a chamber, it is simply moved around. The oscillating kiln is a variation on the rotary kiln and takes less wear than a full rotational system.

All these systems produce electricity as they produce steam. The boilers need to be designed to cool the heat so as to produce steam. There is a requirement to design the
boilers to allow them to operate in such harsh conditions. It is important to avoid re-generating dioxins.

Most of the output from incineration causes pollutants to the atmosphere.

See Slide below

**Incineration**

- Conflicts with recycling
- Pollutants to atmosphere
  - CO, HCl, Hg, TOC, SO2, NOx, O2, H2O and CO2 Particulates
- Legislation
  - SEPA Thermal Treatment Guidance
  - Scottish Governments 25% cap
- CHP

The Waste Incineration Directive sets the standards of outputs. By burning the waste at 850° for 2 seconds, most of the dioxins are killed off and do not reform. The actual pollution control system takes up to two thirds of the plant in size and this mitigates against pollutants being released into the atmosphere. These plants must also comply with the Thermal Treatment Guidance.

SEPA monitors the outputs. Currently there is a 25% cap on incineration which has been set by the Scottish Government. This cap is not detailed in any regulation or law as yet. The Scottish Government proposes to use the planning system to regulate this cap. In effect, no planning consent will be given for an incineration plant if more than 25% of its waste is municipal waste. There are a lot of grey areas and questions which makes it very difficult to plan for the future.

In terms of SEPA’s Thermal Guidance waste plant must be as efficient as possible. In theory it should heat local industry/housing. Clearly there is a major strategic problem in doing this. In some areas of Denmark, for example, 99% of all heating comes from the district heating plants and the majority of this comes from the power plants. Operators are not allowed to cool the water from these power plants but must pass the heat on to the district heating system. We do not have a similar system in Scotland nor the infrastructure for this. Undoubtedly, it would cause issues with the energy suppliers if we tried to do this. It would involve a massive cultural change. Consequently it makes the whole proposition very risky for any intending plant operators.

**FH** - What distance can hot water be transported across. Is it 2-3 kilometres?

**JC** - In Denmark it can be transported up to 20 miles with only a 3° reduction in heat. It is just a case of having the infrastructure in place. Clearly, however, the cost involved in this is huge.
Advance Thermal Treatment

Gasification, Pyrolysis, Plasma

- Partial oxidisation of waste in an oxygen restricted environment.
- Outputs
  - CO, HCl, Hg, TOC, SO2, NOx, O2, H2O and CO2
  - Syngas
  - Char
  - Electricity
  - Heat
  - Ash

With the Pyrolysis system, there is no air present. In Gasification the air is closely controlled and very little is used. With incineration an abundance of air is required.

Most of the advance thermal treatment plants produce gas, char or oil.

Gasification

This system heats gas up so it creates a reaction and creates more heat which will produce a gas. The waste is heated up and then the gas is allowed to come off. The process involves catching the gas and burning it off, normally in a second chamber.

Pyrolysis

This is the same process as gasification but no air is present.
There is a Gasification plant in the Borders. Waste goes into the chamber, oil or gas is injected to heat up the waste and the air. The air flow into the chamber is controlled adding enough air to allow it smoulder slowly. With no air whatsoever, there are fewer emissions; we are simply releasing gas. The gas goes into a second chamber where it is burnt.

Outputs are as detailed in the slide above. These outputs are going to be filtered anyway. The aim is to get a gas, by a slow burning (oxidisation) of waste. The gas actually can be used in boilers and potentially as a fuel. These systems are preferred to incineration as they involve a better process as they are not so aggressive and more controlled. They are, however, more expensive to run and are really designed for a single stream waste. They are susceptible if moisture content is high.

**Plasma**

Plasma is very expensive. It does the same job as Pyrolysis but heats waste by using a plasma torch. The waste is heated to extremes. It results in a molecular disassociation, in other words it breaks down compounds/elements into their component parts. They require potentially 1,000 tonnes a day to produce enough surplus energy to sell to the market. They are new to the energy waste market and need a while to develop for commercial use.

The advantages and disadvantages of Gasification over Pyrolysis are difficult to quantify. The systems are more or less the same. There are however more gasification plants than Pyrolysis plants. This is probably due to economics. Gasification has a longer track record, is cheaper to build and is politically more acceptable.

**Autoclave**

- Breakdown waste using high pressure, high temperature steam.
- Outputs
  - Floc
  - Recyclate
  - Waste water
  - rejects

**Autoclave**

This process has only recently been applied to municipal waste. It utilises high pressure steam. There is no need to pre-sort. The waste is put in a rotating cylinder and steam is blasted in and the waste stays in there for a number of hours. Any organic material is broken down and you end up with what is known as the floc. In effect all the water has been dried off. The floc product is 100% organic but there is a requirement to find a use for the output. The system falls down here.

One full size plant has been commissioned in Newcastle this year but there are no other major plants in the UK. Floc can be turned into building products in theory but there is no proof that it will be used. The other option is to gasify the output. This is easier to do as some of the materials that cause problems have already been removed so you have a cleaner output but it involves another process whether Gasification, Incineration or Pyrolysis.
The floc cannot be composted as it has a high concentration of heavy metals.

Clearly the process must have some merits as the plant in Newcastle is large and has no local authority contracts to set it up. This process may have great potential as the material is clean and easy to separate and pass onto the market place. It does require a really good odour control. It also requires a lot of water as part of the process. Furthermore the waste water would need to go through a waste water plant as it is effluent. You could recycle the steam aspect by recycling the steam.

**Anaerobic Digestion**

- Biological process breaking down organic waste under aerobic conditions.
  - Gas
  - Produces electricity
  - Steam
  - Digestate

*Anaerobic Digestion*

This system is used in the waste industry to treat sewage sludge. It is done with the absence of air. It works in dry waste now but previously was mainly a wet process. Bacteria break the waste down and produce methane and the methane is used to produce electricity. If mixed municipal waste is used the output is regarded as waste not fertiliser which causes problems. PAS 110 is the new standard for anaerobic digestate. However, this standard relies on the material going in being source separated so it is not applicable for mixed municipal waste.

It has been used with source sorted waste at the moment. It is very different to use it with mixed municipal waste. There are timeframe issues for this and Regulators don’t know how to deal with the outputs for some of these new technologies.

From SEPA’s prospective if you take a process and apply common sense they are concerned someone who has a similar process which is not quite the same may wish similar consideration and then SEPA could lose control. You need to prove your case to the Regulators. Anaerobic digestion of mixed municipal waste is not used much in Scotland. There are plants however in Germany. Germans have a better plan for dealing with waste.

SEPA were a relatively new body and required to get to grips with a steep learning curve. There are many new technologies coming in particularly as landfill will become a very expensive method of waste disposal because of landfill tax. The unfortunate thing is that generally in the UK we are really slow in relation to new technologies. There is not a new Regulatory regime covering these technologies. Most waste treatment plants are covered by pollution prevention control permits.

It is a pity that landfill has such a bad name because in many ways this is still the best method of managing waste. The UK is very good at it. The only problem is in relation to landfill waste which can be reused. It should be remembered that a lot of money can be made from extracting methane from landfill. There is nothing actually wrong with landfill
when it is done properly. This involves using sufficient liners, capping the sites and taking off the gas. In the UK we have also had mineral extraction restored with landfill. We also do not really have a methane problem in older landfills in Aberdeenshire as the soil breaks it down so there is no great need to cap the landfill sites. In fact, problems can be created by burning methane and that in itself causes an undesirable output.

There is a consensus that everything breakdown over time. It does not always happen. It has been shown that newspapers / magazines can last in landfill for considerable time. Plastics don’t break down; they will be there for a long time.
Friday 19 February, 2010
Committee Room 1, Woodhill House, Aberdeen

11.30am – Meeting with other local authorities:
Bruce Reekie, Perth and Kinross Council, Waste Services Manager,
Environmental and Consumer Services.

Present: Councillor Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Cullinane (NC),
Fleming (TF) and Hood (FH).

In attendance: Jan McRobbie and Jackie Buchanan.

The purposes of this investigation is to consider the actions which Aberdeenshire Council has taken for the minimisation of waste and the reduction of landfill and to investigate what more could be done and is intended through potential improvements for the future.

1. **Tell us about your job and how your council has chosen to collect its municipal waste and make provision for recycling?**

   My job focuses on waste and recycling policy and strategy including kerbside recycling and recycling from commercial premises where the relevant occupier has chosen to use Perth and Kinross Council for this purpose. I am involved in developing recycling centres and recycling points and any other new related waste developments within the Service. I am also involved in Perth and Kinross Council's waste contracts and procurement e.g. residual waste treatment. I am responsible for all waste minimisation initiatives and I am involved in litter enforcement and the Comfort Scheme Partnership. All my functions are underpinned by an education and awareness role.

   Previously we had a 3 bin system. We did a survey with householders and they had confirmed that 3 bins were all they wanted. Any more than that would have been too much. As part of the survey we asked householders which types of materials they wanted collected. We operated a system where we use blue lidded bins for paper, brown lidded bins for garden waste and green lidded bins for general waste. Following the survey results, we changed the blue lidded bins so that they were used for paper, cardboard, cans and plastic bottles. The blue lidded bins are collected on a fortnightly basis. We also added food waste to the brown lidded bins and for this issued householders with a kitchen caddy for use in the kitchen. The brown lidded bins are also collected fortnightly other than over Christmas and New Year when we move to a monthly collection to allow for the collection of the blue and green lidded bins.

   Green lidded bins are collected fortnightly.

   With regard to commercial waste, we operate a single stream system. This is based on demand. For example bars/nightclubs have mostly glass and cardboard, therefore we have a separate collection for glass and cardboard. In summary we operate a co-mingled system for domestic waste and a single stream system commercial waste.
PB With regard to the domestic waste, is it segregated at the kerbside or not?

BR Domestic waste is segregated later, not at the kerbside. We have a material recovery facility which segregates this material. This was acquired following a procurement process. As a Council, we monitor the market in order to determine what can go into the blue lidded bins. The market for mixed plastics is not good at the moment but conversely the market for plastic bottles is very good. By having a tight specification, this helps the segregation of waste too.

PB Do the public follow the rules in relation to this specification?

BR Yes. They are very good. This is enforced through the Perth and Kinross Bin Policy. Householders were informed through the policy what constitutes contamination, side waste and a crocodile lid etc. and what action would be taken. As the new kerbside recycling system has been rolled out, we are flexible for the first two collection cycles, but if householders do not heed our warnings and put out incorrect waste, the bin will not be lifted. We have been very strict on this. Initially, this created a large volume of calls from householders. It has now settled down. We now have very little contamination and a good presentation of bins. Contamination tends to be in good faith e.g. householders putting their newspapers in plastic bags and then into the bin. The crews have been well versed in the Council’s policy and know exactly what to accept and not to accept and where to allow a bit of flexibility. Contamination rates at the material recovery facility are 5-9%.

NC Is a crocodile lid where a bin has been overfilled?

BR Yes. I should have explained that.

2. Which aspects of your current recycling and waste policies do you think are successful and which aspects could be improved?

The kerbside recycling has been very successful. I think this partly due to the fact the Council have maintained previous bin capacity despite fortnightly collections. Some Councils reduced quite significantly their bin capacity by reducing the size of container or reducing the frequency of collection. We haven’t gone down that route.

The charging for special uplifts has also been successful and the cost we charge reflects the collection costs we incur.

The assisted lift service which we provide have also worked out very well. To qualify for an assisted lift (this means that the Council will collect your bin from a suitable place at your home) you must be unable to present your bin yourself and have no-one else living with you that is able to do so. We are in fact looking to improve this service by endeavouring to increase the recycling aspect of it.

Our procurement has also been successful in relation to securing contracts for
waste outlets. We ensure that our contracts are for a number of years which provides greater security. Some Councils I know have spot contracts. These are fine as long as market conditions for processing and materials are stable.

We have been successful in controlling waste arisings. Previously we had 106,000 tones per annum. It is now down to 96,000 tonnes per annum. Much of the decrease is due to how we manage commercial waste. We have re-orientated our commercial waste services to commercial recycling services; this along with our household waste minimisation initiatives has had the effect of, to date, controlling our waste arisings.

We also found that the skip hiring costs were high due to the relative landfill tax and other associated costs. We have changed the scheme so that the skip hire is part of a recycling service. Basically we hire out skips provided 70% of the waste is recycled.

I must admit that waste arisings have also been helped by the economic climate too as waste is dropping off across the country due to the downturn.

We have had very good success in engaging with the local communities through talks, presentations etc. In relation to any new initiatives, we have spoken to community groups and community councils, explaining what we are doing.

The next step is to get communities to take action themselves. We set up a Community Waste Fund. Through this, communities can bid for funds. So far we have had a recycling paint scheme set up, a plastic bag free zone set up where all householders are given a cotton bag to use instead of plastic bags. This has been done on a local basis.

We do need to have better information on how well people use the kerbside recycling service through participation and capture rate data. This needs to be monitored more closely.

I would also like to see on board weighing for commercial users. Their waste is calculated on a volume basis rather than tonnage at the moment. It would be helpful to have the tonnage data sourced to assess and charge in relation to the uplift and disposal costs.

With regard to food waste, there is a huge amount generated by commercial outlets. We need to capture this food waste. We also need to secure a long term residual waste treatment contract which is not landfill. This is the number one priority for the Council with regard to Waste Management.

FH With regard to the kerbside recycling do you have any idea what percentage of waste is collected from this?

BR On average, about 45% of the waste is recycled whether through kerbside or composting. However, we need better participation and capture of data. We also need to know by locality, how each area participates and measure this.
We have found in the past the percentage of recycling can differ between different areas. We need target our marketing to specific areas once we have worked out what the problem is.

PB How far do you think you could push the figures up?

BR Based on the current schemes, I think we could hit 49%. Very optimistically and assuming that we implement everything and everyone uses systems as they should, we could reach 60%.

At the moment, we are starting to play round the edges with what is possible. With regard to recycling and composting we are talking about 1 or 2% increase. 60% is really pushing it. To get the percentages as high as this, we need to consider how much money would be required to be put in. It is a law of diminishing returns particularly in rural areas. The carbon impact of our waste and recycling operations needs to be considered against our recycling and composting rate. Our new waste management plan gives a commitment to carry out a carbon assessment.

FH Does the Community Waste Fund you mentioned earlier come from income received through recycling?

BR The recycling income does come into the waste strategy budget. However, we have a separate source of money set aside for the Community Waste Fund. It is administered by the Quality of Life Fund which is an independent body to whom we give money. We assess the applications for funds from the Community Waste Fund. The maximum that can be applied for is £15,000.

PB Am I correct in saying that you incinerate 45,000 tonnes of waste per annum?

BR We do have access to the Dundee Energy Limited recycling facility and we use this as and when there is spare capacity. Currently this amounts to around 500 tonnes per annum. A few years ago, we were looking at the energy from waste route but this has changed due to the Scottish Government’s policy on this. Regardless of what technology is used ultimately an output is produced. Energy from waste is predominantly the final treatment particularly as some outputs cannot be reused. It is certainly a better option than landfill.

PB Bearing in mind the charges you impose for special uplifts, do you find you have a problem with fly tipping?

BR It is in fact not too bad compared to other areas in Scotland. We also find that fly tipping is not caused as a result of the special uplift charge. The majority of fly tipping in our area seems to arise from householders. When we investigate, we quite often find that often they would be quicker going to a recycling centre. I think it is more of an education and awareness issue. We are addressing this by setting up a Community Fly Tipping Fund.

Through the Community Fly Tipping Fund a local community can apply for up to £3,000 so that they can clean up the area, fence it off and even put up a sign.
to deter fly tipping. In effect the community take ownership and find the solution to the problem. This means that areas of recurring fly tipping that are not on Council owned land can be dealt with through community intervention.

We have also set up a Fly Tipping Forum. Fly tipping is an issue which effects various organisations. The Council are involved in relation to public ground, SEPA are involved on private ground and the Police are also have a role to play. There needs to be an intelligence based approach jointly amongst all these agencies. From my experience the majority of fly tipping is caused by a minority of people.

3. Do you apply the same policies across rural and urban areas – and what are the arguments for, and against, this?

CR We apply very much the same policies across the board. Our approach is very much that there is to be no rural disadvantage in relation to waste and recycling collections. The Council see it as their statutory duty to carry this out. We try to provide an equality of service across the board.

About 90% of householders have access to a recycling service. Some rural houses have only a blue and green bin but not a brown one as we cannot offer garden and food collections, due to capacity, across the whole Council area. In our experience the majority of rural householders tend to compost already. However, if householders do not have an outlet, for example for food waste, we do offer food waste digesters. We do collect commercial waste from rural areas and we have recycling centres and recycling points spread across our whole Council area.

PB Who uses community composting?

BR With regard to community composting we have found that there is very little desire for this because of the distribution of brown lidded bins which are used to collect garden waste and also because of the use of home composters. We would need to have a community interest before we had a community composting initiative. Funds are potentially available for this through the Community Waste Fund if the need were to arise.

4. How well do you currently meet Scottish Government targets for waste minimisation and recycling, and what are your plans to meet the future targets?

BR We have already achieved 0% waste growth as we have had a reduction in waste arisings. Currently we are projecting a recycling and composting rate of 44% for 2009/2010 and therefore have met the national recycling and composting target of 40% for 2010.

With regard to the target set by the Scottish Government of 50% of waste being recycled or composted by 2013, I would say that we were working towards meeting that target.
With regard to the achievement of future targets, I would give the following as an example of how these could be achieved; we produce around 100,000 tonnes of waste per annum. We project that around 50,000 of tonnes of this can be recycled or composted. The other 50,000 tonnes needs to be put through a pre-treatment process in order to extract the 20% of recycling which will be required to reach the 70% national recycling and composting target. The output of the pre-treatment process, (25%) can then go to energy to waste plant with the outputs amounting to the 5% to landfill.

That being said pre-treatment of waste is carried out at a considerable cost so further investment will be required to meet the Government target of 70%. Any savings on landfill tax are not ‘savings’ as landfill tax is not funded by central government. In other words, local authorities will not get any budget from central government for landfill tax. The population growth in our area is also an issue. There will be an additional 36,000 inhabitants added by 2035. This increased burden on waste being produced also makes it very difficult to sustain 0% growth.

**FH** Do you have any contracts with the private sector in relation to processing your waste?

**BR** Yes. We have contracts for all our recyclables – cans, glass, paper, batteries etc. We also have contracts in relation to using landfill sites and in relation to processing the materials in our blue lidded bins and brown lidded bins. We are in the process of setting up a contract in relation to processing the garden waste from our recycling centres. We also need a residual waste treatment and are currently looking into our procurement process for this.

5. Are you working jointly with any other council in planning shared provision for future infrastructure? And if so, will the Scottish Government’s planned cap on the percentage of waste which can go to incineration/thermal disposal impact on any plans?

**BR** The Scottish Government has capped our waste at 26,500 tonnes which can go for thermal treatment. We therefore need to consider pre-treating waste which will have significant cost implications. We have consulted on a Waste Management Plan for Perth and Kinross Council. The previous plan was out of date. We have consulted with householders, other local authorities and the waste management industry. On the whole, we do not have a lot of residual waste. In the UK setting, it is a very small amount indeed. Looking at a 25 year contract the amount of residual waste we produce equals one year of Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authorities residual waste. This impacts on how attractive we are to the market. We have a small amount of waste and the situation is made worse by the fact that the Scottish Government position is not clear. Geographically also we are situated quite far north and a number of planning applications for waste treatment plants have recently been refused. The market down south is secure and is firmly established. To any contractor there is much risk involved in coming north as the position is not ideal. As a Council, we are looking at what shared services are available. We appreciate that we may need to go into partnership with another local authority so as to be
an attractive option to the waste management industry. Fortunately the Scottish Government has not stuck local authorities together on a geographical basis this time round. The Scottish Government is now saying that local authorities should come together where there is appropriate synergy to do so.

FH Glasgow City Council is understood to be investing in waste treatment equipment, are you aware of this?

BR We looked at what other Councils were doing and whether their strategy fits in with ours. It is very dependant on what waste you are feeding into the process. This determines whether you can fit in with the other local authorities. With regard to joint procurement, another issue is transport costs in relation to waste. Furthermore, in relation to a shared service, there is the issue of location. If the waste treatment plant is to be situated within your area, how will the local people feel about extra waste from the other local authority coming into their locality?

6. What would make your job easier? Are you aware of good practice elsewhere which you would like to see applied in Perth and Kinross?

PB Certainly, in terms of the Scottish Government Policy, we took the lead across the UK in 2003 with the National Waste Plan. Unfortunately, since then momentum has been lost. There is a new Waste Strategy Plan due to be published this summer. In relation to policy, hopefully this will give certainty as what we need to do. We also need certainty as to funding and regulation. All these aspects need to be consistent and permanent so as to satisfy local authorities and the waste management industry prior to entering into any potential waste contract.

With regard to good practice, I think the concept of producer responsibility is very good. This needs to be rolled out over a national basis though. For example, the waste electrical and batteries producer responsibility has worked very well whereby the producers have a responsibility to meet the costs of reuse, recycling, recovering or disposing of them. The producer responsibility could be extended to supermarkets in relation to plastic packaging and glass, for example. Local authorities have very little control over waste arisings, producers need to take responsibility for this.

Another good practice is the use of re-use containers at recycling centres. This is a scheme where furniture, bric a brac etc are deposited in secure containers and local charities can then take these goods and sell them on. Currently this practice will be trialled at the Friarton Recycling Centre, Perth.

Another good initiative is in relation to street sweepings. Can we recycle these? The dust and fines from street sweepings – can these be used for composting or can they form part of construction materials? Currently our Council produces 3,000 tonnes per annum. If this could be recycled it could add an extra 3% to our waste recycling figures.

Another good practice is in relation to special uplifts and the idea that charities
could do this for councils and recycle the items being uplifted if in a re-usable condition. Currently all special uplifts collected by Perth and Kinross Council go to landfill.

Another issue is in relation to the amount of plasterboard and mattresses which end up in the recycling centres. We need to find an outlet to recycle both of these. Mattresses are large bulky and it would be good if they could be recycled.

AA  Would you say that the easy stuff has been done now?

BR  Yes, especially in relation to bio-degradable waste. We are simply trying to maximise the efficiency of the current waste and recycling services.

PB  I would explain that we do intend to put questions to the Scottish Government as a Committee.

BR  We have spoken to them ourselves. We need them to clear the uncertainty over policy direction, targets and the landfill allowance scheme. This has been suspended until 2011 but no one knows what will happen after that. There may be penalties which will require to be paid in the future.

PB  We intend to ask the Scottish Government about how they arrived at the figures they set for their targets.

BR  The targets set are very difficult to achieve. They are based on the best in Europe but in Europe they calculate the figures differently from us. In Europe what they describe as “municipal waste” includes all waste in the area. If you have control over all waste it is much easier to reach the target. In Scotland, we only deal with a small fraction of the total waste, around 20%. This makes our job very difficult. Based on an equivalent calculation of figures in Europe they are in fact only recycling 40 – 45% of what we would call municipal waste. Europe has now convinced DEFRA to look at their definition of municipal waste. We need this, amongst other factors, clarified before we can put any contracts out to tender.

FH  Are you are aware of any government targets set for non-municipal waste?

BR  In the new Waste Strategy Plan due to be published this summer, Scottish Government has started to look at non-municipal waste targets. They are however no way as stringent as those placed on the local authority. To my mind this is unfair. Targets should be set for all waste coming through on an equal basis so that there is a level playing field.

FH  Is this zero waste plan to include non-municipal waste?

BR  Yes. The consultation has been completed in relation to Scotland’s Zero Waste Plan. The consultation includes non-municipal waste.

FH  If 80% of waste is non-municipal, then that area should be targeted.
It is recognised that commercial/industrial waste can be source segregated. Because of landfill tax, commerce and industry have an increasing financial imperative to recycle. Householders do not have this direct incentive.

With regard to our Community Waste Fund, I would explain that each application for funds is decided on a case by case basis. For example there was a bike recycling project which was given £15,000 as seed corn funding. This has enabled them to secure funds from other sources. This project involved the refurbishment and resale of second hand bikes at discounted rates. There has been the community repaint scheme which involved those involved collecting reusable paint and either carrying out the painting work or donating paint. The Kinross-shire plastic bag project which involved distributing cotton bags to local householders to use instead of plastic bags. There has also been the starter packs project. This project collects cutlery, crockery, bed linen and small electrical items which were given as a starter pack to people who were being housed and moving into property. The fund helped the project to acquire and install shelving to store goods, stepladders and fire extinguishers.

One other matter that I meant to mention was the internal waste management plan for Perth and Kinross Council. We discovered recycling rates varied widely from building to building within the Council. A whole range of actions have been put down and an Action Group set up. We are looking for a 10% per annum reduction in waste in schools and other council buildings.
Friday 12 March, 2010  
The Marr Room, the Annex, Woodhill House, Aberdeen

11.30am Meeting with other local authorities:  
Colin Clark, Head of Waste Management, The Highland Council.

Present  
Councillor Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Duncan (SD), Fleming (TF), Hood (FH) and Thomas (RT).

In Attendance: Jan McRobbie and Jackie Buchanan

The purpose of this investigation is to consider the actions which Aberdeenshire Council has taken for the minimisation of waste and the reduction of landfill and to investigate what more could be done and is intended through potential improvements for the future.

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<th>1. SD</th>
<th>Tell us about your job and how your council has chosen to collect its municipal waste and make provision for recycling?</th>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Highland Council has the largest land area of all councils in the UK. It is about four times the area of Aberdeenshire Council and it has a population of 214,000 approximately. We have seriously super sparse areas along with high population urban areas. Consequently, we have fairly unique issues in relation to waste management. There are a few pre-cursors to what I have to say, particularly in relation to recycling. Highland Council before and when I arrived was one of the worst performing councils in relation to recycling. In effect there was no recycling. This was a legacy from the old District Councils who were in the habit of getting rid of rubbish as cheaply as possible which meant landfill. Highland Council had lots of small landfill sites. The starting point therefore was as near as zero as it could be. This was compounded by a near complete absence of useful modern infrastructure aside from the actual landfill sites. With regard to residual waste collection we have 240 litre bins which are collected throughout the Highland Council area weekly. There is a small exception to this but it is so small that as a percentage is almost irrelevant. Prior to the Strategic Waste Fund there was virtually no recycling done. Interestingly, however, up to about 12 years ago Inverness had a card and paper collection for recycling purposes. This was suspended as part of a cost cutting exercise about 1 year before the publication of the first National Waste Strategy. In effect therefore Highland Council started with a blank canvass. In 2003 Highland Council submitted a comprehensive bid to the Strategic Waste Fund in order to implement the Area Waste Plan in full. The bid was determined by the Scottish Executive to be too expensive and was rejected. Highland Council reverted to smaller bids for front end recycling through the Strategic Waste Fund but had to shoe horn its own aspirations into what could be funded, concentrating on two things namely urban areas and tonnage.</td>
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Personally I am not a fan of targets. It is my experience that they lead to the law of unintended consequences being played out in large measure. We had tonnage targets in as part of our bid. In part due to the lack of infrastructure we went down the box collection route to collect good quality paper which is heavy in weight and has a good resale value and also aluminium (and ferrous) cans as cans also attract a good value. We also received funding for green waste collections which continue all year round. Although green waste is not traditionally very high in the winter months, I always had the intention of introducing a Food Waste Programme so wanted the funding all year round to combine the two. The Food Waste Programme has yet to start running but I would say that with regard to the green waste, there are particular spikes throughout the winter months particularly in November and February.

We introduced monthly mixed dry recyclate collection in many rural areas but not Wester Ross or North-west Sutherland as these areas are very remote. However we are looking at ways of servicing them and have constructed a transfer station in Ullapool and will have one in Gairloch by the end of the year. In East Sutherland we have a most comprehensive weekly kerbside recycling scheme operated on our behalf by a Social Enterprise which has created 16 jobs. It was originally funded through the Strategic Waste Fund and it received lots of political support during the applications stages. We fund another 8 social enterprises. This includes services including the recovery of white goods and furniture for repair and then reuse within the Highland area or recycling. We have recently concluded a deal with the Waste Electrical Compliance Scheme where we have a Social Enterprise Group contracted to take electrical goods away and reuse what they can.

We constructed 5 new recycling centres and improved others through the Strategic Waste Fund. We also have 211 recycling points which take green, brown and clear glass, cans and paper. Many also have textile banks. We have the textile banks also at the rural locations which are operated through a Social Enterprise Group.

**PB**  How long have you been in post?

**CC** Just under 10 years. We will do 35% recycling this year. We operate 2 landfill sites and I have 300 staff. Our budget is about £25,000,000 a year.

**FH** I am interested in the Social Enterprise Groups. How long have these been going on for and were they difficult to set up?

**CC** The origins of our partnerships with Social Enterprise (SE) Groups go back to the landfill tax credits era. We had a Waste Strategy Sub Committee which administered the fund. Several embryonic groups realised that they could survive and perhaps prosper if they managed to get funded on a routine basis through the fund. Some groups became semi-permanent and developed into something of a responsibility for members and officials after being in place for a number of years. We now fund a range of organisations from truly community based using volunteers to charitable businesses whose waste related income is only part of their total income stream.
For me it is important to ask what they do – do they carry out work the council does or do they work in an area the council would not enter? The latter seems the logical place for SEs to be. It is for this reason that the business model adopted by GREAN in Golspie seems the most fragile as they simply collect waste and the Council themselves are good at that. With regard to Social Enterprises the most important thing is that we keep in touch with them and audit them. They need to know that the Council is not a cash cow and that our relationship is based on the provision of an effective service for reasonable payment. Council funding is in two tranches – one based on the old strategic waste fund and the second on the disposal equivalent cost per tonne of waste diverted. Last year the council and SEs agreed to phased reductions of the fixed portion so that in time the only cost to the council will be based on a disposal equivalent which is easier in budgeting terms.

FH You mentioned that paper and aluminium have particularly good values. Do you have good long-term markets and contracts?

CC There is a lot of misinformation from industry and would be experts in relation to recyclates. There was an alleged great calamity a year ago when the perception was that no one wanted recyclates. This was nonsense although there was a marked dip in the market, it was a dip from a very high and perhaps unsustainable level. There is also a perception that we as local authorities require to make things “attractive” to industry if we are to survive. This is not the case. We are there to do business with them and can and should be hard nosed about this. The big downside of having a long-term contract in place is that if the value of the recyclates increase over the term of the contract, the Council can lose a lot of money. At Highland, we try to generate a competitive market between the different competitors who want to buy our recyclates. At a maximum of every three months or so we phone round to see who will give us the best deal. However on the larger question, I have never been of the view that Councils should be commodity traders, and this view has some resonance with colleagues in Scotland. As Chair of the COSLA Waste Officers Network I think it is fair to say that we would prefer a different model to operate which would not leave councils exposed to the vagaries of the markets.

In my view (and in the view of my colleagues), producer responsibility should be extended to provide producer responsibility for other products not simply batteries and white electrical goods. We should include paper, glass etc. In 2001, I suggested to COSLA that the local authorities set up a selling consortium for all Councils. This would have been really easy to set and would have been most beneficial. Unfortunately nothing happened. The proposal appeared years later I think from Government - WRAP; but by that stage however its time had come and gone as many councils already had long-term contracts in place for their recyclates.

Extended producer responsibility should be applied now to difficult wastes such as carpets, mattresses, MDF, Gyproc and should be extended to pretty much everything in due course.
| **RT** | You mentioned that you have rural recycling collections which have mixed recyclates in a 240 litre bin. I assume that you need to sort this out when it’s returned. Is this a major task? |
| **CC** | Because we lack infrastructure, we send our dried recyclates to the central belt where they are sorted. It’s been a long held wish of mine to have our own materials recycling facility to sort waste. We do however have a shed and I now have a report from WRAP on the viability of siting a MRF in Highland. Although it is not final yet WRAP have costed out the project and it seems to stack up financially. Subject to the details of the final report, I hope to put the case before the Council later in the year. This will act as a buttress against market fluctuations. We will be able to store recycled materials and watch the market for the best time to sell. We will also be able to determine the quality of our output. Local authorities generally tend to give materials to middle men. Middle men quite often have long-term contracts with users. If so, they may be willing to pay a higher price for the materials in order to sustain the supply. |

2. **RT** Which aspects of your current recycling and waste policies do you think are successful and which aspects could be improved?  

Id It has been a major success simply to get recycling going in the Highlands. With regard to the harder edge stuff, the recycling centres have been very successful. They are very well used and the percentage diverted is high. More work could be done but the recycling centres are right up there as a successful initiative. As I mentioned, 240 litre bins have been introduced in rural area for recyclates. This has been really successful. The quality of material is very high. There is an argument that the boxes provide a much higher quality of material rather than the 240 litre bins. Thanks to the public and our waste awareness people, we have a very high quality of recycleate. Our people are very visible. They go out in the collection vehicles, do school visits and attend many local and community meetings. Consequently, the public have responded extremely well. We had great success with the box kerbside collection from very early on but now I think the boxes have reached the end of their lives. We need to change the recycling boxes if we want to see the success continue to grow. We publish a waste data report which gives a blow by blow account of what Highland do every year in relation to waste. This includes tonnage data, recycling data, the lot. Our data management and presentation is excellent and puts the data we have on private sector waste arisings/collections data to shame.  

**RT** How successful have you been in reducing household waste arisings?  

**CC** The waste reduction target was proposed by the Scottish Government in its consultation on Zero Waste. The original target to stem growth to 0% by 2010 was set by the then Scottish Executive. I am ambivalent about this target as local government cannot influence it to any great extent. Thus provided it is not left at local government’s door, I don’t mind whether we have one or not. The important thing is that if we have a target, it is achievable and the owner of the target has the necessary mechanisms to attempt to achieve it. Local government have very little ability to determine waste arisings although we can
and do support home composting, the real nappies initiative and schemes such as these.

We can take some credit for the reductions in waste arising through education and awareness but in essence the main mechanisms for actual reductions lie with central government.

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<th>What methods have you used in order to encourage recycling?</th>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>We have produced leaflets in-house. We have used the national logo but do the leaflets in-house as they are more cost efficient. In fact, we can produce a sample for Aberdeenshire Council if you wish. We have waste awareness people locally in each area who are part of the local community. They don't simply limit themselves to visiting schools but as I have said already go on the collection vehicles so they know what is actually being put in the vehicles. They also attend a lot of local meetings. We also have bespoke leaflets and information for each area rather than generic leaflets.</td>
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<th>FH</th>
<th>You mention that you don’t like targets but what level would you like to see the recycling done at?</th>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Yes, you are right, I don’t like targets. If you apply targets in the public sector you tend to get a perverse outcome. An example of this can be clearly seen with the NHS. Their officials move from one target to the next. The NHS in effect has been lambasted with targets. A service based target works much better. Rather than saying that we need 70% recycling we should be saying that we want a community to be given a service which allows them to recycle a set number of items in a certain way. We want to consider how many recycling centres and points we should have for certain sizes of populations/geographical areas, thus providing services that communities want without needing to worry about arbitrary targets. It is also from a budgetary point of view far more transparent to specify a service rather than a target.</td>
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We need to fully embrace what Europe has done for the last 30 years. We need to stop pretending that we cannot do this or that it is too difficult. Basically in terms of the targets we need to recycle as much as we can. In Highland we carried out a trial to answer the percentage question – how much can be recycled from the kerbside. We identified a village and got 125 volunteers and collect their food and green waste every week and their dry recyclables and residual waste every two weeks. We ensured that a major education and support programme was put in place for these volunteers. 65 - 75% is diverted from the wheelie bin waste on a regular basis. This however does not answer the specific question in relation to recycling within the general population as all parties taken place were volunteers, so they were willing participants. However it does describe perhaps the current upper limit. But it should be borne in mind that kerbside waste is only part of all the waste streams that councils handle and not all are recyclable to the 70% extent.

| TF  | You have spoken about the rural 240 litre bins and the urban boxes for recycling. What’s the cut-off point between rural areas and urban areas? |
There is no philosophical edge to it but a practical cut-off point. Basically, we determine how many boxes we can squeeze into a vehicle. With regard to the boxes we discovered that in the main settlements you start with the 30 mile limit zone and work out the way.

One of the issues for the rural areas is that the travel distances can be huge. There is no sense for example in having a vehicle coming from Inverness to Sutherland.

3. Do you apply the same policies across rural and urban areas – and what are the arguments for, and against, this?

Because the targets are weight based we chase tonnes which are easiest to get in urban areas. This is certainly not an equitable system so we have done out best to creep out from the urban settlements with boxes. It is still not enough. We have also re-jigged the routes to try to squeeze services into areas where otherwise there would be none. The most obvious unequal situation arises in Sutherland where GREAN provides a weekly recyclate collection in the east, and in the west and north there is no collections at all. However some parts of the rural Highlands get lots of investment and we have recycling services even on the Small Isles and Ardnamurchan. We do our level best to fit what we can into rural parts. It might not be perfect and it is certainly not uniform; but it seems to work given what we have achieved.

Throughout the Highlands there are very remote which are picturesque and are used for picnicking etc. Does this create a problem?

There is some interesting history here but we now have it down to a fine art. I think we have managed to knock it off in terms of keeping the place clean and lifting residual waste bins. I have discovered that you should never underestimate the knowledge of the drivers. They know the routes really well and are extremely efficient. Local people are good at knowing their own areas and as such I do not favour a top down approach.

Am I right in saying there is no road access to Knoydart? What do you do there?

These people have their own view as to what they want. We managed to establish a mini recycling centre and what is collected here and also the residual waste is taken off Knoydart by boats and containers at a cost of £1000 per trip for two skips.

I understand that some waste from Highland is transported to Aberdeenshire to be disposed of within a landfill site there?

I am a great believer in the proximity principle. However, we are fighting against the 30 year legacy when waste management was not a priority for central government. It was not on the radar up until about 10 years ago and as such, landfill which was so cheap was widely used. However on the closure of Longman in Inverness no alternative provision had been made and as such a
contract had to be put out which was won by an Aberdeenshire company. There has been a new tender recently however and the waste is now going to a landfill near Falkirk. In 1997 Highland Council began a PFI for Integrated Waste Management Services. Because of various factors, (the advent of the Area Waste Plan process being the major one), the project was stopped. At a country wide level although central Government knew that significant change to the way wastes were managed was urgently required, by the late 1970s nothing had happened as landfill was so cheap. The Government much later realised that the Landfill Directive was actually going to have a significant effect and the threat of infraction proceedings in the late 1990s created a scramble to show that we intended to change our practices. This is why there has been such a rush over the last 10 years to change and why we are as a country only now recycling 35% of our MSW.

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<th>4. <strong>How well do you currently meet Scottish Government targets for waste minimisation and recycling, and what are your plans to meet the future targets?</strong></th>
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willingness to do it.

**FH** You mention producer responsibility. When we meet with the Scottish Government we could ask them and also the UK Government about this.

**CC** Yes. There is talk of extending this. The obvious ones to hit are the difficult waste. This would be things such as carpets, MDF, tetra pack, mattresses, Gyproc. This could certainly be done but local authorities would need central Government to implement it by statute. At the moment we have 5 banks across the whole of the Highlands for tetra packs as part of the national trial. It would have been far more sensible to allow local authorities to add banks to the list (so long as the vehicle has capacity to collect the waste) at no cost rather than sticking to the numbers in the trial.

**FH** The Scottish Government has set a 25% cap on energy from waste. Aberdeenshire Council recently turned down an application for a EFW plant in Peterhead. How realistic is the EFW cap?

**CC** The EFW cap has been the subject of discussion between COSLA and the Scottish Government and also formed part of the consultation on the Zero Waste Plan. In its present form I believe the cap is challengeable. However in whatever form the cap re-emerges in the final plan, I don’t believe it should concern local authorities. We are not recycling nearly as much as we should be (i.e. 40, 50, 60, then 70%), so why worry about the cap? Clearly if it becomes Government policy, we will need to work towards it. However to enforce it would in my opinion take legislation.

5. **FH** Are you working jointly with any other council in planning shared provision for future infrastructure? And if so, will the Scottish Government’s planned cap on the percentage of waste which can go to incineration/thermal disposal impact on any plans?

Highland have already written a Waste Strategy Plan with Moray Council. Given the geography however, it’s questionable if we could share facilities although we might be able to do this along the A96. It is difficult for Highland to share facilities due to its size. However we are willing to try anything: We have already sent green waste to the Western Isles to establish the costs and whether there are operational difficulties; we send small quantities of waste to Dundee EFW plant and we are discussing the possibility of sending again a small amount of waste to Shetland.

We are fairly pragmatic. My aspiration is for Highland to be self sufficient in relation to facilities and have a relationship with neighbouring councils that we could share and to maximise the benefit of investment and of the waste mass. If we got to that stage, we would be protected against the vagaries of the market and the cost of disposals particularly if we develop our own plants.

**FH** You said you sent waste to the Dundee incinerator. Is that as and when Dundee has capacity? Would you consider sending it by rail?
It amounts to under 1,000 tonnes a year. Our black bag waste is easy for them to process because it is well segregated. It is transported by road. We would have no problem sending it by rail but the cost would be comparatively high as there is no easy carry on or carry off facilities available. There are also EfW plants in the north of England which would have capacity; but transport costs limit these sort of opportunities.

Would Dundee take more of your waste?

We send as much as we can to Dundee. I have no minimum tonnage guarantee in any of the contracts I enter into.

You mentioned that you send some waste to the anaerobic digester in the Western Isles. How much of a percentage of the whole waste that goes to this plant do you send?

It was just a pilot. The anaerobic digester is situated in Stornoway and has plenty of spare capacity.

What would make your job easier? Are you aware of good practice elsewhere which you would like to see applied in Highland?

I have two comments to make. The local authority sector as a whole requires to be confident in itself and to stop worrying that the private sector knows something that we don’t – it doesn’t. We are also pre-occupied by the risk of failure – waste infrastructure rarely will work as it should on the day it is commissioned – few things do and this is no different for the public or private sectors. The only difference is that where there is a problem with the public sector, it finds itself on the front of every newspaper whereas no one hears of private sector “failure”. There also needs to be a better realisation by the media (and therefore to an extent the public and national politicians) that local government is more than Education and Social Work.

At a practical level, (although I would say that I don’t think this is possible due to the rules and regulations in relation to procurement which has an environment which is horrendously bureaucratic), I think we need to allow local authority officials to expand and bring forward initiatives of joint working in a faster and less structured way. A loosening of structure would help local authorities greatly. Greater funding would also help.

Do you think we could learn a lot from Europe?

I used to be an academic so when I came into the local authority, I was surprised to find that they did not tend to look beyond their own area. I tend to look around at other examples elsewhere if we have a problem. Waste Management changed in mainland Europe about 35 years ago. In the UK, we chose not to do anything as it was cheaper simply to landfill. The amount of money that we require in order to get where we need to go is trivial in terms of the overall local authority budget set aside in Scotland. We pretty much know what we need to do. The costs are frightening local authorities off but really in
the larger scheme of things, they are not huge.

FH I heard from previous speakers that in Germany there are 3,000 anaerobic digesters. Aberdeenshire Council have one in Turriff and as far as I am aware there is only a handful throughout the rest of Scotland. Would you say that Europe has stolen the limelight on recycling?

CC Unfortunately in the UK we still go for cheap. We have not embraced efficient plant preferring to build electricity only plant largely through PFI in England. The reasons are simple – contractually putting in district heating (DH) will make the project risky and more expensive and contractually it will be difficult. It’s also the case that the revenue stream is established more quickly if you don’t have to worry about building heat networks. Unfortunately this is again short-sighted. In Europe they have in my opinion looked at the bigger picture and have a long term view. The best examples are run by municipal authorities and indeed the best example in Scotland is run by Shetland Council. We need to take a long-term view and set up energy from waste plants for municipal good. We have a project which is examining the possibility of siting a very small EfW plant in Portree (Skye) with a DH network. It’s a uniquely small EfW proposal with the only comparable sized plant in Iceland. We have been completely open about it and there has been no public resentment to date.

PB That’s the end of our questions; is there anything else you would like to ask?

CC I would just like to add that Aberdeenshire Council has been very brave in undertaking this investigation I would be interested to see the global outcome. As a postscript, I would say that local authorities in general are doing very well in that we have come a long way in a short time. I would add that we should be more robust in publically defending what and how we do things and what we are going to do. We seem to lie down to the press a lot. We need to reinvigorate our self-confidence that local authorities do good stuff all over Scotland - we simply don’t brag about it.
VISIT TO KEENAN’S RECYCLING – 17 MARCH, 2010


In attendance: Jan McRobbie, Corporate Improvement Officer (Scrutiny and Audit).

Hosts: Messrs Grant and Mel Keenan.

PB Thank you for agreeing to meet with members of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee and assist in our investigation of Waste. The members are keen to see what happens on the ground in a plant which deals with garden and food waste, and also to hear from you of your experiences in starting up and operating this type of business.

GK Prior to setting up the business, I spoke with all local authorities and waste companies which were established and going well. Recycling rates had show continuous improvement to now, but for certain sectors, a plateau has been reached – for example, paper and card and glass. The growth area for the future seems to be in areas of paper cups/plate scrapings/paper towels – the peripherals to many staff canteens. This is an area for a potential 100% recycling rate to be obtained – and an area where many companies, who were already recycling the standard materials, could make a huge impact. Food waste is both a heavy constituent in residual waste, and highly bio-degradable, which could cause problems with gas or leachate if disposed of in traditional landfill sites. It is also a potential quick win for the companies in increasing their recycling opportunities and would, of course, potentially benefit Keenan’s operation.

The company has been in operation for 8 years. I started my first company aged 19, supplying local garages / petrol stations with forecourt supplies of firewood, peat briquettes, sledges and salt. These were obviously seasonal products, and in the summers I supplemented my income with a variety of jobs, including carpet salesman and delivery driver for a local bakery. Over time, I had built up a substantial business, supplying most of the north east petrol station outlets, but realised I was middle man in a chain, and that there were opportunities to develop an interest in the production of the products more directly. I meet with Donald Raymond of Aberdeenshire Council at Kirkhill landfill site to discuss what might be possible. Although not productive in itself, the observation of garden waste sitting at the site had lead to my consideration of the disposal of green waste, which mainly went to landfill. This made it, for local authorities, a pest and the source of potential landfill allowance fines. I researched (more labour intensive in the pre-internet days) composting options, and had discussions with SEPA regarding licensing and with planning officials about planning permissions and permitted agricultural development. I sold my first company to North East Fuels and this allowed the purchase of trammels to screen for bark, shredder and van and trailer. The location for the
venture, the same site we’re on now, was then my father’s farm - it started much smaller scale than it is now. Having processed Aberdeenshire’s garden waste collected from civic amenity sites for 6 months, I visited Aberdeen City Council who confirmed that they were also landfilling garden waste and they had engaged us to compost the waste. From Aberdeen’s 70,000 brown garden waste wheelie bins the scale of the venture mushroomed. Moray’s green waste now also comes to the New Deer plant for processing and an on-site operation, at Longman landfill site in Highland, has been developed to reduce the travel factors in processing that authority’s green waste. We shred and sort Dundee’s waste and run Angus Council’s own site for them. In this way the business has substantially grown in its first 3 or 4 years.

I believe that food waste is to be the next target of the UK and Scottish Governments, with its tremendous impact on methane reduction from landfill. This would require large scale in-vessel treatment (compared to the more open processing which is possible with pure garden waste, unlikely to contain the mix of cooked and uncooked meat.)

In dealing with the mixed streams of green and food, our process mainly deals with them together – all input is shredded and added to the in-vessels process – to a certain extent, the composting process benefits from a higher input of biodegradable input. A large magnet removes any metal items. There are two different rates of charge depending on whether the waste is pure garden and can be processed without requiring any heat treatment, or not. Outside processes are charged at a gate fee of £25 per tonne; food waste at £60. This is still very reasonable when compared to the £150 per tonne average cost of landfill, with the landfill tax is already at £40 per tonne and will increase by a further £8 on 1 April, 2010. The disposal costs have a seasonal variation – obviously in the winter months there is less volume of green waste.

SEPA has been very supportive of the plant and a single officer (Caroline Summers) has worked with the group since its earliest days. Over time, a great deal of trust has been won – the officers know that the firm will not seek to break the rules or cut corners. It’s a shame what happened to Aberdeenshire Council’s own plants. George Niblock and Jack Clark were well ahead of the game – on paper, their proposal looked fantastic and it was unfortunate that SEPA took their stance on the output, as this really screwed up the plan. That experience I think has had a knock-on effect on other local authorities – in general they are not too keen to run the systems themselves and source markets/uses for the outputs. This may have helped us?

In terms of financing the plant, Aberdeenshire Council was also of help directly in the early days with a £25K match funding award (support for small businesses) and a loan of £11k, interest free over two years. The Scottish Government, through their Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) had granted £430k towards the infrastructure
costs and marketing.

GK Support was evident from the council in several ways – interest free loan and grant but also working in partnership for the removal of green waste from the civic amenity centres, which helped the council to reduce the volumes then going to landfill at a vastly inflated cost.

WRAP, an original funder, was then acting as an arm of the government – that role/ function’s now been overtaken with the Zero Waste initiative. It was a pot of central government funding for which bids had to be made, committing to recycle a certain percentage of tonnage. As part of the tender evaluation there was a need to demonstrate that what proposed was really recycling.

The process involved the tender submission, interviews with the management team and analysis of existing contracts, licences and permissions – and this is right as it’s public money. Altogether an award of £432k was received from WRAP. At this point we approached a bank to meet the £500k shortfall. Especially in those days green recycling was felt to be really risky by the banks – and we were only the second site in Scotland (the first being in Perth). The financial houses were concerned that the technology was new and that there was no proven track record. We were only able to provide assurances that we had secured council contracts and give information on gate fee projections. At this stage the operation had become a family business, with my father and brother both working for the firm. We decided that we wanted to raise the money ourselves – although it was still risky and could have drained all our financial reserves. We’d also considered the venture capital option, and had almost concluded due diligence and equity to fund what was still a huge gap. But the conditions which were sought would have put both financial strain through huge dividend requirements and also non executive director fees which we thought would strangle the business. It was a family decision to take the risk, at that point the contract with Aberdeen City was merely at the stage of “letter of intent”, as the scheme had not yet been through all the stages of councillor approval. At this point, the potential for the scheme was leaked to the press by the firm who were to provide the technical plant for the site, and the potential deal with external funders fell through as they thought we’d made the press release without consulting them. The story was picked up by both the P&J and Evening Express newspapers.

FH I guess the deal was already in jeopardy given the demands over fees and business control?

MK Control was the real pressure – what was proposed would have slowed the firm’s potential rate of growth and responsiveness.

GK What happened, instead, was that all surplus funds have been ploughed back into the business. We went back to the bank, asking them if they would support the development if the gap was privately
funded and they said yes. Effectively Dad's input allowed us to build the plant. We've all taken only modest salaries, which had a positive impact on the opportunities to self fund growth and development over the years.

The operation did attract the promised projects in the first 10/11 months of its operation, principally the City fortnightly kerbside green waste collection and the Shire’s uplift from the civic amenity sites. We've all taken only modest salaries.

**MK** The early era was less plant dependent. Now we’re working with four shredders with 25 tonne capacity (costed at £250,000 each) and four screeners. In the early days it was a single, second hand shredder, bought for second hand for £18k, which had worked well (even on site in Orkney!) before its engine blew up. At that point, contingency margins were non-existent, and the whole project could have stalled for lack of cash flow but for the use of personal credit by a family member. These funds were used to purchase of a 2nd hand, 300 hp, ex-military engine (£6k as opposed to a new price of £13k) which put the firm back in business! This relatively minor input of funds saved the business at an otherwise critical point.

**FH** As well as working with the City Council on their food waste, have you been involved in our recent pilot in Banff?

**GK** No – that pilot’s being supported by a local farmer, Charlie Gray at Portsoy. He’s using the same technology as we do, but at a far smaller scale and also has a lot of input from fish processors.

**MK** Food waste is needed to facilitate large scale green waste processing – it’s almost like a recipe of knowing the relative quantities of each to be added to the mix. We’ve supplied Grays with some green waste (from our operations in Moray) and he’s given us some food waste to test out our processes.

**FH** Is his a different process?

**MK** It’s the same but there are many variables. Food waste processing is very difficult, given the different pathogens which may occur from mix of cooked and raw meats and other food stuffs. We use an enclosed system, and shred the inputs to 12mm before they’re added to the chambers where the natural microbial activity can assist the aerobic processes, keeping the material at temperatures of at least 70°C for at least an hour. This kills ecoli and bugs such as salmonella. It’s a bit like cooking meat. Garden waste, without any food waste, doesn’t need this safeguard and can be done outside on concrete pads with little intervention in the natural break down processes. The process of keeping the operation safe is similar to that of an abattoir in terms of regulation – although we are not dealing with material such as spinal columns / guts etc. We still need to have disinfectant baths for security
between different zones in the process and the “vets” (government veterinarians, employed, amongst other tasks, to ensure regulations in food handling and processing were being properly met and to otherwise monitor those involved in food waste and animal by-product safety) regularly come to check our operating practices and systems. They make sure that there are no cold spots in our treatment vessels, that the mixes are being done correctly and take samples of the output compost for testing.

The results need to be sustained over time – it’s not just a case of spot checking. When a set number of clear samples has been achieved, the firm is issued with clearance to take the output off site. It takes three months, and a failing sample resets the process to the beginning. Our operations are now monitored by computerised systems but these are augmented by a range of manual temperatures taken at various sites to verify that the computerised cell graphs are accurate. The vets can come back at any time, unannounced, to do a spot check, and we’re required by legislation to retain our records for five years.

FH Could your process deal with supermarket food waste – I’m thinking of the tremendous volumes which must be generated by exceeding “use by” or “sell by” dated products.

GK The food waste is still a new service in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire and certainly has the potential to include food as a commercial waste. This is a huge area, covering not only supermarkets but other business operations such as restaurants and places of employment which have staff canteen facilities. We’re doing some work with three oil companies in Aberdeen at present, looking at how they operate their staff canteens – this is an area of potential massive recycling to boost the companies which have otherwise more or less saturated their recycling options. There are some interesting products on the go which are also being explored which would mean that not only the food waste, but the plates on which it was served, napkins and glasses/cups and cutlery could also be included in the food waste collection, as can coffee grounds. New processes allow cellulose based products to replace the more usual plastic or cardboard. Of course, paper towels (from the staff toilets) is another area of constant disposal pressure for places with large numbers of staff - and these can be added to the food waste collection as we operate it.

AA Is Costco at Westhill one of your potential customers?

GK I believe that some initial contact has been made.

MK With the escalating costs of landfill which is the only current alternative, more and more firms who have food waste arising will need to consider other disposal methods.

GK We’re also looking at compostable card cups and cutlery – at present
about 1-½ million card cups are landfilled. If we’re hoping to move to zero waste, that’s an easy point to resolve. Food waste is so heavy that to remove it from landfill will make a huge impact.

FH Are you looking to extract heat from the in-vessel treatment processes? Is capturing it the next stage of the development?

GK The process does generate a lot of heat, but up to now we’ve not sought to capture it. We’ve got a live planning application for an eco-house to be built in the field beside the plant. If this is approved, it will have ground source heat coils and pipes. This system should trap, in concrete, heat from the ground giving a starting temperature of 60º (compared to the usual cold temperature.) A windmill’s the next development – we’ve been doing the test for about a year to see if the site is suitable. The house will also have solar panels and follow a Scandinavian style, with glass gables and orientated to capture the maximum heat from the sun. We realise that this style is a break away from the traditional north east structures and are working with planners to come up with an acceptable design. If so, this would be a great use for the heat – it’s difficult to retro fit pipes for houses currently fuelled in more traditional methods.

FH What’s the plant’s capacity in terms of processing food waste? Will this increase in the future?

GK At present, our capacity is 25k tonnes per annum – we’re processing about 16k from the City and 5k from other sources, so about 21k in all. That means we have about 3-4k spare at present. But in terms of future development, when we built the new vessels, the concrete bases were also established for a possible 20 containers – we only have 12 at the moment. We’ve got an additional £217k from WRAP to spend this year on six additional vessels (costing about £1M in total). If there’s a need, we can build it.

In terms of current work commitments, we’ve just tendered for a renewal of contract with the Moray Council (at the end of our existing 5 year contract with them.) This would be a 3 (plus 1) year contract, looking at co-mingled waste.

MK We’re also looking to expand the reception area to facilitate traffic movements in and out and within the site. We need capacity to deal with this.

GK At all stages of development we’ve been keen to ensure that current operations had additional capacity to be able to accommodate any additional work opportunities which may arise. Food waste processing is an area of growth and potential, yet a specialist area which most organisations are loath to tackle with direct provision. We may be able to help roll out any schemes.
MK I think Grant showed real foresight in putting in the bases for potential future expansion. With the concrete structures already established, and the necessary piping and connections etc, adding the vessels themselves is very straightforward without undue disruption to existing onsite activities. Part of the processes need to be kept separate in terms of food waste handling, and the reception and maturation sections are controlled buildings. The maturation sections are needed to keep the process aerobic we bio-filter wood chip and other bark grades, leaving microbes to eat the smaller particles.

TF As I understand it, you process all food waste, including mixed cooked and raw meats? Does this mean that you can handle fallen animals?

GK Fallen animals are category 1 / 2 – we’re only licensed for category 3 – animal by-products, fit or intended for human consumption and not diseased or fallen stock. This exclusion also includes sea mammals such as dolphins.

There are different standards for fallen beasts in terms of the UK categories of waste there are limitations. If we were to process only cooked meats, there would be no need for such a high temperature and we could allow bigger sized particles. The European Union standards originally in place were more expensive to achieve – there was a need to shred the outputs to 12mm and increased requirements regarding process temperature and timings related to particle size. This was a real stumbling block to the first who tried it.

NC Do you have secure markets for the output product?

GK We tend to focus on this area – trying to operate to the best carbon foot-print policies and the proximity principle. The first to benefit were our immediate neighbours, although we do have commercial business customers such as Trump International (who are using our high grade compost at their Balmedie site). We’ve also built up, from the early days, and maintained, connections to organic farms in the Coupar Angus area.

This year’s challenge in terms of ISO 14001 certification, is to work on our carbon foot print. In particular, we need to concentrate on the implications of our market for products. Aberdeen is 30 miles away, but in terms of local opportunities, the saving in green terms would offset the distance. There’s already a co-dependent relationship between the city and shire which needs a certain amount of travel/transport.

MK There’s a real benefit to farmers from using our product. Our farm has 30 acres of crops and we don’t use chemical fertilisers at all. This improves our organic status and also there’s a very slow release of nitrogen (compared with commercial chemicals where about ½ the applied product disappears down the drain at first wet spell). In this
location, that would mean straight into the nitrate vulnerable Ythan – a cost to us in terms of cash paid for the washed away product, but also, more importantly, an environmental cost. Also, if the release is slow, the crop growth is more uniform and sustained.

Our last two crops were oil seed rape and winter barley. No fertilisers have been applied for two years. Wheat in this area normally requires 4 and a ½ hundred weight of nitrogen per acre at this time of year: we needed only one. Treatment like this can bring the north east soils up to the higher yield standards and quality of the Lothians. Soil gets poorer if year by year the fields are cropped, with not even straw put back into the soil. Our product is in demand from arable farmers who are our biggest customers. The Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) have been very helpful to us, and have provided guidance on the wants of the local farmer, of whom there are about 50 in a 5 mile radius.

FH How does the cost of your product compare to commercial chemical treatments?

MK The saving works out as about £35 per hectare and can be used in two ways. As green compost it has a high level of potash, sulphur and phosphate and slow nitrate release – this means it can be applied without breaking the Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) regulations. If the land’s nutrients have been depleted, users can look to gain yields in crops. Compared with chemical fertilizer, food derived compost delivers nitrogen over a much longer period. There are SAC guidance tables for the application of fertilizer and other chemicals to crops, whether general treatments or crop specific. In total, there’s a limit of 170 kilograms per acre. Compost has no field limit – you could apply up to 240 kilograms freely.

FH Are there any figures reported for increased crop yield? I believe I’ve seen the figure of up to 30% suggested.

MK Our own experience with 2 tonnes per acre of spring barley and 1 ½ tonnes per acre of rape is that the yield is up but that our costs are reduced. Comments from neighbouring farmers speak of “best crops in 50 years” – although qualitative rather than quantitative, these might inform next year’s compost prices!

FH It’s good to see such feedback for a product that otherwise would have ended up buried in a hole in the ground, plastic lined.

NC How many lorries come during the average day?

GK The lorries are all council lorries – we don’t collect, apart from one food waste vehicle. Looking at the rate of companies interested in the food waste as recycling, I reckon that we’ll need 4 or 5 additional lorries, especially if the Minister announces restrictions on food waste going to landfill.
FH  Do the local farmers collect the finished product?

GK  Yes – and we have some householders coming with trailers and the like to collect, although we’re not really catering for, and therefore not set up to deal with, this customer group. We don’t advertise it. With all the commercial vehicles coming in, across and off the site, individual collections can almost be a hindrance and a safety concern. Local farmers tend to come with tractors and carts.

FH  You’ve no interest in supplying a “bagged and delivered” service, like B&Q?

GK  We have a bagging plant and some bags available – more for use at waste aware days and agricultural fairs than mainstream. There had been an original consideration of the potential to return bagged output to the council’s civic amenity sites, but that never took off and was never funded. We now sell so much loose, there’s no need to develop the bagged options at present – demand far outstrips supply. It sounds like a good idea, but to be able to compete with the likes of established names such as Fisons means that the figures don’t stack up currently as we’ve no problem getting rid of it loose. Allowing casual purchases by individuals and small scale landscaping firms works well for PR but isn’t a business focus.

MK  We do prepare stocks for open days and events such as waste aware days – both here on site and elsewhere in Aberdeenshire. It increases public awareness of the positives of our processes and not the “messy” inputs. In general terms the UK public aren’t very aware of waste processes and challenges, the more events which can be used to encourage sharing of information and involvement the better.

FH  Are housing developers another possible outlet?

GK  Yes – we sell a fair bit. We produce two different grades of products – 12 mm which is generally for horticultural works and the 25/30mm which is used for agricultural purposes.

MK  Rather than the pre-bagged outputs, we have a trailer and tipper to deliver to households.

GK  The vehicle makes the deliveries safer, cleaner and easier.

TF  Can the compost be applied using conventional spreaders?

GK  Yes.

MK  We used a standard agricultural muck spreader. The compost is lighter in texture than farmyard manure and not claggy.

We won a Scottish Waste and Resources award at the end of 2009.
This scheme is covers all kinds of waste management operations, including plastic recyclers and is open to any private company operating in Scotland that can demonstrate innovation in the fields of waste, recycling and resource management.

GK The award also acknowledged good practice. The firm has also been noted in VIBES (Vision in Business for the Environment in Scotland) and personally I was commended in Entrepreneur of the Year, Grampian (2009).

MK This last one was a special, highly commended, award.

TF What’s public perception of your operation? I’d imagined there may have been challenges in the early days with opposition stacked against you?

GK When our original application was submitted there was a horrendous backlash. Some of this came because the planning department had advertised it was an “animal by-product facility”, not a plant making organic fertilizer/compost. There was a justification for this designation – it was intended to rebut any future complaints that it hadn’t been properly advertised for public comment.

The designation lead to a campaign of misinformation by a few individuals, who made comparisons between what we were intending and what had happened with Dundas Bros (the knackery at Kintore) whose operation was claimed to have devalued adjacent properties.

MK There were also suggestions that we’d be dealing with hospital and schools wastes which was taken to mean amputated limbs. All we could do was use every method to clarify what was really intended – and that included providing information to local councillors and the planning service, to address concerns if possible.

TF I remember a similar public concern and misunderstanding when a recycling point was suggested for Laurencekirk – it was alleged there would be rats as big as cats. Local councillors were pilloried over this.

MK Some of the original objectors have subsequently come to apologise. I have to commend the local members for treading a difficult balancing act between listening to local community group voices and also reading the factual information.

GK The press campaign was virulent – a full ½ page on page 3 of the local Press & Journal: “Residents raise stink over compost site proposal” and “We don’t want poultry waste here”. We had no option but to contact the papers and offer to put our position, stressing the good news and positive story behind increasing recycling. The editors agreed to put my side, so a balance was presented ultimately, not just in the P&J but also in the local weeklies such as the Ellon and Turriff Advertisers where the
positives were stressed, with “green farm goes veggie” and a picture of me taken with Ross Finnie, the then minister. It stressed “a handful of people have objected”. There was a full page spread in the Buchan Observer also.

After the presentation of the other side, most of the locals had their concerns addressed. All of the hysteria has died down.

And as a firm we’ve made a commitment to the local community – we’ve given sponsorship to the local community association; assisted the local primary school with its eco-school status by providing a free collection of food waste and returning compost to the school to help with their garden. It’s all at a very early stage, but we support where we can.

MK We’re now able to report that many of the early objectors now either work for us, supply services or/ and take compost.

GK As I mentioned before, SEPA were very supportive of us and willing to work with us in the early days – very different from your own experience and ideas for Banff and Mintlaw. My personal opinion is that it’s a real shame what happened to Aberdeenshire as the thinking and vision was well ahead of its time. It was a fantastic idea and seemed the perfect answer to the need to increase recycling rates and reduce landfill. It was unfortunate that SEPA viewed the output not as compost. This was partially because no standard had been agreed for such outputs at that time. Even though the intention was to use the output not for agriculture or horticultural purposes, but to cover landfill, they couldn’t approve a standard which would allow this use.

You can still see the ripple effects today across councils in Scotland – they’ve been soured by that experience of irresolvable disputes with SEPA. All 32 local authorities collect – Aberdeenshire was at the forefront, 10/15 years ahead – now you’re the only council not collecting green waste.

Our SEPA experience, working with a single officer from day 1, has been completely different and we’ve developed a level of trust with the organisation as we’re known not to do illegal stuff or seek to cut corners. The officer and her organisation also have a very clear understanding of our business.

The advent of PAS (Publicly Available Standard) 100 brought in the much needed standard, later adopted by the Composting Association, but this only happened in 2005. It was the nail in the council’s do it ourselves coffin but probably was the reason we’re here as we are today, to process source segregated green waste. As a BSI approved concept, SEPA are keener to assist us.

I speak with other operators in the central belt and believe that the officers in the local SEPA office in Fraserburgh have been very
supportive indeed.

**MK** I should reassure you that SEPA are diligent and strict in their dealings with us – but we have not found them unreasonable. Our philosophy is that if we’re asked to do particular things in a particular way, others will need to meet the same standard. There’s therefore no point in contesting these requests, more a need just to get on with it.

When looking at other tenders and costs of other firms, particularly related to quality, we’re up there.

**GK** SEPA publish tables of its inspections etc and we’re always right at the top of the tables, deemed to be “excellent”. Previous practice may have been harder on local authorities?

**MS** Do you get knives and forks amongst the food wastes? If so, how are they removed?

**MK** We use magnetic separation; it’s easy for the metals. What is harder is the plastics where we use a human’s eyesight to look before the materials are shredded. People learn over time, and we’ve found reducing volumes as the food waste beds down. Our process involves a piece of plant called a wind sifter (£80-90k) and it whips plastic out at that stage.

We’ve been working with some companies in Aberdeen to look at biodegradable cutlery and cups, as mentioned above. It’s an interesting process to be able to withstand hot foods/ liquids and provide stable surfaces and effective cutting edges.

**FH** Could this be applied to other bug bears such as yoghurt pots?

**MK** There are a range of possible uses, some only beginning to be explored. I think it’s a field that will develop, in response to industry pressure, in the future.

At this point in the process, protective food-wear and clothing was donned and the members toured the site, viewing all parts of the process. The undernoted bullet points were observed:

- Metal waste is separated out and sold to a local firm (Peterhead and Fraserburgh based);
- Fish waste is processed – coming from Boddam and Mintlaw – primarily prawns today;
- The wood chips are sold to indoor riding schools – more bouncy than sand;
- Compost is donated to the local school in return for food waste freely collected this is to encourage the school’s eco-committee (FH could this be extended to A’ shire’s 17 secondary and 151 primary schools?);

The meeting reconvened in the boardroom with some final exchanges.

**FH** What are your plans for the future?
GK Legislation is tightening all the time – and there are lots of potential calls on our services. In Highland we currently operate on site at one of their many landfill sites and we know there’s chance of increased need that might lead to a need to replicate this plant up there. There’s been discussion about a possible site and we’re aware of the need for planning approval and site licences. Another possible area of expansion would be in the Dundee and Angus area.

At present we have 18 employees, some currently out working on other sites. The process isn’t labour intensive and may not be thought of as having a huge benefit to local jobs, but in New Deer, we’re a sizeable operation.

We take income from gate fees from the Councils who send us their green waste – currently £25 for the windrow process. Moray are also all green at present – we don’t always need the mix to process as food waste. If we win the tender at Moray we’ll need to enlarge the facility that processes co-mingled waste.

MA Is packaging an issue for the possible retrieval of food waste from supermarkets?

GK Yes – but in my experience the volume will still be there even if some possible sources don’t materialise/ are too costly for their producers to process.

Here on site we’ve high hopes for the eco house and green energies – it may become a show house of what is possible, with its ground source heating and wind turbines. Energy’s a major cost for our current production – we used to pay about £4,500 per calendar month – I’ve recently negotiated a reduction to £3,000.

NC Did you always have the idea to become what you are today?

GK I never envisaged this. All I knew initially was in my previous business I had to pay for the product and for haulage, someone to dispose of it and someone to deliver. It seemed simpler to do both ourselves. It’s grown bigger than I thought, from the days in 2002 when I got the first quote for an in-vessel system which I couldn’t then afford….I think we’ve had lots of luck.

FH You’ve also clearly demonstrated the ability to look round corners and find solutions – lateral thinking to resolve problems.

GK I think some of the original objectors were convinced it was such a horrid process we’d be charging a premium and make a fortune – but the cost of infrastructure and buildings is equally costly.

NC To return to a previous question, how many lorries do you have per
GK: It varies with the seasons – the peak of operation is summer – June, July and August when there might be between 6 and 7 lorries per day. In December, January and February, there are days when we see no lorries at all. If food waste itself becomes more of the focus, this will remove a degree of this variation – it will be more of a constant, irrelevant of garden waste arisings. In the low seasons, high immovable overheads still mean that we lose money.

We’ve never had to turn a lorry away because the site was at capacity, although we did come close to it in the early days. Since then we’ve made improvements on site which should mean we never have to.

FH: What total volume of business do you process?

GK: It’s about 30k tonnes on site with an additional 30/40k off-site. We’ve got permission for up to 70k capacity here.

It costs to provide offsite facilities too – for example, when we go to Dundee, we need shredders at a cost of £230k each – the price has jumped £100k in the last wee while, mainly because most of the plant we use is imported from European manufacturers (the specialist providers) and so has been damaged by the weakness of the pound against the Euro.

There being no further questions, the Vice Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked Messrs Keenan for this opportunity to visit the plant, ask questions and find out more about the process.
The requirement for the residual waste tender came about partly as a result of the proposed closure of the Crow’s Nest landfill site, which is scheduled to take place in July 2010. Basically, it has insufficient capacity to continue. We also had to take into account the expiry of the existing waste contracts. These were put in place as a temporary solution pending a joint solution with Aberdeen City Council. It has been necessary however to continue the two waste contracts until September, 2011 as the joint solution with Aberdeen City has not happened. Furthermore, there was a need to conform with national tendering legislation and a need to meet statutory obligations for landfill diversion.
Residual Waste Contract

– Deals only with residual waste
– No Guaranteed tonnage
– A period of 15 – 20 years
– 14 companies request documents
– 5 companies returned bids
– Scoring is based on 30% cost 70% quality
– Quality is sub divided

• Technical 38%
• Deliverability 26%
• Financial 23%
• Sustainability 13%

The proposed contract is only for residual waste and therefore it does not deal with recyclables. There is no guaranteed minimum tonnage in the contract: the reason for this is to allow the Council to continue to improve its recycling without impacting on the contract. The intention was to have the contract in place for fifteen years with an option to extend it for a further five years. The minimum term of fifteen years is required for an appropriate return on capital for the Contractor.

The Council required to tell each interested company how the Council was going to score the tender. It should be noted that only 30% of the scoring was based on cost with 70% based on quality.
Targets

- The contract targets are as follows:
  - A maximum of 5% of waste landfilled by 2025, with interim targets of 56% by 2010, 36% by 2013 and 15% by 2020.
  - Reduce the amount of BMW landfilled to 25,630 tonnes per annum by 2020, with interim targets of 54,917 by 2010 and 36,611 by 2013.
  - Reduce CO2 emissions from the waste management operations to zero ('carbon neutral') by 2020. This target excludes emissions from the Council’s vehicle fleet and should involve a minimal amount of carbon offsetting.
  - 97% of Council deliveries handled within the maximum turnaround time of 20 minutes. Turnaround times below 20 minutes do not compensate for deliveries delivered beyond the maximum turnaround time.
  - The Contractor is responsible for any fines imposed as a result of any targets not being met. The Contractor must therefore indemnify the Council against any fiscal penalties which may be imposed by the UK or devolved administrations throughout the term of the contract, as a result of the Contractor’s failure to meet the targets stated within this ITT.

In terms of the above targets, it was necessary to mirror the Scottish Government targets. The Scottish Government has set a maximum of 5% of waste being landfilled by 2025 with interim targets as detailed. There are statutory target dates in the legislation although the 2013 target and 2020 target are predicted by us as these have not been set as yet by the Scottish Government.

The requirement to have a turnaround time below twenty minutes is very important. It places a large burden on the contractor in relation to how they accept waste, remove waste from the vehicles and then get the vehicles out again.

It will be noted that the contractor is responsible for any fines imposed as a result of any targets not being met. The driver for this is to encourage the diversion of waste from landfill. Currently a penalty is incurred for breaching the landfill waste limits set by the Scottish Government albeit that the Minister has indicated that presently there is no requirement to pay the penalty. Clearly, however, the position may change. If payment of penalties were to be demanded in the future, it should be noted that although the Council would be responsible for payment in the first instance, (as can be seen from the target detailed above), the contractor has a responsibility to indemnify the Council in this regard.
Evaluation

“The Council will award marks in respect of answers provided based on the completeness of the answer, evidence provided and how the answer meets the Specification”.

Council set three criteria on which marks were to be awarded:-

(1) the completeness of the answers; as much detail as possible was required.

(2) evidence provided; where is the evidence to support the answers given?

(3) a requirement that the contractor can meet the Specification; the contractor requires to prove that it has the necessary knowledge and experience and will meet the Specification.
I-1. Technical proposals. Please outline your proposed approach to meeting the requirements of the output specification, using appropriate diagrams as necessary.

Your response should incorporate as a minimum, and in no particular order:

• An operational method statement for each facility proposed.
• A summary of proposed technical solution and an explanation of how the proposed technical solution meets the requirements of the Specification.
• Where applicable, a clear discussion on the extent to which the performance of the solution may be dependant on service elements outside the scope of the contract.
• The anticipated extent to which non-contract waste, i.e. waste delivered by third-parties, will be accepted and treated within the facilities proposed to deliver the Specification.
• A summary of the proposed technologies to be utilised as part of the technical solution, including details of reference plants, commercial track record and your previous experience in the construction and operation of these technologies.
• A performance flow diagram identifying the inputs and outputs of the proposed technical solution and their relative quantities.
• How each technology/Service is able to adapt to changes in waste composition and overall tonnages treated over the life of the contract.
• Please also provide details of location(s) and an outline drawing of the plant(s), including details of footprint.

Any other points which the Bidder considers to be relevant

The technical proposals detailed above show an example of the questions asked in terms of the tender. This was the very first question that was put to the contractor. All the questions have guidance. The key element in terms of this question is a performance flow diagram showing how all the various things were going to flow. Because the Council cannot guarantee either the amount or the type of residual waste for disposal on any ongoing basis, the question was whether the system proposed by the Contractor could cope with both changes in the waste composition and in its volume. The Contractor also needed to have technical drawings imposed on maps in order to ensure that their planned proposals fitted the location.
Tender Evaluation Criteria

• Completeness
  – Answered all the questions?
  – The amount of detailed information supplied

• Evidence provided
  – Track record in dealing with MSW
  – Experience in process management
  – Markets for outputs
  – Reference Plants

• Meeting the contract specification

Four Waste Management Officers from the Council went through question 1 in all the five tenders that were received. Their modus operandi was in effect to go through each question in respect of each of the tenders, rather than going through each bidder’s responses separately. It was thought that in this way, each tender would be given equal consideration. It took four days for the Waste Management Officers to go through the five tender response documents. Scores were then submitted to Central Procurement Unit (CPU). They in turn asked for more justification for the scoring and two more days were spent dealing with this.

There was a major problem in seeking clarification from one tender on a particular point because in order to be seen to be fair, it would be necessary to go back to all of the parties tendering. Consequently, it was decided not to seek clarification on anything and simply base the scoring completely on the tender documents received.
Bid One

• Short Term Solution
  – Re-profile the Crows Nest landfill to accommodate more waste, continue to use the landfill until the processing facility was constructed and operational.

• Medium and long Term Solution
  – Process all waste using an Autoclaving system.
  – Process would be built on the Crows Nest Landfill site and use gas extracted from the site to provide energy and gas requirements.
Slide No. 8

Flow Diagram in Respect of Bid One

- MSW Delivered
- Waste Reception
  - 36 tonnes per hour input
  - Waste Water output 0.01 m³ pt
  - Sorting system
  - Electrical input 20kwh pt
  - Biogas input 14 Nm³ pt
  - Water input 0.12m³ pt
  - 2.4m gls
  - 5% non organics for disposal
  - Allowance 25,500
  - 70% organic floc, reduced to 40% dry materials for onward processing (36,000 t)
  - 25% non organic, glass, metals, plastics, for recycling (15%)
  - 200,000 gls
  - 90,000 tonnes?

Slide No. 9

Bid Two

- Proposal is for Mechanical Biological Treatment, using two facilities, one north and one south (although the south maybe a transfer operation)
- No short term solution has been offered.
- Has reference plants and experience in the operation of the type of facilities proposed.
Bid Two Flow Diagram

Process losses
34,369 tonnes
54%

Mechanical Pre treatment
Recovery of
Recyclables
And Rejected
Materials

34,369 tonnes

Bio Stabilisation & Maturation

Mechanical Post Screen
Recovery of
Rejected Materials

31,196 tonnes of CLO

4,759 tonnes
Recyclables

16,391 tonnes
landfilled

45,530 tonnes

22,046

19,035 tonnes
Landfill

38,437 tonnes
26% landfilled

Bid Three

• Short term solution
  – mandatory send 25,000 tonnes to EfW Tees Valley
  – Variant send to landfill Aberdeenshire

• Long term
  – MBT
  – Gasification
Slide No. 12

Bid Three Flow Diagram

Kerbside Residual Waste 77,000

Direct Delivery 24,665
Inverurie 21,846
Stonehaven 16,913

MBT 77,502

Process Residues 31,628

Landfill 31,628

Recyclate 7647
Process loss 19,845
CLO 8,295

Non Fe 388
Glass 3,798
Plastic 2,093

Direct 9,284
Inverurie 8,223
Stonehaven 6,366

HWRC Residual 29,178

Direct Delivery 14,094
Inverurie 24,665

MBT 77,502

Process Residues 10,076

Gasification 39,256

Electricity 25,000 MWh/yr
Combustion 27,283
IBA 10,795
APCR 1,178
Heat 4MWth

Slide No. 13

Bid Four

- Short term solution
  - Take all waste to Greengairs landfill (Glasgow)

- Long Term
  - Anaerobic Digestion
  - Mechanical Biological Treatment
  - Refuse Derived Fuel

- Variant bid offered
Slide No. 14

105,000 t Input → Screening

- Recyclate: 6,369
- Water: 5,401
- AD: 30,620
- GAS: 17,307
- MBT: 35,016
- CLO: 12,327
- RDF: 37,000
- Landfill: 22,790

Slide No. 15

Results

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FH What are the short term and long term solutions for the successful bid?

JC To keep waste in Aberdeenshire and waste landfilled in Aberdeenshire until the new plant is built. There was a slight concern as to whether the contractor would get planning permission but they do have an excellent track record on this.

PB What monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that the contractor meets its obligations under the contract and what would happen if they failed to do this?

JC The contractor needs to provide information for us and we will meet with them to review their progress. The only targets are the output specification which has been set by the Scottish Government and the turnaround times. The contractor has given us a programme of works and our monitoring of this programme will act as a check. The outputs will be measured monthly. If the contractor fails to meet the conditions of the contract, we can simply end the contract.

RT Has there been a decision not to send residual waste to Teesside?

JC Yes, this was decided by the Policy and Resources Committee. By not sending the waste to Teesside, Aberdeenshire Council will not meet its 2010 waste management targets. The Policy and Resources Committee were aware of this when they made their decision.

RT Will this be an expensive decision?

JC Yes. It was necessary to look at the cost of sending waste to Teesside set against the penalty set by the Scottish Government if this is imposed and also consider the issue of ignoring the proximity principle. So far we do not know what the Scottish Government are going to do. All they have said is that we should be concentrating on 2013.

MS Is gasification a variant of energy from waste (EFW)?

JC Yes.

FH Am I right in saying that the penalties have not been imposed by the Scottish Government because Scotland as a whole is meeting its targets for landfill?

JC Yes. The Scottish Government are quite comfortable that they will meet their 2010 target now and are not going to have a penalty imposed by the EC.

PB Is the 25% cap on EFW being reviewed?

JC Currently there is a 25% cap on EFW. There are lots of questions regarding this but not a lot of information on how this cap will be supported, how it will work and how it will be enforced. It is supposed to be regulated through the planning system, that is applications for planning permission will not be accepted for EFW plants if the amount of EFW proposed is set at a higher level than the cap. The big question is, however, how this will work. The Scottish Government has promised that they will come back on this issue after the National Waste Plan Consultation. The 25% cap comes theoretically from a figure of 70% recyclable waste given by SEPA. Of the remaining 30%, 5% was judged to be appropriate for landfill and 25% appropriate to be burned.
Wednesday 24 March, 2010
Woodhill House, Aberdeen

11.30 am  Meeting with Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
John Harris, Waste Strategy Co-ordinator.

Present:  Councillors Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Cullinane (MC), Hood (FH), Sullivan (MS), Thomas (RT) and Tait (IT).

Jan McRobbie, Improvement Officer and Jackie Buchanan,
Committee Officer

1. RT  Tell us about your job and how it relates to the collection of waste by councils in Scotland?

JH  I will start by giving you a bit of my background. I have been with SEPA since 1996. I was previously with North East Fife District Council and dealt with waste regulation in the Council. Initially with SEPA, I was an Environment Protection Officer. From 2000 until 2003/4, I was involved in the development of the national waste strategy and the eleven area waste plans. The one for the north-east combined Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Since 2003/2004, I have been involved in the implementation of the National Waste Plan and Area Waste Plans, and more recently have been assisting the Scottish Government in developing the Zero Waste Plan which is to be published in the next few months. Several SEPA colleagues have been specifically seconded to the Scottish Government in order to help with the Zero Waste Plan. I am also involved in the landfill allowance scheme. All 32 councils in Scotland have a landfill allowance but limits are imposed on the amount of the bio-degradable waste that can go to landfill. SEPA audits all councils on this. SEPA looks at the council’s data and reports on how much waste is being sent to landfill and how much recycling/composting etc. is being done. SEPA also looks at the infrastructure dealing with waste in each local authority area both in-house and external and how each local authority deals with their waste.

2. NC  How easy is it to “translate” European generated domestic law into regulations which are clearly understood and applied by local authorities and the waste trade in Scotland?

JH  This can be difficult at times. It depends on how the legislation is drafted and whether it is easy to interpret and transpose into UK legislation, in other words if it readily makes sense to interested parties. EC law in particular can be complex and there needs to be good guidance to ensure that regulators understand what they are being asked to do so that everyone is on the same playing field. For example, the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994 took over from the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and put the onus on anyone dealing with waste to obtain a licence. The regulations also contain a number of exempt activities which would not require a licence. These were brought into force in order to comply with EC Directives and also to ensure that waste was not harmful to health, or giving rise to pollution of the environment. These regulations are currently being revised. The
Scottish Government is consulting on putting in place consolidated legislation which should hopefully simplify matters in the future.

PB When you say simplify, do you mean that the manner in which the regulations are being expressed should be simplified or the regulations themselves?

JH The legislation needs to be updated in order to comply with the latest EC Waste Framework Directive which was revised recently and needs to be put in place in Scotland by December 2010. Also, some of the exemptions that community groups rely on are difficult to rationalise in terms of the current regulations. An example of this is in relation to community groups which recycle paint. Technically in terms of the regulations, a licence should be obtained for this. However, in simplifying the new legislation, this anomaly hopefully will be sorted out. Generally it is hoped that the new regulations will allow community groups to recycle waste without the requirement for a waste management licence in most cases. Historically waste management licences controlled matters such as landfill sites, scrap metal, etc. The EC Pollution Protection Control Directive now means that all landfill sites are controlled under the PPC regime. The PPC Directive imposed more control over landfill sites. The regulations are more onerous to cover activities that can be more harmful to the environment. There is much more monitoring and control. Other activities will come under the PPC system in future where there is a greater potential to pollute.

PB When will the consultation in relation to the waste framework directive end?

JH The waste framework directive was published in December 2008 and EC countries were given two years to implement it into local legislation. It must be in force by December 2010. Scotland should comply with the revised waste framework directive once the new legislation and Zero Waste Plan is in force.

3. FH We believe that The National Waste Management Plan (Scotland) Regulations 2007 have removed the duty to prepare the National Waste Strategy from SEPA and place the duty on Scottish Ministers, rather than SEPA, to have a National Waste Management Plan. What was your previous involvement with the National Waste Strategy and how does this connect to Scottish Government targets for waste minimisation and recycling in terms of Zero Waste?

JH The National Waste Strategy for Scotland came about in terms of the 1995 Environment Act which placed the onus on SEPA to prepare it. SEPA duly did this and by the end of 1999 had come up with a National Waste Strategy for Scotland. It detailed the way forward for Scotland by providing a framework for sustainable waste management including the rationale that everyone should work in partnership and that there should be a sustainable local waste management strategies. Eleven waste strategy areas were to be set up. I was tasked with setting up the Fife one, along with other partners. The Waste Strategy Area Groups were tasked with coming up with Area Waste Plans i.e. a plan to make waste more sustainable in each area. The idea was that there would be partnerships set up to take this forward comprising local authorities, enterprise groups, community groups, waste businesses and ordinary businesses. There was also guidance given out at the time to ensure
uniformity as far as possible among the various areas. The guidance detailed how the groups should take forward the area waste plan and implement it. Each group came up with waste data including details of waste arising, waste carried in and waste being carried out. The group also came up with option papers. Although we had fairly accurate data for municipal waste, it was not the same story for commercial/industrial waste. Also, because the priority in terms of the EC directive was to target municipal waste a decision was taken to focus on this. Each group came up with issue papers to lay out problems that their area had and how to take the plan forward and how to recycle and compost more. It should be remembered that around that time which was in 2000 only about 5% of municipal waste was being recycled or composted in Scotland. The issue papers also laid out future options. Once we got feedback from our consultations, each group published a draft area waste plan for public consultation. This was around 2002. This plan laid out the best practical environmental options for the area and once the consultations had taken place in 2002, all area waste plans were published in February/March 2003. These combined to form the National Waste Plan. This gave rise to the then Scottish Executive coming up with a strategic waste fund and all local authorities were entitled to bid into this. The funds were to help to roll out, for example, kerbside recycling. The strategic waste fund was also intended to give rise to infrastructure to deal with waste being collected. This did not happen due to the change in Government and the new focus on zero waste.

The national waste plan and area waste plans gave rise to targets. These targets were changed due to the change in focus by the Scottish Government to meet the targets set by the EC. The new zero waste plan when published will make the national waste plan and area waste plans obsolete although it is still unclear how the zero waste plan will be taken forward at a local level.

FH Am I right in saying that the eleven areas that were set up in relation to these local area waste plans were only in respect of municipal waste by and large? Are there any aspirations to look at industrial/business waste?

JH It is only over the last few years that we have managed to grasp how much industrial and commercial waste there is, and how it is being dealt with. It is likely that the zero waste plan will focus on all waste. In particular, I would think that it will deal with commercial and industrial waste which could be linked to climate change which would mean bio-degradable waste mostly.

RT The Scottish Government seems to have focused on municipal waste. Is this because it is easier to target municipal waste and is municipal waste by and large more bio-degradable?

JH It is easier to focus on municipal waste mainly because we have the data available on this more readily. However, the Scottish Government focused mainly on municipal waste because of the nature of the EC legislation which specifically dealt with municipal waste. I would add that there may be a change in the definition of municipal waste very soon. Traditionally municipal waste was waste collected by the council which was primarily household waste. It could be that the definition will be broadened to encapsulate other commercial/industrial waste. The extent to which commercial/industrial waste is bio-degradable compared to municipal waste depends
very much on where it is coming from e.g. hotels and pubs probably have the same amount of bio-degradable waste as households, restaurants would have a higher amount whereas other commercial waste may have a lower amount.

RT What would you say the position was as a whole?

JH If you were measuring it weight for weight then the bio-degradable waste in commercial/manufacturing waste would be much less. Construction and demolition waste for example is mainly inert and is therefore much less bio-degradable.

AA You mentioned a change in the definition of municipal waste. We have heard from previous speakers that in mainland Europe the definition of municipal waste is completely different from that used in Scotland.

JH Yes, I believe in certain EC countries they have a broader definition so that it comprises all waste from the municipality.

FH I understand that there is a lot of food waste from hospitals, restaurants, large businesses, etc. Do you have details of the tonnages?

JH I think that SEPA may have this information. We have a waste data team who tend to survey people and get a split on the commercial/industrial waste. I can try and get this information to you.

IT You mentioned a variation in the definition of municipal waste. Will this have an impact on the ability of countries to meet targets?

JH Yes. I believe it will. I understand that there has been correspondence between COSLA and the Scottish Government indicating that if the new proposed definition of municipal waste is adopted, it will be easier for Scotland then to meet its 2010 and 2013 targets.

PB Yes. As a Committee we have heard evidence to this effect before.

FH Do you know why there was a shift in the duty to prepare the national waste strategy from SEPA to the Scottish Government?

JH No. I don’t. I would say however that it was not down to the present Scottish Government. It was the previous Scottish Executive who drafted the legislation not the Scottish Government but they have accepted it. SEPA still assist them however, in relation to the zero waste strategy and as I mentioned have people seconded to assist. Consequently, although SEPA does not have this duty imposed on them, they are still assisting Scottish Government in creation of the plan.

PB We can always ask the Scottish Government representatives when we meet with them why the duty was transferred from SEPA to them.

4.

IT Which aspects of current recycling and waste policies by local authorities do you think are successful, and which aspects could be improved?
JH Quite a lot of aspects of the current recycling waste policies by local authorities are successful. I would summarise these as follows:-

Looking at the top performing local authorities and what they are doing, they are all restricting the amount of waste that is being sent to landfill in some way. Some have done this by alternating the residual waste collections, that is having them fortnightly rather than weekly. Also, they normally are giving greater choices to householders to make it easier to recycle. Other councils have reduced their bin size say from a 240 litre bin to 140 litre bin. Councils have also made it easier for people to recycle by providing kerbside recycling, more recycling centres and recycling points and making these easier to use. Years ago the old civic amenity sites comprised simply a few skips. Now they have been re-badged as recycling centres and councils try to ensure that most of the waste is recycled. Also a lot of councils allow businesses to use recycling centres with perhaps a minimal charge for doing so. The separation of waste at source is also very successful. This means the paper and card which is recycled is clean and also any containers which are recycled are clean. It is better not to co-mingle too much as this may inadvertently lead to rejected materials that may add to costs in relation to recycling. I also think it is very important to raise awareness in relation to waste recycling and engage with the public.

With regard to improvements, I would like to see more local authorities sharing best practice with each other. A lot of local authorities are busy in relation to dealing with the waste problems and do not have time to share best practice or learn from other local authorities. Also, better partnerships between local authorities would reduce costs and it may well be beneficial to share recycling contracts.

IT How would you suggest that local authorities share practices?

JH This could be done through COSLA. COSLA have task groups which are to be taken forward. One such group for example is tasked with determining how to take forward the zero waste plan.

IT You mentioned that one way that local authorities have improved recycling was by reducing space for residual waste.

JH The local authorities achieving the best rate of recycling are restricting householders’ use of bins for residual waste. Some of them are reducing both the frequency of their collections of residual waste and reducing their bin sizes. However, at the same time, these local authorities are making recycling easier for the local community.

IT Where there is an increased space for recycling does this work, or does it cause co-mingling of waste?

JH You will always get someone who will want to spoil the segregated waste in some way. When these schemes are started councils normally monitor what’s happening and take up any issues with householders that arise and educate them as to what they should be doing.
PB If you reduce bin sizes, is there not a tendency for some people to complain and start depositing extra waste at recycling centres?

JH Most councils have found that if they publicise in advance what they intend to do and raise public awareness, most problems are raised and dealt with before the new service starts. As I said you will always get someone who will not want to co-operate and the council is required to focus on these people to reduce any problems as far as possible.

PB I would mention that this Committee is keen to talk to other councils in order to learn good practice and this is not simply in relation to waste. Which local authorities would you suggest that we contact in relation to good practice relative to waste?

JH The top three to my mind are Moray, Fife and Clackmannanshire. Clearly there will be differences between Aberdeenshire Council and these other local authorities but it may be worthwhile for officers to talk to officers at other councils. It may also be worth looking at local authorities down south because some are claiming really high recycling rates and this would be a good fact finding opportunity. I would also like to make you aware that the Scottish Government has brought all delivery bodies, such as Waste Aware Scotland and the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP), under the banner of Zero Waste Scotland. This is the new programme formed to support delivery of the Scottish Government’s Zero Waste policy goals.

PB You mentioned that it is best to separate waste at source. We do have a kerbside collection where different waste is collected separately. In some areas however it is all collected together and separated at a plant. For example, I know of such a practice in Dumfries & Galloway, so it could be the case that separation at source is not the best route?

JH The zero waste plan may focus on the best way to do this but many councils in the U.K. who have established high recycling and compost rates normally segregate at source. This provides new, clean recyclable materials. When you get a downturn in markets if waste needs to be segregated after collection, the costs are normally higher. From my experience it is better to have the waste separated at the start.

PB Do you have any comments in relation to the collection of green waste and food waste?

JH Different councils do this in different ways. Some co-mingle green waste and food waste. However, if you do this you cannot put the waste then to a normal waste composting plant because of the strict regulations in relation to animal by-products. The jury is out on this at the moment but the Scottish Government will focus on food waste in years to come.

PB What’s the relationship between green waste and food waste collection?
JH  It’s a case of horses for courses. In Fife, for example, they’ve recently trialled a different system of waste collection. Householders were allowed to put food waste in the brown bin already provided for garden waste. Although this increased recovery costs as any cooked meats would need to conform to animal by-product regulations and need to be treated in an in-vessel composting unit, the trial did increase overall recycling and composting rates.

PB  Members of the Committee visited Keenan’s Recycling at New Deer last week and were able to observe the processes of treating mingled green and food waste. It seemed to be a very successful operation.

JH  Some councils have trialled mixed green and food waste. In Fife, there was a recent pilot in Markinch, where householders were allowed to do this. Also in this trial the smaller blue bin used for paper/card was swapped with the residual waste bin, and the residual bin was used for the bulkier paper and card. This meant that the residual waste bin capacity was reduced by about a half.

In this trial, recycling and composting has risen to about 70%. Chris Ewing of Fife Council would be able to provide more specific details of the scheme, if you are interested.

RT  If you look at targets to meet landfill directive for 2020 and following years, is this really possible to achieve without incurring financial penalty?

JH  The real issue here is householder participation. If you look elsewhere in Europe and certain US states, where there are greater levels of household recycling, there are usually variable charges or incentives to encourage participation, as an element of their waste strategy. Reference was made to this in the Scottish Government’s recent Zero Waste Plan consultation, and may be more likely to involve incentives rather than charging. There may be a need to consider this in preparation to meet the 2020 targets.

5.

MA  What particular aspects of regulation and monitoring do you think are the most onerous – and how swiftly can the processes adapt to encompass new technologies? Does regulation, by its very nature, often rule out cutting edge opportunities?

JH  I’ve partially referred to this above, in the context of the simplification and updating of the Waste Management Licensing system, however things can be made difficult for new technologies, especially where the legislation has not been updated to catch up with developments on the ground. This is even more the case with technologies which are new to the UK/Scotland.

SEPA tries to apply a common-sense approach where technologies are not yet covered by legislation. Advice would be given to the operator or potential operator. They could be given a “letter of comfort”- i.e. an assurance that we wouldn’t take action against them, although their operation does not conform strictly to current legislation. This will often be done through a policy statement. For example, looking at waste paint scenarios, in the letter of the law, any community groups should be
licensed to collect / store and mix left over paint for re-use. This was flagged up to SEPA about a year ago as a problem, and we highlighted this to the Scottish Government for their information. Although the legislation was not changed, a policy statement allowing such groups to be exempt was agreed. This was clearly an area of low risk and made sense as it was a sustainable activity; such areas we’d try to cover in consultation with the Scottish Government and the people it would affect. In most cases, a policy statement may be given as a stop gap until such time as the legislation could be amended. Legislation can take some time to amend.

I’d stress that SEPA needs to ensure new technologies and ways of working cause neither harm to human health nor damage the environment.

MA I’m assuming you’d then monitor new technologies to be sure no hazard or risk was taking place?

JH If it’s a new technology, we’d ask the developer/proposer of the new practices to provide evidence that what is proposed is safe – for example, if it’s new to Scotland but already used in England, we’d look to see evidence of what happens at the English plant. It would be the same if the technology is already in use in mainland Europe or elsewhere – again a paper trail of evidence would be accessible. If the technology were not so well evidenced elsewhere, it could be possible that trials would be expected before any major application could begin.

PB Given that Scotland is the land of inventors, what if the proposal is totally new?

JH Again I’d suggest that there would be common sense regulation. If what were proposed breached current understanding of either Waste Management or Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) regulations, we would talk to the Scottish Government and hope to issue a policy or position statement for activities not covered in the current legislation.

FH In terms of energy from waste (EfW) what are the current regulations and inspection regimes? I’m assuming that there’s a series of checks and balances? Also, in terms of new technologies I believe there was previously an issue with standards in terms of compost – leading ultimately to the creation of PAS100? Has this now been resolved? I’m aware that newer technologies for compost are being produced – is the issue about how the compost can be used?

JH There are very few EfW plants in Scotland. If plants are large-scale, as most are, they would need to be licensed in terms of PPC, not Waste Management, legislation.

Controls are fairly strict and normally regulated by the local SEPA team. If the scale is significantly larger, it would fall under the monitoring of a SEPA specialist. There are “power-station” specialists in SEPA and EfW would be treated as such, if large enough.

The controls would focus on (a) waste going through the plant; (b) how the waste was treated in the plant; and (c) emissions from the plant. These areas are all
covered by European Directives. Also the terms of the Waste Incineration Directive (WID) would specifically apply. This imposes very stringent emission levels – most EfWs have to be WID compliant.

On the issue of compost standards, this has been partially addressed by the creation of a Publicly Available Specification (PAS) – which is not a full blown, international standard. PAS 100 was established by the Waste & Resource Action Programme (WRAP) to ensure that waste when composted was composted correctly. It ensures that both the temperature and duration of treatment are adequate to kill pathogens (i.e. to avoid risk to handlers). The standard also ensures that the compost is of a standard to be used as “garden” compost or for agricultural use.

PAS 100 also controls the types of waste which can be used to form the compost – i.e. green waste, source segregated for a good, clean compost output. In this way, the materials go in as a waste, but are no longer considered a waste material when they come out of the process. PAS 100 compliant compost can therefore normally be viewed as a product.

FH How does adding food waste to the process influence conformity with PAS 100?

JH I’m not an expert in the process but believe that food waste can be allowed in PAS 100 – subject to specific controls. If food waste is added to the inputs, it needs to be controlled, in terms of foot and mouth and other similar infections. The Animal By-Products Regulations would need to be applied – and these are monitored by the Government’s Animal Health agency to ensure that there is no risk from compost being used on land to which animals have access.

RT If a gasification plant is used in association with Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT), does this need the same controls as incineration or are there fewer problems?

JH Waste subjected to any combustion process would need to comply with the emissions and controls of WID.

6. MS Are there any lessons or good practice from elsewhere in Europe which you think might be considered for Scotland?

JH The recent government consultation on the Zero Waste Plan raised several issues with parallels drawn to what happens in Europe, including landfill bans, which restrict certain categories of waste from being landfilled. These tend to be food waste and other bio-degradable materials and it intends to move these further up the waste hierarchy. To do this, there need to be alternatives in place and stable markets for recyclates or compost products. The intention is to ensure that landfill gas is prevented or minimised, obviously with an eye on climate change. There’s also a focus on capturing waste derived energy which will replace non-renewable fuels.

Initiatives such as variable charging and incentives are another area where we could learn from Europe – as it clearly influences high levels of recycling and composting.
I think we could also learn about more efficient use of EfW – those schemes which currently exist in the UK/Scotland may not make the best use of the fuel as most produce electricity, as a 20/30% efficiency. In certain parts of Europe, District Heating plants allow the neighbouring public to benefit more directly, whether the heat is used for homes or in public buildings such as hospitals and schools. The Scandinavian approach tends to be more localised, smaller plants.

From my experience working in Fife, public consultation showed that no-one wants large EfW schemes but the idea of district heating plants was more generally accepted.

The annexes of the Zero Waste Plan consultation will have more examples of what could be done.

FH Is there an issue regarding tonnage needed for a small EfW plant?

JH As well as Scandinavian plants, there is one in Lerwick which is small – about 30/40k per annum. The plants are more expensive than landfill and need more infrastructure – but landfill costs are rising and will continue to rise as time goes on – an additional £8 per tonne will be added in April. In time other waste recovery activities currently deemed “expensive” might be cheaper than landfill.

It’s expensive to retro-fit the pipes etc needed for district heating and similar schemes, but it’s something which could be added in at a lower cost when new developments are planned/approved.
Mr David Fleming provided a written note at the start of the meeting responding to the questions asked. This note makes up a large part of the narrative below.

a. **My background**
   - Trained as a physicist – therefore need to observe and measure what we do
   - Career as an Information Manager in a wide range of roles including local authority, health service, voluntary and commercial sector
   - Final job was IT Auditor for Audit Commission in London
   - Now Chairman of Stonehaven & District Community Council for 4+ years
   - Joined at the centre of the row over the service change on 19th Dec 2005

b. **My approach to this invitation**
I am not an environmentalist, although I am keen to leave the world a better place. I have looked at the questions partly from the view of a representative of the people of Stonehaven, and a strong advocate of the community, and also as an Information specialist, trying to analyse and make sense of the situation, so that people understand the problems and possible solutions. I talked to a lot of people in Stonehaven to obtain their views after receiving this invitation to come and talk to you today.

c. **Attitude to Aberdeenshire Council**
I have been called aggressively critical. I accept, acknowledge and do praise the fact that many of the services Aberdeenshire Council provide are good or acceptable, and that many of the population are satisfied.

However, I prefer to operate as a critical and constructive friend. I believe very strongly that they should aspire to do better, and in some cases much much better. They should strive to constantly improve their efficiency and their service levels. That is what commercial and voluntary organisations have to do to survive. The same principle should apply to Councils. Continuing the mediocre, the ordinary is no longer a viable strategy, especially in the current financial climate.

d. **Help**
I have had a great deal of help in preparation from a number from Council officers. They always provided me with the information I asked for, often more than I asked for, and always promptly. I would like to express my thanks to them.

**IT** – You mention that you consulted a number of Council officers. Would you say as a consequence that you are expressing your own views in answering the questions or their views?

**DF** – I didn’t consult Council officers but I asked for information in a bid to try and understand the documents they had published.

**IT** – Did you find in your dealings with these officers you were less aggressive critical and more friendly critical?

**DF** – I didn’t find any need to be critical. It is others that have called me that. I would say that I do get annoyed with the “can’t do, won’t do” attitude.

**PB** – In your dealings with the Council officers in relation to waste management, did you find that you got a better response than perhaps your experience has been with other parts of the Council Services?

**DF** – Yes. Whether this was because I was asking for information rather than action, I couldn’t say. In general I have found that some departments will try and help while others are not in that mode. The Waste Management Department certainly fell within the former category.

**IT** – You are providing therefore an honest statement of your own point of view. Now that you have improved information, would you say that you were unfairly aggressively critical in the past?

**DF** – By and large I would say that my views have not changed as a result of the information I have been given.

1. **FH** - How well do you feel your communities are served by Aberdeenshire Council’s waste and recycling strategies? How easy was it to have altered policies and procedures from those to which you were accustomed under the previous district councils?

I am not certain that I can be served by a strategy. I am served by a service. One may have a service development strategy. However, I cannot find any trace of one on the web site.

a) **Current service levels for Waste Management**
Generally good, partly due to the sterling work done by people on the ground.

They are almost always very helpful, and provide a service that is very regular, even in the worst of the weather. It is a job that I would not care to do.

b) **Strategy document**
Where is it? Told on Wasteline that “it works through the Scottish Government”. Nothing on the web site.

Then I was sent the “**Integrated Sustainable Waste Management Strategy** 2001 – 2020. Officers thought that this was the current policy document.

Apparently, this has not been reviewed since 2000, because another review of services has intervened. No Strategy should last unchanged for 10 years let alone the 20 years of this document. It should be reviewed at least every 5 years, preferably every 2 or 3 years, because major outside influences change that quickly.

Examining this document, its prettiness covers a multitude of sins.

I can’t see any reference to policies in this document, only “commitments” and a few “targets”. I don’t believe it is a strategy document. It says what we are to do and why we are to get there by 2010 but there is nothing detailed by way of an action plan to put targets in place. It is of very little use currently which is a serious issue. I am not certain that we can be served by a strategy. To my mind, we can only be served by a service. I don’t think waste management is unique in this. A lot of strategy documents fall into the same trap.

**Targets are very poor;**

It would appear that we have not met them at all.

On Page 29, the Strategy said:

- 0% p.a. growth in first 5 years
- 1% p.a. drop in next 5 years  = 5% drop over the ten years

The actual performance is:

- 21% growth from 1999 – 2009
- Levelling out now

- Business reduction of 3 – 5 % by 2005
- No figures

The commitments are not translated into policies or into action plans.

d) Alteration from previous District Councils.

Policies and Procedures – we got an **advice folder**, but it has not had anything in it for about 3 years. Even the telephone number on the front is now wrong. When you are referring to policy and procedures, I assume that you refer to changes in the last ten years.

The major change which took place on 19 December, 2005 was a shambles. It did not seem sensible to introduce such a change six days before Christmas which meant altering something which people assumed would stay in place. This was very bad timing. There was no sign of a project plan, a risk register or any timeline of how things could happen. Neither was there any testing to see if the changes would
work. For example, where I live, we cannot get a wheelie bin into our house. This was not taken into account and a wheelie bin was simply plonked outside our house which is in the centre of Stonehaven. Clearly, this was of no use.

**FH** – You’re saying therefore that there was no consultation within the community at all or any pilot project?

**DF** – There was none in Stonehaven. When a public meeting was later held to discuss the changes, there was a slide showing a picture of a wheelie bin lorry sitting on a road with no cars in sight. This was completely unrealistic as one of the main issues was the ability of the wheelie bin lorry to travel along streets where cars are almost always situated. It was as if the Council were living in an unreal world.

**PB** – Going back to the Waste Strategy document, (i.e. Integrated Sustainable Waste Management Strategy for Aberdeenshire 2001 -2010), when you consulted with Council officers, did you ask them if it had been revised since its creation?

**DF** – Apparently, any revisions have deliberately been put off due to the fact that the Zero Waste Plan was to be published by the Scottish Government. Regardless, the policy document should have been revised in at least 2004 and 2007.

**JMcR** – If I could simply comment here please that originally the Scottish Government wanted Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Moray and Angus all to work together. It then became apparent that this would not be practicable so it was agreed that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire would work together. These changes may have had an impact on the potential for revisals to the policy document.

**FH** – We now have fortnightly collections, recycle boxes, recycle centres and mini recycle centres. Do you feel that these things have provided a positive waste solution for residents?

**DF** – Although the current system is working, it could work a lot better. Currently, figures show that 33% of Aberdeenshire’s waste is recycled. That makes us 26th out of 32 on SEPA’s list. Clearly, there are quite a few gaps. I appreciate very much what staff are doing on the ground and they do an excellent job. In fact, quite often they do extra. For example, they frequently clean up seagulls’ mess when that is not part of their job remit. This approach needs to be applauded. The staff work very well as a team.

**FH** – Would you say that people in the communities have embraced the fortnightly collection and the recycling?

**DF** – With regard to the fortnightly collection I would say yes. We don’t have the temperature problems that are suffered in the south east of England which create a major hygiene issue. With regard to recycling, certainly the enthusiasts are doing it. The non-enthusiasts however are not. A significant proportion of the population are carrying on as they did in the past. We don’t know what percentage recycle really thoroughly as opposed to those who do not do it at all.
FH – Aberdeenshire Council does do spot checks in certain streets for example, to see if the recycling box is sitting outside a house ready for collection. If not, they may make enquiries with the householders and try to encourage and educate them in relation to recycling habits. It is interesting to note however that you feel that a percentage of the community are not embracing recycling at all.

DF – There is no public information on statistics for recycling. Consequently I deliberately talked to people to ask them what they themselves do.

AD – Do you think compulsory recycling is an option?

DF – This is the wrong approach. People need to do this willingly, otherwise it will not work.

AA – I agree that a lot of people don’t bother.

DF – It can be quite subtle. Since the Council have stopped allowing brown cardboard to be recycled, I know that some people instead just put it in the bin. We are not understanding enough why people are doing these things. For example, I know one neighbour who refuses to put garden waste in their car and take it to the recycling centre as it will make their new car dirty.

AA – Is there still an issue in relation to wheelie bins in Stonehaven?

DF – No. We have black bags in the centre of the town and use these because the wheelie bins are too big.

PB – I understand that there are some parts of Stonehaven where the wheelie bin van cannot get access to because the streets aren’t wide enough.

IT – You mentioned that there is now an issue with brown cardboard because it cannot be recycled. Has that not always been the case?

DF – One of my neighbours certainly indicated that in the past it appears to have been collected but that as it is no longer being collected, she is simply putting it out in her bin as she hasn’t got the time to take it to a recycling centre herself.

IT – Did officers give you sight of the regular performance criteria reports and did these satisfy you?

DF – Yes, I got these and they gave an overall picture for Aberdeenshire as a whole. This doesn’t help in trying to assess the position in a particular locality within Aberdeenshire. As you know, Aberdeenshire is made up of many different parts. Also, the reports didn’t differentiate different types of waste. The comments were at a very high level. Much more detail is required. There may be detail underlying these comments but I don’t know.

IT – So you are saying that the reports are inadequate in their present form?
DF – Much depends on why the reports are being prepared. If it is for the purposes of Single Outcome Agreement, which I believe is the case, then they may be appropriate. They are not adequate however for managing a service. They are too high level and the review period they cover is too long. I do appreciate it is not an easy job to do. Currently, waste is only weighed centrally. Waste needs to be weighed at its collection point and there needs to be detailed sampling done. This would be a huge commitment. We need to have a more detailed picture as to what goes on so as to allow improvements. It is very important that we have numbers / statistics in order to get a clear detailed picture and to ascertain where economies can be made.

2 – SD - Are there areas of unresolved issues where you feel the Council has failed to deliver what it said it would? If so, do these relate to the policies themselves or their operational application?

I have already concluded that it is difficult to determine what Aberdeenshire Council has said it would deliver.

There is no mention in the Strategy of the costs, including the effects of landfill tax.

What targets are we now trying to reach? Will the long-term budget achieve those targets?

Look at Scottish figures in Table below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waste Arisings by Category - Scottish figures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic kitchen (catering) waste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense plastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Card and card packaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>textiles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other combustibles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organic garden waste</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plastic film</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other non-combustible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-recyclable paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other putrescibles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferrous metal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other recyclable paper</td>
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Areas not tackled include:
- Food waste
- Garden Waste

And yet these are the largest percentage of the weight of domestic waste.

**SD** – Do you know about the pilot schemes in the north of Aberdeenshire in relation to food waste?

**DF** – No I didn’t know. I do appreciate that Aberdeenshire Council encourages composting of food waste but not all householders do this. As you will see from my figures above, 27% of waste is organic kitchen (catering) waste.

**PB** – We visited a plant at Keenan’s which processes garden and food waste very efficiently. There are other smaller operations in Aberdeenshire dealing with this also.

**DF** – The top five or six councils in Scotland have large incinerators. I know that there are pros and cons in relation to incineration but we should certainly bear it in mind.

**FH** – With regard to your figures in the table, I would explain that there is an electrical goods initiative operated at a household waste recycling centre. A lot of electrical equipment is taken in and then recycled. There are also skips for metals, so a lot of stuff is coming out of the waste stream and being recycled.

**DF** – There may be a lot of facilities but how many people know about it? The items towards the bottom of the list in the table are the most dangerous to landfill. It is really important that these are taken out of the residual waste to keep the planet clean. The items at the top of the list are not poisonous. There needs to be more spreading of the word.

**FH** – Every householder got a booklet.

**DF** – Yes, but that was five years ago.

**PB** – There have been additions to the booklet.

**DF** – Yes but the telephone number on the front is now wrong.

**FH** – There have been whole pages added in the Press and Journal advocating recycling.

**DF** – Have the effects of this been measured?
FH – They have been measured through tonnage. I am concerned however in relation to your point that there is not enough public information.

AA – What would you suggest could be done to improve the position?

DF – We need to do market research on how to reach the population and what message to send out. Some messages are good but would people be bothered looking the information up? We have not had anything new through community councils in the last four and a half years. All sorts of community organisations should be approached in relation to specific things. Schools should be included and generally there needs to be specific targeting of groups.

PB – There is an education vehicle which travels around Aberdeenshire.

DF – We need to know how much this costs and how effective it is, i.e. how many people have changed their habits as a result of it. There needs to be number crunching done after any new initiative to work out how successful it is.

What policies
Very difficult to establish what the policies actually are. There are plenty of motherhood and apple pie statements,

e.g. in the Waste Strategy Document (referred to earlier) is says on Page 24 – second paragraph:

“By specifying what waste will be collected free or at a cost and what container should be issued, the householder is encouraged to take greater responsibility for the waste they produce. By providing alternative facilities such as home composting units or Civic Amenity Sites, the waste producer can make a choice as to how that waste is managed.”

Will that change people’s behaviour??
The keen ones will do it, but what about the 50% who are apathetic, or have difficulties.

What is missing (apart from the policies and the operational issues is the connection between them, is the need to persuade and to lead the public to fulfil the target.

Continuing and developing the enthusiasm
Most of the motivation seems to be coming from the activists; what about the “can’t be bothered brigade”?

I did a straw poll this week, and most people think they are recycling more that half by weight.

Yet figures show 33% currently. Is this a real difference? I think it is, and it is question of “Are you reaching a high enough percentage of the people with your persuasion?”
Three ways forward

Really need to get some behavioural statistics – survey/sampling etc.

Establish clearly the costs of the individual parts of the service, so as to be able to make a clear option appraisal on the choices that people are expected to make

Move well away from a “one-size fits all” culture, and give householders a range of services, so that they can feel involved in finding the best way of achieving the agreed aims of the service.

3 – AA - Do you think the Council explains why changes are made to waste and recycling collections adequately to let the public understand why decisions are made?

The only one I know of is the Waste Aware Folder, and some generalised adverts, with very little explanation there at all.

Folder: Last update July 2005 – 5 years ago + one undated amendment.

Far too dictatorial in style.

Sewer syndrome

If it appears to be working, people are happy and do not even think of it. If it is not working, they get very annoyed quickly, and take extreme actions to subvert the system.

This is what happened in the winter of 2005/6.

This question makes it sound as if Aberdeenshire Council makes the decisions, and Aberdeenshire Council can take the credit for 33% landfill. People take decisions, and their behaviour creates the 33% landfill. For example - See the blue box Press Release. It said “Council has challenging recycling targets to meet”.

FH – I would explain that we get targets as a Council from the Scottish Government and need to meet these. First and foremost of course, the Council serve the population of Aberdeenshire.

DF – Yes, but we should be building a picture showing that we are all in it together. A lot of communication comes over as if the Council wants the community to do something. Let’s be clear, without most of the community doing something, Aberdeenshire Council will achieve nothing whatsoever. It should be promoted as our community, as we are all part of the same team. Otherwise you get this “nothing to do with me” attitude.

IT – I think that is an excellent point. Whenever the Council has an advert saying the Council does something, it creates an artificial divide which has real effects. We need to emphasise common ownership i.e. “we” need to meet targets, not “the Council”. There should be common ownership at every level.
AA – Unfortunately, people see matters as being the Council’s responsibility. They expect everything to happen and everything to be done for them. We need to reverse this perception. There is also a trend amongst a lot of people simply to throw everything out in the bin and to take no responsibility for the implications of this. This needs to change.

DF
Way forward
Make a variety of facilities to make it easier for people to do what you want them to do. Then let the people choose what ever fits into the style of premises, lifestyle etc. Draw people into the decisions. Turn the publicity away from “Aberdeenshire…” to involving people.

4 – IT - How well do you think Aberdeenshire Council’s current policies apply fairly to both rural and urban areas?

DF - We have no measure of fairness.

E.g.  is there fairness within the town of Stonehaven ? – e.g. Black bag system Is there fairness between those that can and try, and those that abuse the system?

Part of the fairness must relate to the costs. Do we know what the costs differentials are between the various ways of achieving the targets? These costs must include a cost to the resident as well as the cost to Aberdeenshire Council. We need to consider when it is fair to pay this extra cost and when it becomes unfair, for example it would seem to be fair to spend longer collecting waste from sheltered housing but not fair to spend a longer time emptying a person’s bin when they regularly overfill it.

SD – Should cost come into it if a householder is paying for a service?

DF – Costs must come into it. The question is can you write a service level agreement without considering the cost and the answer must be no.

AA – Would you say at the moment that the waste service provided by Aberdeenshire Council in relation to the towns compares fairly against that provided in country areas?

DF – With regard to the rural paper collection, the system of monthly collections is fine provided the containers are adequate. Fairness is about a series of judgements and has to be based on efficiencies.

FH – Question 4 is really about the level of service that is provided. In urban areas, the service is high, there is more recycling at pavement and more access to recycling centres as opposed to in rural areas.

DF – The use of rural / urban comparisons as the only criteria is not the right view. There needs to be more subtlety in judging the position.
5 – FH - How well do you think education on waste and recycling is carried out?

DF - None seen - see Q3

A lot of people have expressed the view to me that they do not know what is expected of them. They simply do what they think is right, and hope that the system accepts it.

Not certain what goes out to schools.

Educate means to lead. Where are we being led to?

Action Centred Leadership model
1. Define the task. (Boss, if you don’t tell me what to do, there is fair chance I won’t do it!!!)

2. Develop the Individual: (Each person contributes to the 33%).

3. Build the team: Deal with those who break the team rules, encourage local cooperation.

People don’t know what to do. They make up their mind on partial knowledge or based on what others do or based on what works. Needs vary from family to family. It is not difficult to offer different services. For example, you could have black bags, the recycling collections, the commercial collections, the large wheelie bin vans, the recycling centres and the mini recycling centres.

A major fault of the initiative introduced on 19 December, 2005 was that it was based on the notion that one size fits all. Giving people the correct choices is very important. The Council needs to work on an increased choice as far as possible. They also cannot offer unrealistic choices.

PB - Question 6

Is there anything which Aberdeenshire Council does which you feel is not worthwhile, with regard to waste and recycling? Or are there other services which you would like to have which are not provided?

DF - Services not worth while

We appear to be doing just the basics that there is not much to cut off.

Explaining
The folders issued in 2005 seem to have been a waste of money. I hope this sort of general exercise is thought through in future.
I have to remember that household waste is only about 15% of the total waste arisings. I have not researched the Commercial/Industrial or the Construction/Demolition areas.

**Services which should be provided**

In the latest performance report, it says that the Council is planning:

- Increased recyclate collections
- New initiatives of Food waste recycling
- Addition Household waste & recycling centres

I applaud all of that, provided that is the best use of the limited spare money we have.

I think there is more room for considering garden waste, as well as the food waste initiatives. Between them, they are two biggest categories of waste which should not go to landfill. See Scottish averages below.

Incineration
- The top 6 Council who all currently achieve over 50% (in the case of Shetland 94%) have incineration facilities

Optimising recycling
- Working at reduction and re-using
  - (Cannot comment on this because I can’t find any information on the subject, but I am aware that the public think much more could be done to reduce waste at source.

Services at supermarkets, to make the relationship between what we buy and what we throw out.

Composting
- Compost is 27% (40,000 tonnes) of the recorded total, yet we only recycle 6.2% (9549 tonnes)

Anti-littering activities
- Better and more litter bins
- Better trade liaison e.g. takeaways, cigarette ends

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**Table 14 - Households Receiving a Kerbside Recycling Collection in Scotland**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of households †</td>
<td>2,364,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry recyclables collection (households)</td>
<td>1,114,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of households receiving a dry recyclables collection</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green waste collection (households)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of households receiving a green waste collection</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15 - Composition of Household Waste †

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Landfilled</th>
<th>Incinerated</th>
<th>Recycled</th>
<th>Composted</th>
<th>Other Treatment</th>
<th>Landfilled</th>
<th>Incinerated</th>
<th>Recycled</th>
<th>Composted</th>
<th>Other Treatment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>100,026</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18,705</td>
<td>10,423</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7,632</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>138,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeenshire</td>
<td>105,750</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38,432</td>
<td>9,549</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>153,731</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DF** – As I’ve said, we’re still simply doing the basics. The waste booklet was too general. It needs to be local. It tried to cover too many topics. It is not easily read and it’s not easy to refer to as a reference document. A lot of the information is well out of date. It is important to ensure that the project is sustainable before embarking on it. We need to look at people’s motivation.

**FH** – There is a move to try and get products better identified for recycling. We need to extend the number of products which can be recycled and make the symbols for recycling on these products clearer.

**DF** – Often there is confusion between things made from recycled material and something which is recyclable.

**FH** – Obviously not everything is recycled by every Council though.

**DF** – Household waste is only 15% of the total waste. The biggest waste is commercial, industrial or construction / demolition waste. We need to build a cost model of waste operations.

**Extra Question**

**Costs**

I have had a look (a very preliminary look) at the current expenditure. I think this bears closer examination.

I have been used, in most of my business career, to being able to know quite precisely how much each part of the activity costs. How much does it cost in Kincardine & Mearns Area (or even in the Stonehaven built up area) to undertake a collection and other various activities? How much can we recover by not landfilling – including the transport cost etc?

I can remember two parts of my career. When I worked with Mother’s Pride in bakery business, we knew precisely how much every part of the operation cost us – every week. It made for very accurate decision making, and high profitability.

When I worked in the Health Service, we had no idea how much it cost to run a clinic or a have an operation. It was almost impossible to manage the budget other than in a very negative way.
Just looking at the figures I have been presented with there are many unanswered questions. We spend

- 32% (£1.63 m) of the Refuse Collection budget on Internal Transport - that is not lorry fuel: that is a further 16% – what is that 32%? It is similar in the Waste Disposal budget – over £880 k.

- There is a budget line of £3.65 m on Waste Strategy Bid Expenditure – probably all very worthwhile – but how on earth do we know? That is 47% of the Waste Disposal budget.

- In the Waste Disposal budget there is a line called contract costs, which amounts to 15.5% - £2.87 m. If that sum is not allocated against what service we get for that contract, then we cannot work out the totality of the best way forward.
  - e.g. if that contract includes the landfill tax that the contractor (operating a private landfill site) pays and recharges us, then the line saying we spend £3.89 m on landfill tax is a significant understatement – which I think it is. Either that or we are undercharging landfill tax at £38 per ton rather than the £48 per ton which is quote on the Inland Revenue website.

I would strongly recommend that some energy be put in to arriving at a robust cost model of the Waste Operations. I think we might surprise ourselves.
10.15 am Meeting with other local authorities:
Peter Lawrence, Strategist - Waste Management, Housing and Environment, Aberdeen City Council

Present: Councillors Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Duncan (SD), Hood (FH), Sullivan (MS) and Tait (IT)
Jan McRobbie, Improvement Officer and Jackie Buchanan, Committee Officer

1.
AA Tell us about your job and how your council has chosen to collect its municipal waste and make provision for recycling?

PL Thank you very much for inviting me along today. My role is in relation to Strategic Waste Management in Aberdeen City Council and in this role I develop and oversee policies in relation to Waste Management which includes assessing the overall impact of waste management activities. Over the last two years we have been revisiting the City Council’s Waste Strategy and a new strategy was approved in April and will be launched soon. This has been overshadowed slightly by very recent changes in the waste collection patterns throughout the City which are now fortnightly rather than weekly. Another part of my role involves liaising with external stakeholder groups. In addition I work through COSLA and influence the Scottish Government. Both through COSLA and as a Council we have had a big impact on the zero waste plan which has just been published. I also oversee the Waste Management Service contract with SITA UK Limited, its duration being from 2000 – 2025. The terms of the contract are currently being reviewed.

With regard to the collection of municipal waste, the City is split into two forms of collection. The first part is the suburbs and semi-rural areas, comprising on the whole houses with gardens. This represents 70% of the total collections and for these householders they are issued with 2 x 240 litre bins. A grey bin for residual waste and a brown bin for garden and food waste. They are also issued with a box and a bag for recyclable material. All three collections are fortnightly now. With regard to the remaining 30% collections, these relate to multi-occupancy properties and include high rise flats, tenement buildings and flatted courtyard type properties and the waste collection provision for such properties is very limited. Generally, there is only a residual waste collection. Black bins are provided. Many of the high rise flats have a single chute system and the occupiers tend to use the single chute for everything whether the waste can be recycled or not. We have a real challenge here. We have started to address this by providing an on-street paper and cardboard collection in some parts of the city, replacing refuse bins in the process.

In the City we have 50 recycling points which are evenly spread. They act as a backup for the 30% of households where we do not have good recycling services.

PB You mention that you have recently finalised a new waste strategy for Aberdeen City. Can you give us a bit more background on this?
The strategy has been in the process of amendment for about 18 months or more. Firstly, we engaged with stakeholder groups in the City prior to developing the strategy. After the strategy itself was developed, we produced the key themes document to establish what we as a City wished to achieve in terms of a City wide strategy. We wanted to get value from all waste, where possible we get material value through recycling and if we can’t do that we recover the energy value. We put the themes out for consultation early 2009. We did this by paper, electronic means and a web base consultation. We reviewed the responses and thereafter developed a detailed strategy. A draft strategy was published in September 2009 for comment and we had public events to encourage consultation. The final version of the strategy was adopted by the Council in April.

You mentioned that your collections are fortnightly. Are these alternated?

We totally reorganised the way we collected waste. It was a patchwork before. Now we cluster the work so that there are 10 collections around the City, 2 each day. Because we operate different types of collections, we have a different level of productivity. Ultimately in the future, we hope to re-organise the system again so that we have one week collecting residual waste and one week collecting recyclable materials. However we need to ensure that we have a simple system people understand and at the same time balance this with cost efficiency.

You mentioned energy from waste in relation to getting energy value from the waste.

The strategy identified the need to use energy from waste. This should be done within the City if possible both to provide opportunities for city householders and businesses to benefit from district heating and because the city wishes to take responsibility for dealing with its own waste.

Would this mean that if there were some building programme in some part of the City, an energy from waste plant could be attached and thereby provide a district heating service?

Yes, we have considered this. There is in fact a City wide review of heating requirements being done. We need to ensure that we can get heat as well as electricity from the waste as incineration for purposes of obtaining electricity only wastes a lot of energy. In order to develop a heating plan for the City we need to determine use in terms of the type of use and the timing of use. We need to map it out and determine what demand is in both size and location. A lot of old housing stock is not efficient so there is a need to target this. We realise that the way forward is through influencing the planning system.

50 waste collection points is a huge amount, are the items separated there?

Yes, each Recycling Point has 5 separate containers.
SD Which aspects of your current recycling and waste policies do you think are successful and which aspects could be improved?

PL There is a difference between policies and practices. We have good policies, the City Council Waste Strategy is a good tool. Our practices are very good at collecting residual waste. Every household gets their residual waste collected and we miss very few collections. We are less good at recycling waste however. There is not a uniform provision of service throughout the City as there is a bias towards the suburbs. We are looking at improving the recycling services offered to multi-occupancy properties. The recycling rates in the suburbs are between 30 – 35% but the picture is very patchy. Where there is social deprivation, the recycling levels dip. We need to find ways of engaging with householders in these areas and encourage them to segregate waste and to buy into resource recovery.

SD You have mentioned that there is a huge problem with multi-occupancy properties. Would it be helpful if you could identify the individuals who are creating these problems?

PL Yes, I suppose it would be helpful but it is an impossible task. However it is not so much a case of identifying the individuals; we need to address communities street by street, tenement by tenement and ask why they don’t use the recycling facilities available. That being said we first need to provide recycling waste collections. I would say that the primary incentive for people to recycle is generally social good. Certain parts of the community are more influenced by this than others. Finding ways in which to engage non-users is a huge task. Recycling costs more than shoving everything into a black bag and giving it to the Council as residual waste at the moment. The position will change however and it will become more cost efficient to recycle both individually and as a community. Costs will influence activities. We need more clarity on the costs. We need to focus on selling recycling on the basis of financial cost as well as the environmental costs.

PB What do you think about penalties being imposed on an individual basis?

PL Finding ways to change behaviour is important. There has been a lot of talk about rewards but if you reward every householder, who pays for it? There is a scheme where you reward individuals for recycling and penalise them for throwing items into the residual waste, however there is a big issue about public acceptability of this. We are not ready for a direct charge on waste either at administrative level or socially. The waste policy needs to fill the gap between putting waste out in the bins and recycling waste.

FH Do SITA sort waste?

PL They have no facilities to segregate waste once it is collected. On the whole it is better to have source segregated waste in any event. In terms of the waste strategy, Aberdeen City Council intends to introduce a mixed material recycling facility (MRF). This will accept glass, cans, paper, plastic, card and, possibly, tetra pack. It will allow full recycling to be provided by a single container outside every multi-occupancy property including courtyard properties. This is not new in itself but
it is newer to include glass to be recycled. This process importantly allows a high quality of recycling material to be produced at the end. It is crucial that the output is of a high quality. It is the right solution in the City due to the multi-occupancy issue. There will be significant savings in collections as well. We will be able to give everyone in the suburbs a third container which will replace the bag and box system which we have at the moment. This will increase capacity in relation to recycling and also allow us to use the same vehicle type for collection.

**FH** If you had a bigger container for recycling materials, would that allow you to reduce the frequency of collections?

**PL** Yes. That is right. We could either do three weekly collections for the recycling materials or have a smaller container for residual waste because if we provide better recycling facilities for householder then the amount of residual waste that requires to be collected can be reduced. By reducing the cost of recycling collections in this way, we can improve the overall efficiency of recycling. The current system of sorting recycling waste at the kerbside is very time intensive.

**AA** I recall that when I lived in Aberdeen City the paper bags and recycling boxes would quite often blow away on windy days so that system didn’t work terribly well. A bigger bin would be very useful.

3.

**MS** Are there difficulties where your operating practices do not match those of neighbouring authorities? If so, how have/ do you deal with these?

**PL** I wouldn’t like to overlay this point. It is not significant problem. This is perhaps a difficulty with communication. As the Shire and City have different practices this can create a problem. It is perhaps made more difficult by the National Branding System which Scotland is trying to adopt so that both the Shire and the City have similar branding and the same means of communication. This may lead to confusion.

**AA** From my experience some people don’t appear to know whether they actually live in the City or the Shire!

**FH** We as a Council have gone through a major tendering process recently in relation to waste. Have there been any discussions with our officers on how this went? Do you exchange information?

**PL** We do have meetings and talk but we cannot discuss the tender due to confidentiality issues. We can only speak generally. There will be an opportunity in the future to discuss this I hope but as we have different issues in relation to residual waste it makes it difficult for the Shire and Aberdeen City to work together. In an ideal world there are advantages in working together as much as possible but as we do not live in an ideal world, we need to take decisions which perhaps are not easily demonstrated as being good for the north-east overall. Aberdeenshire is very rural whereas Aberdeen City is very urban. Practical solutions for the city are necessarily practical for the shire.
As I mentioned we are re-negotiating our contract with SITA rather than taking on a new one. The proportion of our work may be removed from SITA’s remit as a result and thereafter an additional tender process may be required. In that event, we may ask Aberdeenshire for advice in relation to the tender process they recently underwent.

4. How well do you currently meet Scottish Government targets for waste minimisation and recycling, and what are your plans to meet the future targets?

IT Am I right in saying that the Scottish Government’s mandatory targets do not help?

PL In relation to waste minimisation, Aberdeen is doing a fantastic job. We have a 3 – 5% reduction per annum. The Council cannot take the credit for this, though. The reduction is largely a result of the current economic position and the shift in population. In Aberdeen City occupancy per household is reducing consequently there is a reduction in household waste. There has also been a small reduction in commercial waste too. As a Council we have no concerns in relation to the waste minimisation target. However, the blanket target which has been set for all authorities across the country is not reasonable as it doesn’t take into account local circumstances.

With regard to recycling, our record is very poor. We are sitting 28 out of 32 in relation to all the Councils in Scotland. A lot of it is down to the fact that in relation to multi-occupancy buildings we do not provide the right recycling collection service and where we do, the results are pretty patchy in that only 10 – 15% of the population are recycling in these areas. We need to focus on this. We need to determine how to provide a system which is easy to use and engage householders so that they buy into it. For multi-occupancy properties the communal bin system means that personal ownership is not there and therefore fewer householders take responsibility. There is no easy way to further restrict the use of black bins without a back lash from the public.

We need to focus on food waste. Food waste has the most damaging effect on the environment when is goes to landfill. It is more detrimental in its direct effect than batteries and electrical goods. This was why we introduced the food waste programme. We are still missing about half the City in this as we combine the food waste collection with the garden waste in the brown bins and not everyone has a brown bin. With regard to the food waste it is being composted at the moment and there is no energy gain from this. In the long term, the best option is anaerobic digestion. Anaerobic digestion will allow heat/energy to be produced and the idea is that it will be used locally. Our challenge is to develop a system which is as cost effective as possible as always there is a balance to be struck between policy aims and cost pressures. The five year plan process is being looked at to see what the consequences of doing nothing are as opposed to do something. Anything new has cost implications. If we can reduce the costs of anaerobic digestion so that it is better than EFW then it will economic to take that course.
We need to look at the targets to see if they are right for the City. We do try to take account of the Scottish Government but we need to see what is right for each community. The capacity to comply and cost of complying with national targets vary according to the circumstances in each community; a blanket approach is not cost effective or likely to result in national achievement. As cost pressures increase environmental benefit is taken into account to a lesser extent.

If you are asked by the Scottish Government to meet the targets without funding being obtained from them how would you do this?

We need to step back and look at the future. The position is very difficult now due to the budget restrictions because if there is no quick pay back in relation to a new system then this is certainly a disincentive.

Would you say that it would an incentive for people to recycle if they were getting cheaper heat/electricity?

It is difficult for the public to make such a direct connection. We ask everyone to increase their recycling. Only some people see the connection, electricity for example will go into the National Grid. It is different with heat certainly as we can direct heat into certain areas of the community so that the public can see real benefits. Hopefully, through this, they will be directly engaged.

Yes. It is very important to have an incentive.

You mentioned an anaerobic digestion as way as getting heat from waste. Is the only other method incineration?

There are a number of ways including gasification and pyrolysis. We need to make a case for incineration in order to make it publically acceptable. I would say that the recent planning application for an incineration in the north of Aberdeenshire was very encouraging. Although it was refused, the nature of the debate and the reasons for the refusal were good. There was a careful analysis of all the issues and a balanced sensible debate about the impact of the plant. The health issues which are often perceived as a major concern were ruled out completely. If we are going to have debate on incineration then we need to put everything into context. From the various research that has been done there is no sign of any impairment on the health from modern EFW facilities. In the past it has been simple and painless to simply say no to such proposals as there was no cost issue involved. Looking ahead waste disposal is going to become very much a cost issue.

Are you working jointly with any other council in planning shared provision for future infrastructure? And if so, will the Scottish Government’s planned cap on the percentage of waste which can go to incineration/thermal disposal impact on any plans?

No, we are not joint working as we have a contract which covers the whole of the City. If we were to share services in relation to the collection of waste there may be benefits of scale. That being said Aberdeen City Council is currently reviewing all
services and that includes looking at contracting out/joint venture in relation to the collection of waste. We will be spending the next 3 – 6 months looking at this.

FH You mentioned a joint collection scenario. If it were possible to remap the way in which waste was collected, how many days would Aberdeen City be collecting waste?

PL We collect waste on 5 days and on top of that sometimes collect waste on a Saturday morning to catch up. We are looking at a possible 4 day week but it is at very early stages.

FH Have you quantified the savings in relation to this?

PL No. As I said it is very early stages. We would need to determine first if it is a practical alternative.

FH The second part of the question relates to the Scottish Government’s planned cap on the percentage of waste which can go to incineration. What are your views on this?

PL The Zero Waste Plan document which has just been published by the Scottish Government is very different from the consultation paper. I am very pleased with that as the arbitrary cap on EFW per authority in my view is counterproductive. The new document seems to indicate that prescription has gone. The Scottish Government will consult and develop targets for EFW rather than impose it by way of a cap. Each Local Authority is different so consequently, each will have different levels of an EFW requirement. If the restriction on EFW is too great, residual waste levels increase and there is therefore a greater need for landfill use.

6.

PB What would make your job easier? Are you aware of good practice elsewhere which you would like to see applied in Aberdeen City?

PL We need to plan for waste management a lot more effectively through the planning system. This concept has been developed in other parts of the UK. We need to ensure that we have the right level of capacity. In order to do this there needs to be a much more structured approach in respect of planning waste infrastructure. This is very important. For example the lack of recycling infrastructure has meant that we collect waste for recycling in a very costly way. We need to learn from other authorities in relation to this. Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire have both recognised that the planning structure needs supplementary planning guidance and provide for this. COSLA are interested in this and have made this approach a pilot project.

An other aspect of things which would make my job easier would a greater increase in responsibility by producers. Local Authorities and the community pick up the bill in relation to the disposal of goods. The ‘producer pays principle’ needs to be extended so that it just does not apply to a restrictive list of goods but applies to as many goods as possible and regulation is required for this.
One last point would be to demonstrate to the public the cost of not recycling. I think if we did this it would make a big difference to people's behaviour.

7.

PB  What do the proposals in the recently published “Scotland's Zero Waste Plan” mean for you?

PL  The draft plan was very detailed and prescriptive and there was major criticism of this. The Scottish Government have listened. The new plan is brief, high level and lacking in clarity in some areas. So there will be a lot more work to come. We need to consult with the Scottish Government in particular in relation to the landfill bans which are proposed. The intention is to ban specific materials from landfill, for example waste that can be recycled and food waste. We also need to clarify the EFW issue. The Scottish Government have already moved from a cap to a target which is probably as much as could be expected.

The biggest uncertainty is in a little section of the report which details the Scottish Government's intention to introduce a carbon metric to assess performance. Previously performance was only based on tonnage. Although this was very simplistic, it was easy to use and it is how all Local Authorities measure waste. The Scottish Government will continue with tonnage as an important factor but will also have a carbon metric which will measure the carbon effect of the waste. The difficulty is in converting a tonnage of recycled materials to the carbon measurement. It is very confusing as historically everything has been based on tonnage. I don't think anyone has thought this through and currently I'm not quite sure what it means. I think that in theory it is a very good thing but I would not say that it's the appropriate time to introduce it.

AA  Do you know how the carbon metric will be assessed? When will the calculations start and when will it end? Will this not be an impossible task?

PL  We will need to wait and see how this plays out. It may in fact be good news as in the Zero Waste Plan appendix, the outline carbon model used shows that we would have a higher recycling percentage today if we used the carbon metric rather than tonnage. There is always an element of unknown quantity however in relation to these things and the area of carbon-based accounting is undeveloped; we need to ensure that we do not end up with unintended consequences from rushed implementation of a carbon metric.

MS  In relation to recycling bottles, would it not be better to have a deposit and return system in place so that the bottles are returned at source and individuals get paid for this?

PL  Yes. Aberdeen City Council pushed the Scottish Government on the deposit/return scheme. It requires the right of enforcement and this was included in the Climate Change Act but specific regulation has not been instigated as yet. Ideally it is always better to reuse goods rather than recycle them which is what this scheme allows. There is however a lot of vested interest in the drinks industry and they have lobbied strongly against the scheme.
JMcR In the final annex of the zero waste plan SEPA’s input is required quite majorly and the timescale given is short. Does this concern you?

PL Yes. SEPA are restricted in capacity and I would be concerned that this would create issues in relation to getting the work done and ensuring that it is done thoroughly.
Wednesday 23 June, 2010
Woodhill House, Aberdeen

11.45 a.m.  Presentation by Matt Davis, Waste Management Officer (Strategy) on Zero Waste Plan, (ZWP).

Present:-  Councillors Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Duncan (SD), Sullivan (MS) and Tait (IT).

It should be noted that the under-noted comments are based on an early look at the ZWP, and should now be read along with the Waste Management Working Group Report which explores the ZWP more fully with the benefit of more time and further clarification on aspects of the ZWP.

Scotland’s Zero Waste Plan

Matt Davis
Waste Management Officer (Strategy)

I will run through the highlights of the Zero Waste Plan. Difficult to summarise exhaustively – there’s around 40 pages of technical annexes so it can’t easily go into a presentation, but I’m aiming to highlight the big issues in the plan and how those affect the Council.

The plan does raise quite a few questions which obviously we expect to be answered as time goes on – it’s been out for a fortnight or so, so although some things are unclear now, they’ll become clearer in the future.

There is a definite need for further consultation on certain aspects of the plan, which we’ll obviously be contributing to.
Mission

To achieve a zero waste Scotland, where we make the most efficient use of resources by minimising Scotland's demand on primary resources, and maximising the reuse, recycling and recovery of resources instead of treating them as waste.

The Zero Waste Plan

• Shaped by S. Govt. consultation in 2009
• Sets strategic direction for waste policy in Scotland for 5 – 10 years
• Deals with ALL wastes not just MSW
• Identifies 4 areas of work / focus
So to set the background:

Plan developed over the past year or so – we contributed to the consultation.

This plan aims to set out key areas of activity and priorities for the next 5 years and provide an investment framework for the next ten – the big things that immediately pop up in that timescale for us at this point are segregated collections for food wastes and a ban on certain things going to landfill – more of that later.

This plan moves away from basing Recycling and Composting (R & C) targets (the ones you hear about in the press all the time) just on MSW – Municipal Solid Waste - that Local Authorities collect and instead looks at all of Scotland’s waste – it includes commercial, industrial and construction waste for the first time.

That’s great for the environment – instead of just focusing on 15% of the total waste stream it now looks at all of it. I’ll show some numbers later.

Bad news about that is it may put some extra burdens on businesses in terms of dealing with their wastes – we’ll know more about this as time goes on.

In the plan, four main areas of work are defined and described. These form the basis of the plan. I’ll go through these and the issues that they raise for us as a Local Authority.

**Numbers in Perspective**

- Scotland produces around 20 million tonnes of waste per year:
  - 2.9m tonnes – MSW
  - 8.6m tonnes – Construction
  - 7.9m tonnes – Commercial & industrial

Referring back to an earlier point on numbers –

MSW - what we collect from houses & businesses - is only 15% by weight of waste produced in Scotland, so it’s great that this plan takes everything into account. Much better for the environment – previously ran the risk of regulating / controlling 15% of waste to the nth degree, but not worrying too much about the other 85%.
4 identified areas

• Resource Streams
• Economic Opportunity
• Resource Management
• Education and Awareness

And here are the four identified areas which I mentioned – these are set out in the plan, with as always more detail in the annexes.

I’ve got two slides on each of these, one to explain it and the second to highlight the issues I see at this stage that affect the council and the businesses within the area.

As I said earlier, it’s early days for the plan, so this is an overview, it’s by no means exhaustive!

Resource Streams

• Encourage waste prevention to decrease overall resource use
• Increase quantity and quality of materials recycled
• Improve data from public and private sectors
• See waste as a resource
As you saw in the mission statement the whole plan centres around efficient resource use - really looking at waste as a resource, not something you bury and hope it goes away.

In each of these slides I’ve tried to give an overview of what the plan says in the section.

Here we will have a number of measures to encourage waste prevention – these will come down from Government. It involves things like prevention measures such as eco design in packaging – light weighting bottles to carry a product as effectively as possible with reduced weight, reuse activities such as freecycle, charity shops etc – where goods are being reused in their current format.

The government are also aiming to get high quality materials – high quality materials with little contamination at collection can be made into a greater range of things – and have more value. That’s great for us as we have always had a policy of collecting high quality materials which have a high value – it’s why the paper we accept is only paper, no brown cardboard, so it can be made into newspaper; it’s why we separate our glass – so the clear glass can be made into whisky bottles, not all mixed colours of glass as they can be recycled once only into road aggregate. Our source segregated kerbside collection really is much better for getting good quality materials than any comingled collection is using bins to collect the recycling.

They want more data from the whole waste industry and they really are pushing the waste is a resource angle – promoting the fact that there are opportunities for businesses here in reprocessing the wastes.

**Resource Streams - Issues**

- Waste prevention programme
- 70% target for all recycling (not just MSW)
- Carbon metric as well as weight data
- Landfill bans by 2020

Issues for us –

At a glance the waste prevention programme looks a bit like much of what we’ve seen already, but the news is that the government will count materials made ready
for reuse towards recycling targets. That means that activities such as the box room at Banchory Household Waste Recycling Centre, (HWRC) become more attractive to us – essentially the reuse area at the side of an HWRC where people could leave say an old table for someone who wants it – we can now count that tonnage towards recycling. The public like these things, but they are expensive to run as I said last time I was here.

In this section the targets have also changed – it used to be 70% Recycling and Collection (R&C) by 2025 of MSW, now it’s all waste – commercial, industrial, construction as well.

The targets change for Local Authorities in that we will have to separate domestic and commercial wastes out and count them separately – it’s still unclear what effect this will have on our R&C rate.

Household waste targets will remains as:

- 40% - 2010
- 50% - 2013
- 60% - 2020
- 70% - 2025

Commercial targets will be set separately – which I assume will apply to the commercial waste we collect currently.

But we do know that the Scottish Government aims for 70% recycling and Max 5% to landfill for ALL SCOTTISH WASTES by 2025.

In the consultation we raised the fact that the current weight based tonnages don’t always show what is most environmentally beneficial to recycle and should there be a carbon equivalent measure too – in short – there now is. Unclear whether targets will be set relative to that, as for comparisons on an EU basis we must continue to use weight based data.

This section also introduced the concept of landfill bans. The Scottish Government have been quite clever here in their introduction of bans – waiting until the treatment infrastructure is there and bringing in other rules at the same time to make the bans more effective.
Economic Opportunity

- Encourage reuse / refurbishment of materials
- Support high value markets
- Market confidence for investors in infrastructure to underpin markets for high quality recyclates
- Utilise electricity & / or heat from EfW

The plan makes a lot of the economic opportunities surrounding waste management, as I mentioned it wants investment and is seeking to reassure investors that things have a ‘ten year plan’ for want of a better term to encourage them to invest.

There are mentions of encouraging reuse of materials in all sectors – we already have the REQUIP website facility on Arcadia where council departments can use other department's old materials such as desks and office equipment.

Supporting high value markets was in this section and it went on to mention separate collections for materials to ensure that they are high quality and that these materials do not contaminate any thing else. The plan raises the possibility of amending legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act & the Duty of Care regulations to enforce the separate collections of paper /card, glass, metals, plastics and textiles FROM ALL SOURCES.

Now for us this may not be too bad – but again, we need clarification on this – we already collect these materials with the exception of textiles from 70% of our households.

Will we have to collect them from the other 30% (rurals) or is the provision of Recycling Centres and Points, (RC&Ps) enough?

We don’t collect textiles – would we have to collect them or could we enter into some kind of partnership with the various charities who put a bag through your door regularly – they get the income, we get the tonnages?

This could have a big impact for small to medium enterprises, (SMEs) – not all will be able to segregate those wastes in terms of space for collection bins, though Waste Management Working Group agreed that smaller businesses can use the kerbside or the Recycling Centres & Points for the trade waste now, if they pay.
However, it may still be a burden in terms of ‘RED TAPE’ for them.

The government says that they will consult further on this.

Big issue here for us is the separate collection of food waste – the plan proposes enforcing this by 01/04/2013, and banning it to landfill by 01/04/2015.

Good news and bad news for the Council.

Good news is that we are already well progressed with plans to collect food waste from 100% of Aberdeenshire households, increasing service to the public and helping to meet our recycling targets, decrease costs and reduce waste to landfill.

Bad news is that this will cost money at a time when we are looking to save money.

BUT, given all the benefits Food Waste recycling brings – better service, less waste to landfill, towards our recycling targets, cheaper than landfilling it, plus the fact that this service contributes approx half of the carbon reduction that Aberdeenshire Council is proposing making over the next few years, my personal view is that the collections becoming mandatory just strengthen the argument to implement the collections ASAP.

**Economic Opportunity - issues**

- Separate collection regulations – Food waste
- Sustainable procurement toolkit for public and private sector
- Support for more plastics recycling

OK issues – well I think I’ve covered Food Waste.

The sustainable procurement toolkit will push us towards buying more recycled materials, or goods with a recycled content, but I suspect this is happening already in procurement, although this may just encourage more of it.

The government are also looking to increase plastic recycling capacity – for mixed plastics such as yoghurt pots etc. This does raise an issue as plastic bottles are...
already hard and expensive to collect, adding more plastic will mean that our lorries carry a lot of fresh air. It will be hard to add these materials to our current fleet without a big expansion in fleet and crews to accommodate the materials. The high quality materials we currently collect will be contaminated by margarine tubs etc, so there may be issues of lost income there.

If the Government could tie their producer responsibility aims to the plastic recycling target aims and get the producers to pay for the collections then that would be fantastic, not sure if it will happen.

Resource Management

• Encourage investment through regulatory infrastructure
• EfW only used to recover value from resources that cannot offer greater environmental and economic benefits through recycling
• 25% cap

OK thanks to the contract I don’t think this one affects us too much as a Council.

The government had introduced a cap of no more than 25% of MSW material going to incineration. The rules have now changed and apply to ALL WASTES not just MSW. The plan is seeking to ensure that only waste that could not be practically be reused or recycled can be incinerated. It seeks to remove the absolute tonnage limit (the 25% cap) but in the short term, whilst legislation is developed to take the ‘practically reused / recycled’ aspect into account, the cap will remain.

SO it will affect us somehow, but we’re not sure how yet.

Certainly, once food waste is out of the system, and the waste then goes through a pre-treatment, as is proposed under the contract, there will not be much left that could be recycled.
Resource Management - Issues

• 25% cap

Incinerator Bottom Ash, (IBA) – No longer able to count this towards recycling under the ZWP proposals – suspect there may be a backlash from Local Authorities on this as it’s unclear why not.

We would be able to count towards diversion.

Education & Awareness

• Deliver clear targeted education programme to all
• Local & National Campaigns?
• Incentives to encourage recycling / minimisation
• Encourage understanding in education system
• Recycling on the go

I know that in England some Councils have put micro-chips in bins to monitor individual household’s waste and as an incentive offer store vouchers for those who recycle.
We could not easily bring this scheme into Aberdeenshire but it is a good idea to have incentives.

Education & Awareness - issues

- Funding for campaigns?
- Advice on recycling on the go – Funding? Contamination?
- Lots of promises to work in co-operation with LAs on education – schools and communities – Any funding though?

In terms of education & awareness the plan proposes little new – we do do a lot of the awareness activities already – work with schools in the classrooms and communities at various events, we do campaigns – the plan mentions more of this, but crucially doesn’t seem to mention money, so we’ll see what pans out - I’m confident that with the team we have working in schools and the events that are held, we can cope with anything they come up with.

Recycling on the go is a thought though – essentially they are promoting recycling bins in Town Centres, at busy areas etc for the juice bottle as you walk down the street, as opposed to a Recycling Point for materials you save up for a week or so. There are practical issues with these – contamination and how to get a lorry in to empty them when they will be full at a busy time, siting them, funding them etc. Nothing we cannot handle, but it may cause us a few headaches in the short term. Personally from a tonnage point of view I doubt these will contribute much overall, so they really become a PR message.

REASON = little contribution. Most stuff drunk on the go is light – cans and plastic – little weight = little impact.

NEWSPAPERS are fine inside but where – Stations (problems with bomb threats) airports (already done). Where else do you read a paper outside in the ‘shire?
Summary

- Generally a good plan
- Drivers to increase recycling
- Raises some questions
- Unclear on funding
- Good environmental basis – not just putting expectations onto public sector

Will impact on the Council as it will be necessary to recycle more and split waste tonnage between householders and commercial/industrial businesses.

It will have an impact on businesses generally. It is good that the focus is no longer on the public sector only.

Scotland’s Zero waste plan

www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/06/08092645/0

matt.davis@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

PB I note that you say that there is a 70% target for all recycling not just for municipal solid waste (MSW). You have also said that this means the target will include not only what the Council does but also items which charity
shops re-use, commercial recycling and construction recycling etc. If you could answer the following three questions therefore:-

1. How can this be measured?

2. How will this target sit in relation to the carbon metric measurement rather than the tonnage/weight measurement?

3. Is the 70% figure backed up by sufficient research so it is realistic and achievable?

MD: If I could start with question number three. To be honest the 70% figure seems to have been pulled out of the air. In saying that I can see ways that potentially the Council could get up to 70% but the issue is whether it's economically viable. I know that in Aberdeen City there may be problems reaching this target but certainly it is easier in Aberdeenshire.

With regard to question one, the Government asked for data from the commercial sector. By introducing a list of materials that should be recycled from business they will need to increase the amount of data that businesses provide. This could cause issues for some businesses in terms of staff time.

With regard to question two, I am not sure how the carbon metric measure will work. The Government is still to keep the weight based measure as the EU works on this basis.

PB: Who is responsible for calculating the percentage in relation to the carbon metric measurement?

MD: SEPA. You will see that aluminium cans are at the top of the table and residual waste is at the bottom.

IT: Did you say that the 70% target is achievable?

MD: Yes, if all our forecasts work, we can get close to it.

IT: Clearly over the next five years investment will be limited due to the need to balance the books. Is the target therefore pie in the sky?

MD: Yes in the absence of funding. I am not sure if funding will be provided centrally or if the Council will need to find funding from their existing budget.

IT: If funding was to be found internally would that mean cuts across some other service?

MD: I can't really say. This is the finance officer's remit. We have been asked to cost out proposals for food waste but it is not within my remit to deal with funding.

IT: Did the Scottish Government give any indication as to funding?
MD Not as far as I am aware.

IT Is there a burden on businesses to collect?

MD Yes it will place a burden on businesses. For example if compulsory food waste collections came in then it would cost. Still, it would be cheaper to recycle than to send to landfill.

MD In the Zero Waste Plan Annex A page 12 and 13 there is a table showing the weighting factors for the carbon metric. Aluminium cans are weighted as a 100 which is the maximum as they are most carbon efficient to recycle. The table provides some bizarre surprises. The food waste can add as much as 6.5% on to Aberdeenshire Council’s tonnage but in relation to the carbon metric table the weighting factor is only 1.7. Therefore aluminium cans are much more efficient to recycle on the carbon metric table than on tonnage. How these targets will work in relation to each other, I cannot say at the moment.

AA Yes. It is difficult to see how they will be assessed.

MD Books for example have a weighting factor of 11.8, mixed cans 62.4 and ferrous 46.4. There are clearly a lot more questions to be answered.

AA It is good to see the initiative about producer responsibility. That is very interesting. A lot of companies already individually do their own bit for the environment. The food waste ban is good and the unsorted waste ban is also good.

MD Yes. They are. It is okay for Aberdeenshire as by 2013 we will be processing food waste and also sorting waste.

FH What is your view on energy from waste (EFW) plants?

MD Our new waste contractors SITA propose an EFW plant which will be a gasification plant. It will burn waste with less oxygen so this tends to means much fewer emissions. It will only deal with 37,500 tonnes of waste which is less than 25% of our waste arising.

If we do nothing and do not increase recycling we will not be able to meet our waste targets – we would need to send more than 25% of our waste to the EfW Plant. Therefore we need to increase recycling to remain under the 25% to EfW limit.

FH Is there a timetable for proposed food waste collections?

MD No, not at present. There is a report on the costs to go before Committee in September/October this year. If the scheme is approved it will take about six months to buy the vehicles. As a very rough estimate I would say it will take about a year to 18 months therefore for the scheme to start, assuming
it is approved. There is an issue about finance though which splits the rural
and urban areas. The intention would be to replace the rural waste vehicles
with new two compartment vehicles which will mean waste can be collected
in the back and food collected in the front. The position is different in the
urban areas where we would need to have weekly collections as there is
more food. This would increase the frequency of the black box and white
sack collections also. There would also be a slight adaptation required to
the vehicles to accommodate this. The intention would be to double
the frequency of collections but not necessarily the costs because we would
change work patterns to fit in.

**MS**

We had a presentation from a representative from SITA who seemed to be
saying that the 25% cap on EFW would be a significant constraint on
reducing the amount of waste going to landfill. Do you think we should
challenge this cap?

**MD**

I doubt that the Government would be open to challenge.

**MS**

If it were established however that the 25% cap is not appropriate would it
still not be worthwhile challenging it?

**MD**

It is an artificial constraint as it pushes waste in a certain way. I do agree
with you that it can be a constraint but I can see ways of reaching the target
without having to increase the cap.

**MS**

Who decided it should be 25%?

**MD**

I am not sure.

**FH**

It may in fact have been a default position. The Government may have
determined how much could be recycled and work it back from there. The
recycling target has been set at 70% and the landfill target at 5%. This
leaves 25% left for incineration.

**MD**

I know that there are other municipalities within the EU claim to have
reached 70% recycling but they appears to have vastly different ways of
calculating it to us in the UK.

**AA**

We had a witness in recently who stated that he had found it difficult to find
our data on the website and that it was not clear enough. Do you think we
require improved data as a Council?

**MD**

The information which the witness was seeking was on our website at the
time that he looked for it, but the website does not have the clearest
navigation it could have. We do need improved data as a council so we
can make informed decisions, and the website does need to be clearer.
There does remain an issue with people misinterpreting data, but this is
something we cannot avoid.

**FH**

You mentioned the recycling of textiles. Is this going to be mandatory?
MD It is listed on the plan as a separate collection. I don’t know if it will be compulsory for the Council to collect it or if simply the plan is making provision for its collection. There is a market there for textiles. The problem is that it is already covered by charity shops and if we were to do it as a Council we would simply be duplicating the effort, filling up our vehicles and thereby reducing the number of houses we can collect from. It is unclear from the plan if there is a compulsion on Councils to collect textiles. It could simply be a case of including an extra collection point within the recycling centres and mini recycling points. In fact a lot of them already have a container for textiles.
2.00pm Meeting with Community Council Representatives
Ms Hilda Lumsden-Gill, Huntly Community Council

Present: Councillors Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Duncan (SD), Hood (FH) and Sullivan (MS).
Jan McRobbie, Improvement Officer and Jackie Buchanan, Committee Officer.

1. How well do you feel your communities are served by Aberdeenshire Council’s waste and recycling strategies? How easy was it to have altered policies and procedures from those to which you were accustomed under the previous district councils?

FH

The first thing that I would say is obviously you can’t please everyone. In relation to Huntly Community Council, I think the community are generally pleased with the Council’s service in relation to street collection and we now have the added bonus of the large brown communal container which can be used for garden waste at the recycling centre. This has been a great success. Previously, waste collection was weekly. It then changed to fortnightly and this created a bit of concern amongst the community particularly for larger families. Personally it is not an issue for me because there is only myself and my husband in our house. I have heard that for larger families it may be possible to request a second bin although I’m not sure if this is the case. Assuming it is, the public generally don’t seem to be aware of this. I appreciate that excess waste can be put in the large communal containers at the recycling centres but this is not always an easy option, particularly if people do not have transport.

With regard to comparing current policies and procedures with those under the previous district council, I would explain that I only moved back to Huntly about twelve years ago, although I am originally from Huntly. Consequently, I don’t think I am in a position to comment on the changes. I would add that there were quite a lot of complaints when we had the bad weather and the waste collection stopped temporarily. In my opinion however, people’s expectations were unrealistic. If the snow was so bad that people couldn’t use their cars then clearly the Council would be in a similar position in relation to the bin lorries.

FH

How well were the recycling boxes and bags received in the community?

HLG

They were well received. There was a slow start but their use has increased. Unfortunately however, I would say that the recycling boxes are too small and the bags are light so they tend to blow away. A better system would be desirable.

FH

If a bigger container was used for the material to be recycled, would it be feasible to reduce collection to every three weeks rather than the current
fortnightly collection?

**HLG** Probably not. If the Council were considering this, we would really need a large bin and not simply a bigger box.

**PB** You mentioned the recycling bag for paper blowing away, the Council are replacing this bag with a green recycling box and have in fact started doing this already. With regard to larger families and the residual waste bin, you are right in that householders can apply for a second bin. There needs however to be a full investigation by the Waste Management Team to assess whether such a bin is required. This involves educating the householders to ensure that they are maximising their recycling capacity.

**HLG** It is my understanding that you can certainly apply for an additional bin but there is no guarantee that you’ll get it. I also don’t think that this procedure is known about nor understood.

2. Are there areas of unresolved issues where you feel the Council has failed to deliver what it said it would? If so, do these relate to the policies themselves or their operational application?

**HLG** I don’t feel that I am well placed to speak about the areas of unresolved issues as I don’t know what these are and I don’t know what the Council’s targets are either. I would imagine that meeting recycling targets is very important and I would say that the general public, as far as I am aware, do not appreciate the cost of landfill.

**SD** What if we were to slant the question and simply ask if the Council are doing well in their service to the community?

**HLG** The Council are certainly doing well enough but no system is perfect. It is important that there is a willingness to listen and to take onboard criticism where it is justified.

**PB** Has there been any waste management complaints or comments made before the Community Council?

**HLG** There were complaints over Christmas as I mentioned as a consequence of the adverse weather and the fact that the waste was not collected. Also, the issue of waste being collected fortnightly rather than weekly came up in the past. The community would prefer waste was collected more frequently. I would add in relation to the bad weather issue to their credit the Council arranged for waste to be collected as soon as they could after the weather improved and didn’t wait until the following fortnightly collection date.

3. Do you think the Council explains adequately why changes are made to waste and recycling collections to let the public understand why decisions are made?

**HLG** I appreciate that what the Council are doing is working hand in hand with the
national campaign on recycling. There has been a lot of publicity in relation to recycling through the press and on television and there has also been the Waste Aware bus which I know about. Sometimes however I think that the general public are only interested in how issues affect them. With regard to the way in which the message is given to the public, I think people are fed up of having detailed text. They need a simple message perhaps pictorial, something eye catching which gets a person’s attention.

**MS** Would you say that the Council have got it more or less right in relation to the recent changes?

**HLG** Yes. If I could just go on to answer question 5 which relates to education on waste and recycling, in my view education is a lifelong experience. If however you can get young people engaged in recycling then this can feed down to a family and can spread out. I also think there should be education targeted specifically at older people who are not used to the recycling concept so they can then understand fully what it is all about.

**SD** Do you think that there is room for compulsion in relation to recycling?

**HLG** No I don’t like that idea at all.

**SD** How about a carrot approach, for example, a reward for recycling by way of say a voucher for a shop?

**HLG** Perhaps that might work. I know it is going off on a tangent but there is a reward scheme in existence for shopping locally in Huntly. Once you spend a certain amount in a local store you get a voucher back. Perhaps a similar scheme would work with recycling.

**PB** As you may be aware, the Council delivered an A5 size folder with recycling information and have subsequently sent out replacement sheets.

**HLG** The information contained in the folder is useful. The reality is that although I know where my copy is, I would imagine a lot of the general public do not. Again although I add in the replacement sheets, I don’t think that the public at large would do this.

**PB** What do you think of how it is written?

**HLG** Although I read the folder when it came out, I really must say that I can’t remember how it was written. On that point, I do not know if the general public would ever read it. People may view it as a waste of time.

**PB** Say for example people don’t know what the point is of recycling plastic or didn’t know what to recycle, it may help if these issues were publicised. Would you think a supplemental guide would help?

**HLG** Perhaps but the whole presentation issue needs to be addressed. It needs to be short, snappy and easy to read. Perhaps a different format would help.
FH Since recycling started, there has always been a bit of a problem identifying which items can be recycled. Would you think that better recycling identification marks on products would help? It may be of course that our Council do not recycle all products that can be recycled in theory. I don’t think this aspect would be a huge issue. What are your views?

HLG That would possibly help but I think we would need to educate people to understand the identification labels on the products in relation to recycling. It’s all about getting a balance. Some people might say that they need more identification on the products; others may say that this is too much information. I find that if I put items into the recycling box which are not appropriate for recycling I just get it back, so I learn by experience.

4. How well do you think Aberdeenshire Council’s current policies apply fairly to both rural and urban areas?

HLG I can only give a limited response on this because I live in the town. My mum certainly stays in the country and I know from what she has said that they changed the days of collection early on which caused confusion but this is now sorted. I know that the blue bin that she has for her newspapers, etc is a lot bigger than the white sack I have but I appreciate what you were saying earlier that the position is to change.

PB Is there a recycling centre in Huntly?

HLG We have large recycling containers up at the Council area and also at both supermarkets in the car park. There is also a Council recycling site in Stephen Road, which includes a large brown container for garden waste. As I said earlier, this has been a huge boost. We can recycle paper, bottles, garden stuff, lots of bigger stuff too.

PB Are there facilities for electrical goods, batteries, computer equipment, etc?

HLG Yes. In relation to electrical goods, there is an employee on duty who puts them aside.

PB Would you say that there are adequate facilities?

HLG Yes, I would say that there are although there can be queues particularly at this time of year for the garden waste container. On a related issue, I saw an article on BBC News 24 recently where Hampshire County Council, conscious of the need to reduce landfill, had started a system where they recycled other people’s waste. Basically, things in good condition were taken from the recycling centres and sold on. The proceeds either went direct to a charity or were split between a charity and the local council. It was labour intensive and obviously there were health and safety issues, disclaimers, etc, but it still had the effect of reducing the amount of goods going to landfill and people benefitted from the goods and there was a benefit from the cash. They did say however that another council would not look at this scheme
because of the various drawbacks.

**PB** There is a similar scheme operated at Banchory in the recycling centre by the Crow’s Nest. This is run by a group called the Box Room. It is only done at one site however.

**HLG** Hampshire County Council certainly said that they couldn’t roll it out across all their sites, just selective areas. It does seem a waste to have perfectly good items going to landfill.

**PB** Do you think this type of scheme would work in Huntly?

**HLG** Yes, it might work. Perhaps Huntly is not big enough however. Potentially it may require a bigger town.

**FH** It could be done as a pilot and then abandoned if it didn’t work.

**HLG** There is a risk of course that people would not like the thought of their goods being used by someone else.

**SD** You mentioned earlier that there seemed to be confusion in rural areas as to when various collection days were.

**HLG** I think this was only when the changeover first happened. I understand that it’s fine now.

**5.** Is there anything which Aberdeenshire Council does which you feel is not worthwhile, with regard to waste and recycling? Or are there other services which you would like to have which are not provided?

**HLG** I think it would be a good idea to have a bin for recycling and not the small tray which we have just now and I appreciate that this may lead to collections being every three weeks rather than fortnightly. With regard to the brown recycling container for public use in Huntly, some say it is very good. There are others however who cannot get up to the container because of perhaps transport issues. These people would prefer to have brown bins in their garden for the garden waste. There was also concern initially in relation to the recycling containers at the Council depot. It is necessary to use a ramp to get access and this was thought to be too difficult for older people.

There needs to be a balance in relation to increasing any bin sizes or the amount of bins supplied because if there are too many, or too big, then space can become an issue.

**PB** Do you think that people help each other in Huntly in relation to recycling? I mean do less able people get help from more able?

**HLG** Oh yes. Huntly is a good community. We have local initiatives such as litter picks, etc organised by groups. People do help each other. People want value for money but need to realise that the Council cannot do everything.
FH  What would you think about a possible food waste collection?

HLG  I agree there needs to be one. It's fine for me, I have a composter in my garden and I use it. I think the public might be concerned about the increase in vermin if there was a food waste collection, so they would need to be education about this to reduce any concerns.

FH  A food waste collection is being trialled in the Banff area at the moment. Householders are given biodegradable bags and these are used to line a small box which is kept inside and the food is put into the box. The bag is then taken out and put in a recycling box outside. The advantage of having food waste recycling throughout Aberdeenshire would mean that we would have a 10% increase in recycling. Apparently the two biggest areas of waste are bread and potatoes.
Monday 28 June, 2010
Committee Room 2, Woodhill House, Aberdeen

2.00pm Meeting with Pauline Hinchion, Chief Executive, Community Recycling Network Scotland (CRNS) and Mark Morgan, Assistant General Manager, The New Hope Trust

Present - Councillors Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Cullinane (NC), Fleming (TF), and Sullivan (MS).

Jackie Buchanan, Committee Officer.

1. Tell us about your jobs and your organisations’ role in waste minimisation and recycling in Scotland.

PB CRNS played a major part in moving Scotland towards the Zero Waste agenda. CRNS was set up in 2003 and started moving the agenda towards the Zero Waste Agenda. We believe it is the future. I understand that there will never be a situation where there is no waste. It is more that the concept of waste will cease to exist. Waste will have a function be it a raw material function or an energy function, in this way it becomes a resource.

CRNS is also about communities. We recognise that communities will play a key part in the future through the idea of localism. As the cost of moving things around undoubtedly will increase consumers will be inclined to purchase things locally, this is where things are going to happen. We should use waste as a resource to encourage this concept.

We have 129 members in Scotland. Every year we have 1,300 trainees and approximately 2,200 volunteer placements. We divert (73,000) tonnes of waste from landfill. We divert (14,000 tonnes of) furniture from landfill. We have members who do everything in the waste hierarchy whether it be waste prevention, recycling, including SME recycling, food waste and kerbside recycling, re-use schemes in relation to building materials, office and household furniture and energy efficiency initiatives. We are also involved with energy saving trust activities.

We try and send nothing to landfill.

We have come from having no concept of zero waste and now within Scotland we have the Zero Waste Plan. There has been a shift from the concept of waste management to the new concept of resource management.

PB You have a 129 members in Scotland is that right?

PH Yes. The criteria for membership are clearly defined; it must be a not for profit organisation, it must have a social purpose and it must use waste resources to achieve its purpose. Consequently our members have both economic and social benefits. When CRNS came into being there was a growing group within the voluntary sector trying to look at environmental issues and how these
affect communities. For disadvantaged communities both urban and rural waste is not rubbish. It can be used to create employment if channelled in the correct way. For example, one of our members started recycling old mattresses on a small scale and now recycles 45,000 per annum. This enterprise has both created jobs and had a major positive impact on landfill in that nearly 90% of the mattresses are recycled where previously they all went to landfill. Our experience is that the private sector companies enter the market only when the market is certain and therefore tend to recycle only traditional materials like plastic, paper etc. We cannot do the same materials. CRNS tend to pioneer new initiatives. We were among the first to get involved with the following concepts:

1. Zero Waste
2. Separated Kerbside Collection
3. Building Material Recycling,
4. Office Furniture Re-use, and
5. Pioneer markets for new materials/initiatives for waste.

As I have said, however, if private companies see that such initiatives are successful then they tend to come in and take it on.

The New Hope Trust (NHT) are most well known for their humanitarian work in Eastern Europe and came into being when the Berlin wall came down. NHT did not start out as a recycling enterprise. We received lots of items as a charity and ended up with a huge pile of stuff. It was that that lead us to get involved in recycling and it is now a key part of what we do. We more or less ambled into it and are now very proactively involved in recycling. About one and a half years ago we underwent a restructuring which included restructuring the recycling part of our enterprise. A typical scenario will be that someone gets in touch asking if we want to have a sofa that they are getting rid of. When we arrive to remove the sofa they have other items which they asked if we could also take so we end up with more material. Generally people are glad to see the items being put to some good use rather than ending up in a hole in the ground. Humanitarian aid is still a big aspect of what we do but so is recycling now. We take on trainees who sort the materials we receive. Some of it goes to orphanages, other items are passed onto people who need help and some items go to other recycling organisations. There are many benefits apart from the environmental benefit. The community aspect is what it pulls in as a consequence of recycling and this is bigger than the environmental benefit.

Am I right in saying you are based in Peterhead?

Yes and we work all over the City and Shire

How do you work with Aberdeenshire Council and other local authorities in supporting community recycling initiatives?

We are a membership organisation so our primary objective is to assist our members. Clearly, however, we come into contact with local authorities as
they have a statutory responsibility for waste. I have found, however, that there is an issue for our members of accessing the waste stream vis a vis local authorities. CRNS generally has quite a good relationship with local authorities. We have worked with them on various projects for example the Bulky Waste Trial. The materials available for uplift comprise stuff that we could use. CRNS helped members carry out this trial and it was very successful. Previously all items from council uplifts were sent to landfill. In our trial there was a 67.5% diversion rate. We have also been involved in the re-use facilities operated at local authority household waste recycling centres. This also assisted local authorities as it reduced again the items going into landfill. We were the first people in Scotland to pioneer this. We were also the first people to try to put together furniture packs for homeless people from “waste” materials. So, we have been involved generally in trialling new ideas in conjunction with local authorities and these have been pushed to other local authorities if they show an interest. Under the Zero Waste Plan we help local authorities in the following ways:

1. Greening the voluntary sector.
2. Food Waste Programs – this includes anaerobic digestion at a community level and energy created from food waste at a housing association level.
3. We lobby local authorities on behalf of our members. There was a scheme whereby £150 per tonne was paid to local authorities to help divert materials from landfill where there was a scheme with community involvement.
4. We sit on Waste Management Groups.

As I mentioned above we also help local authority and members with new pilot schemes. In general we have been instrumental in assisting local authorities recognise that waste is not a problem but an economic opportunity. It costs local authorities £48.00 per tonne to landfill. They can use that money to support local groups and take the waste out of landfill. Next year there is going to be a real impetus on recycling building materials. Construction demolition material takes up approximately 90% of the waste that goes to landfill. This resource needs to be recycled and reused.

TF You mentioned anaerobic digestion. Are the plants in private hands or in local authority ownership?

PH This is a fairly new technology in Scotland and currently anaerobic digesters are in private hands and the Council simply pay for the process. As a model of sustainability for others to use, it is particularly important where there are new buildings for this to be considered. I have seen how much energy is produced very efficiently through anaerobic digestion and the resource which comes out at the end can be used to spread on the land. In England anaerobic digestion is more advanced. Marks and Spencer, for example, are actually buying in additional food waste to feed their anaerobic digestion systems. It doesn’t make sense to pay someone to take it away when it is a resource. I understand that there is an anaerobic digester in Aberdeenshire at Keenans. There are only two or three other in Scotland. As I have said it is very new but
It is very strong in the new Zero Waste Plan. It has enormous potential.

**MM** It turns waste product into a resource.

**PH** It does however have cost implications. Also, how you pick up the food waste is important. The UK Government has announced new feed-in tariffs which will mean that anaerobic digestion becomes a very valuable source of energy.

**PB** What is CRNS doing with Aberdeenshire Council?

**PH** Very little.

**PB** Why is that?

**PH** We have very few members/organisations situated in Aberdeen or Aberdeenshire. We only have nine members in this area which is very small. Our members struggle to get access to the waste stream. They rely either on donations or providing alternatives to the local authority which is expensive. There are also lower levels of activity and generic support around community business is just not there. In the Highlands, one of our organisations has just won a tender for recycling of “WEEE”, (Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment). The organisation concerned scaled up its business and won the tender. They are a training organisation which trainees working on the tender. If there are no large economies of scale, enterprises struggle to provide a service. Consequently, our membership tends to be focused on the central belt. We also require a commitment from local authorities to allow our members access to the waste stream.

**PB** There are 32 local authorities in Scotland. Together Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire comprise a 16th of that. If you have 129 members then a fair proportion for Aberdeen City/Aberdeenshire should be about 8. Is that not correct then proportionally?

**PH** I agree on your figures.

Waste is one of the big four issues which also includes energy, food and transport in the sense of communities coming together. We are starting to work with the Development Trust Association of Scotland to get them to look at waste as a resource. For such a large geographical area Aberdeenshire does not have as many members as I would have thought.

**MM** Over the last 20 years our organisation has had a strange journey. From totally ignorance to where members of CRNS have connected us to a portfolio of people and information. Due to the likes of the Zero Waste Plan etc there has been a change in the views of Councils. For example we are in discussions with Aberdeenshire Council at the moment in relation to their Bulky Waste uplifts. Currently, 100% go to landfill. This needs to be changed. We are beginning to see a change of culture. People are aware of the environmental issues more and more. There is an openness and willingness to make it work. Sustainability is a major factor. Aberdeen City and
Aberdeenshire have not progressed as far as perhaps other areas but they can catch up and close the gap. They can also take advantage of opportunities that still clearly exist. We realise that we ourselves as an organisation can make a difference. Recently, for example, we renewed our bins and took a deliberate decision to buy smaller ones.

3. Are there useful lessons which can be learnt from your organisation’s experience of, or awareness of other Scottish and international community recycling initiatives, at home and abroad? What are they?

PH CRNS are members of the RREUSE Network a group of organisations which exist across the EU. We receive funding from Director General Environment and from members. We have access to a whole source of learning across Europe. As part of this learning, I try to visit places and see initiatives for myself. We also lobby extensively in Europe in order to try and influence Directives. I would say that we are missing out the following areas in Scotland:-

2. Anaerobic digestion.
3. Community Re-use and Recycling Centres.
4. SME collections – in Europe they are looked at this as a collective and as such they come together to recycle. This does not happen in Scotland but the position may well change as a consequence of the provisions detailed in the Zero Waste Plan which includes commercial waste as well as municipal waste.

We have recently had the National Re-use Day and local authorities got involved in advertising this. Re-use is of course always the first option above recycling. The idea was to get more people to re-use rather than recycle.

I have visited the Netherlands where I have seen anaerobic digestion operating on a small level and it is viable to do this. Members were taken to Flanders where they try and work further up the waste hierarchy. This is where the best recycling and re-use network is located. Local authorities don’t need to offer any bulky waste uplifts as it is all dealt with through the network with a tried and tested scheme.

MS I understand that the Danes and the Germans have a system whereby they leave out bulky items which they don’t want on a Saturday morning between 9.00 and 12.00 and anyone can simply come along and pick it up. I couldn’t see this working as well however in Scotland and there would be concerns around health and safety issues. We seem to have an entrenched regulatory attitude.

PH A cultural change is required. In saying that, fly tipping of the likes of sofas is a real issue in communities. We need to be more responsive to citizens. In relation to your scheme, I would imagine that the residual stuff (i.e. the items which weren’t uplifted) would be a concern. They would need to be removed and there would need to be someone to do this. The Pass It On Day Scheme
is on a much smaller and managed scale.

**MS** Is this catching on?

**PH** Your model that you have just quoted, I would love to get there. There needs however to be a structure behind it or there would be no responsibility for the residue. I would add that you can phone any of my members and have a free uplift.

People are not resource aware. We could trial your model provided the infrastructure was in place; say for example our members collected the residue. It would need to be on a small scale initially however.

**PB** In relation to the general situation do you write-up reports and produce documents?

**PH** All Councils get our quarterly magazine “Towards Zero”. We do briefings, we have a DVD on how to set up a Re-use Shop; we have lots of stuff. There is lot on our website too. We do try and push it out there. I will send some stuff to you.

**MM** I echo what Pauline has just said as members of CRNS we have benefitted from their experiences and advice. In a lot of cases, there is no point re-inventing the wheel.

4. **AA** From a national overview, how well does Aberdeenshire appear to be doing in its approach to working with its communities to empower their waste management?

**MM** They could do a lot better. If I could just explain some of the issues that we come up against. The minute a private enterprise sees something working, it tries to muscle in and take advantage and when it reaches the stage that no money can be made, it abandons the initiative. We are very keen as an organisation at every step not just to benefit the environment and reach targets but that the benefit is ploughed back into the communities where it takes place. There needs to be long term sustainability if this is to happen.

We have partnerships with 12 social enterprises. We pass items on to them and this has a multiple level benefit both economically and socially. Private companies do not have social benefit to such an extent so it doesn’t work as well simply because they don’t have local engagement. There are opportunities in Aberdeenshire for best practice as many initiatives have not been trialled there yet. There is the benefit from learning from other councils’ experiences.

There is a need for community and social enterprises as the schemes are not just about financial impetus. They tend to be so much more successful when there is community engagement. There is a need to buy in on these levels.

**PH** The part of the question about empowerment is very interesting. People need
to take responsibility.

We now need to get people to look at waste as a resource and not as a waste. If we can help people see that waste has value e.g. 1,500 tonnes of aluminium cans are worth about £900,000. Waste is not a problem but a valuable resource e.g. once people realise how much food is wasted they will realise how much it costs and will thereby reduce the amount of food waste. Incineration encourages a throw away attitude. I think we confuse people if we have incineration and recycling side by side. It gives a mixed message. The energy recovery argument is used but the new Zero Waste Plan is trying to get away from strict caps. Now, with recycling targets, you can have a biomass for dirty woods, anaerobic digestion for food and various different types of recycling which are much more sophisticated than mass burn. That would be my message. Help people to see the link. There is some interesting stuff going on down in Wales where the community gets some of the financial value of recycled materials in that an amount of money is paid over to the local community.

I think there is a danger in trying to solve the residual waste problem too quickly. In my view it cannot be done using the incineration solution. I can find details of this scheme in Wales and send it on to you.

Marks and Spencer as I mentioned earlier are actually buying food waste to use in their anaerobic digestion systems in order to power their vans. This is excellent in that gives the message that you cannot just throw away waste. It helps people make the connections.

We need to educate people to be responsible for their waste. Coupled with that there should be ease of access for people. For example we asked people why they didn’t recycle and in general the response was that it was too much hassle. A holistic approach is required.

PH People need to see the value of waste. There are housing areas in the Netherlands where there is an anaerobic digestion system. The residents buy into it because the more waste that is recycled the higher reduction they receive in their rent. They can see the benefit because the costs are reduced. There is a clear direct connection.

AA A lot of people do recycle but don’t know what happens with it.

NC We need to start with children in schools.

TF What is your view on Tetrapak?

PH I saw a TV programme about Tetrapak recycling. Tetrapak is made up of three different materials essentially, plastic, cardboard and foil. It is this mix that makes it difficult to recycle as each of the components require to be separated. The TV programme which was on 3 or 4 years ago showed a plant being built in Mexico which could separate the various components. Part of the Zero Waste Plan strategy is to try and get packaging recyclable. This includes
Tetrapak. I know that some of the suppliers are trying to take out the foil part of Tetrapak in order to make it easier to recycle. In fact I think that producer responsibility could deal with this and also Design for Environment could deal with it also. There is a Directive in Europe which aims at getting the designs for packing more eco-friendly. I discovered recently that there is a facility in Dundee which takes Tetrapak for recycling. It is problematic however. It needs to be done at much higher level.

AA As far as I am aware Tetrapak is collected at some of the recycling centres.

PH The individual parts of Tetrapak are expensive resources. Perhaps the expense will lead to a change.

5. NC Do you have views on how the best service provision could be provided across the board in terms of recycling opportunities?

MM One of the best ways is to use a lot of what is in place already. There is a lot of infrastructure on the ground level. We are aware of a lot of groups, for example, the furniture recycling/re-use. There is a lot of this in Aberdeen City and there is capacity for much more through community led groups. On a ground level, the engagement is there. We need to help community groups to understand the benefits and worth of what they are doing. We ourselves had thought there was no outlet for certain things so that we would need to set up an outlet. When we did some investigation, however, we discovered that there is a big network there. It is just a case of finding them. So rather than create a network we use what is in place already.

AA Perhaps you could give us a list of what you do and the networks you use? I appreciate you can’t perhaps list it all today but would it be possible for you to send it to us?

MM Yes I can do that and I can also give you an idea today of what we are involved in. We collect stuff, for example, furniture. If the furniture doesn’t have fire guard protection, its uses are limited but parts of it can still be recycled. If the furniture does have a fire guard, it can go to second hand outlets for sale. If it needs repaired, it can go and get repaired first. We tend to get a lot of books. If they are rare books we can sell them on-line e.g. on E-bay. Others are passed on to our connections e.g. there is a place in the Borders that takes books. If at the end of the day the books are not used or sold on they can be pulped.

In relation to mattresses, we are currently setting up a service level agreement in relation to the ones that cannot be re-used. Most of the component parts of the mattress can however be recycled.

We have gone beyond the straight in and straight out scenario. As far as possible we ensure that every part of everything that is given to us is reused or recycled in some way. For example we take in old and broken kettles and we have a contact that can use every part of the kettle including the flex and the base.
PH  There is an enormous opportunity in recycling. It is very important that in relation to kerbside collections, the items are source separated. If a company can be guaranteed a good quality product then a greater economy will be created around it which adds value to the product. For example you can add value to plastic bottles by picking it up in a certain way and having the plastic pelletized and granulated. This doubles its value. As a pure product it can then be used e.g. in the manufacture of jumpers.

The Scottish Government is putting £5,000,000 into a plastics recycling plant in Scotland so we would have less need for world markets in order to re-use our plastic. There is a real separation problem in the UK. This leads to poor prices. When the price of such resources plummeted a couple of years ago, the UK suffered greatly because of the poor quality of our products. We also have a problem with UK companies having to search world-wide for resources since good quality products are not available in the UK. Companies will at the moment buy bio-mass for example as they know there are biomass plants planned in Fife.

Currently, Councils are paying to have valuable resources taken away. They need to think long-term.

6. PB  The Government’s new Zero Waste Plan has recently been launched. Are there elements of this which CRNS would welcome as being potentially effective, or areas where greater challenge may be discerned?

PH  I was on the Working Group which developed the strategic part of the Zero Waste Plan. It is a brilliant document. Parts of it, however, create problems. The annexes are rife with confusion. The Revised Waste Framework document from Europe provides that all national states must produce a waste prevention plan and that all national states must have accredited repair and re-use network. We are trying to turn the re-use and repair idea into a sustainable plan. This is far more effective than putting waste into the ground. The Zero Waste Plan talks about landfill bans. I have a lot of background knowledge in waste and I still can’t understand what is being said.

Previously we had a 25% cap on EFW. The concept of municipal waste and the definition of municipal waste is being changed, so our understanding of municipal waste will be changed. This is not helping things. Also in terms of the Zero Waste Plan the concept of Energy From Waste is not recognised as being as sophisticated as it is.

The strategic element of the Zero Waste Plan is very good.

One of my concerns is that the Government now seem to be saying that the PAS 100 and PAS 110 need to be implemented in relation to community composting and anaerobic digestion. This is going to be very costly for small scale companies. We are trying to negotiate a way round this at the moment. The reason that this requirement is in there is because local authorities are picking up garden waste which is not compost and trying to say that is. The
problem with the PAS 100 and PAS 110 requirement is in relation to the cost of testing the product. At the moment there aren’t sufficient testing facilities in Scotland and it needs to be sent down south.

The carbon metric proposal is very interesting. It completely shifts the emphasis. At the moment waste is measured on tonnage so that buildings materials have a much greater measurement than for example aluminium cans. It is the opposite case with the carbon metric.

MM I have nothing to add and echo what Pauline has said and also her sentiments. The Zero Waste Plan brings great opportunities but also creates a precarious situation all at the same time.

PH I would like to see the financial restraints and the difficulties which the economy and in turn the Government is experiencing at the moment lead to a fundamental difference in the way waste management is dealt with. We need to have a new infrastructure and need to recognise that waste can be a resource.

TF Animal waste can be minced down and changed into an inert material and fired up as fuel.

PH I saw this in the Netherlands. Local authorities should be encouraging farmers to do this. There will be huge opportunities made available in relation to anaerobic digestion. As I mentioned before the cost of fuel is going to become a real issue in the future. Oil is not sustainable in the long-term so the likes of anaerobic digestion will become much more prevalent.

AA Aberdeenshire Council is currently looking into food waste collection and we are running a trial at the moment.
Wednesday 30 June, 2010

Present: Councillors Bellarby (PB); Allan (AA); Cullinane (NC); Duncan (SD); Hood (FH); Tait (IT) and Thomas (RT).

Officer: Arlene Kelday, Assistant Committee Officer.

2.00pm Meeting with Duncan Simpson, Vice-Chair Scottish Institute of Waste Management; and Director of Marketing, Valpak:

There are two aspects of your experience about which the Committee would like to hear. The first is about you, your role in Valpak and its role in working, primarily with producers, to minimise waste and promote recycling. The second is in your role as Vice-Chair of the Institute of Waste Management where it would be helpful to hear of any national views in that body about current waste issues.

1. **Tell us about your job, your career history, and your organisation’s role in waste minimisation and recycling.**

   **PB** When I left school I had no idea what it was I wanted to do, although I knew I liked geography. I studied for a degree in planning and then for a masters in technology management; specialising in waste management and risk management. Upon completing my studies I applied for every job in Dundee as that is where I wanted to work. Dundee was known as being the industry centre for waste. I applied to become a bin man before gaining employment as a Recycling Officer with the council. In this post I introduced the three-bin system (blue for paper, brown for garden and grey for general waste). I then gained employment with Gordon District Council as a Recycling Officer and was involved with submitting its recycling plan.

   At the time of local authority reorganisation I was employed as a Waste Management and Sustainability Officer and became aware of an organisation called Valpak. Valpak had only been in operation for three months at this time and had no strong influence in Scotland. I gained employment as a Project Officer with Valpak and worked with BP on the reverse cracking of hydrocarbons. This role also involved dealing with customers, SEPA, the REHIS and the Government. I am now the Director of Sales and Marketing with Valpak.

2. **Tell us about any particular areas where you think your skills and working with producers to design solutions to have been very effective?**

   **DS** A retailer can tell me how much of a particular product they sell, where it has been sold, and how much waste is generated, but they cannot tell me what that product weighs. In order to work out what obligations a retailer has under the regulations, this must be worked out. I have weighed half a million products and have their weights stored on my computer. For example, the weight of a bottle of shiraz can vary between weight $x$ and weight $y$ depending on which country it has been produced. It is possible to reduce the weight of a product and I have asked retailers to explain this to their producers. This is why plastic bottles are made of a more flexible material than they were previously; it
reduces the weight of the product. Buying power of retailers can reduce the weight of a product.

Many retailers ask me why local authorities cannot collect waste in the same way. Having worked for local authorities I know why this is not possible. It is difficult for waste collection to be the same in London as it is in Inverness because each area has different needs. It is not practical to have a single, uniform method of waste collection across the country.

A third area where working with producers has been effective is putting the cost of packaging and waste electrical and electronic equipment back into the market place. This drives change.

PB You mentioned that the material used to make plastic bottles has changed to reduce the weight of the product. Can your organisation find areas of best practice where this being done?

DS I am often asked “why is the design of one bottle better than another?” I pass the information to WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme). Where there is not the technology in a particular country to reduce the weight of a product, I would suggest that the product is tankered to the UK for packaging. Stella Artois does this and advertises its bottles as being light-weight. This causes the buyer and seller to think about how the weight of a product can be reduced.

PB In terms of best practice, what can be done in the future?

DS There are three layers in packaging: primary, secondary and tertiary. Tertiary packaging is the film used for packaging the goods during transport. Secondary packaging protects the primary packaging, for example a box or shrink wrap. Primary packaging is the packaging which is in direct contact with the product. There is a lot of focus on reducing primary packaging and there is a lot more that can be done. Producers can be nervous about discussing change because buyers will want to pay less for the product if packaging is reduced.

3. Are there areas where it is hard to negotiate and provide for producer responsibilities?

DS This is a complex area. Having worked in Waste Management for 14 years I understand what has to be done, but it can be difficult to explain this to many businesses because they have a high turnover in staff. I find that once the buyer for a particular organisation begins to understand the process, they are moved on to another position within the organisation.

I would say that gaining information from the householder is a difficult area. We conducted a survey to ask consumers what their greatest concerns were regarding waste in the market place and packaging was the top issue. We found that many consumers purchase recycled products to resolve this. However, many consumers purchase particular brands because they like the
product not because of the packaging it is sold in. Only when the product has been consumed, and the packaging becomes waste, does it turn into a recycling issue for the consumer. For example, it is not possible to recycle yoghurt pots or take-away containers and this is an issue for some consumers because they would feel better if it could be recycled. The packaging of these products could be changed but this would increase its carbon footprint and consumers do not always realise this. Our carbon footprints can be reduced also by driving less and switching the lights off more.

AA  Do you think people are more aware of the carbon impact?

DS  The carbon metric system (proposed in the Zero Waste Plan) should work in principle but it is a blunt tool. Producer Responsibility legislation puts everyone in the right direction and SEPA will ensure that it is done correctly. If we recycle more than 60% of plastics it is actually worse for the environment.

There are some tough questions to be answered. There can be anomalies depending on where the product is purchased.

Life Cycle assessments can be carried out for packaging and this looks at the resources used to produce the product. The biggest impact in terms of carbon footprint is where the product is produced and this should be concentrated on.

4. Are there useful lessons which can be learnt from your company's experience of working on an international canvas – do other countries support or enforce producer responsibilities more effectively?

DS  On first appearance it may look like other countries are doing better but when you look at the numbers the UK is doing well. Lessons could be learned with regard to technology and communications. For example, Holland has an excellent advertising campaign. I classify consumers in four categories: (1) those who recycle and know why they do it and are aware of the legislation and targets; (2) those who recycle because they think it is a good thing to do; (3) those who make up excuses as to why they don’t recycle but still know that it is a good thing to do; and (4) those who will never recycle. The latter category causes most problems to local authorities and make up 10 – 15% of the population. However, Holland has 22 classifications of consumers and has different adverts for each category. The adverts are a positive marketing tool.

We can learn from other countries but have to remember that each country is different. On the whole the UK is doing OK. Germany had a head start with Energy from Waste Plants and Holland has a Zero Waste Plan. Some private Waste Management Companies ban some products from landfill; however this must be carefully defined. Economic drive can also result in change. If it is more expensive for their waste to be sorted, retailers will separate the waste before collection. The Scottish Government require waste to be sorted but this is optional for local authorities. However, if targets are not met then they will be penalised.

FH  What makes the UK different from other countries?
Holland has been at it for 25 years and recognised the impact global warming will have on it. Germany looks at solutions and has the engineering capabilities. Much of the waste and recycling equipment is made in Germany. There are many historic, cultural and political issues to be looked at. There are also legal and planning issues to consider, particularly in relation to Energy from Waste Plants. Many consumers are worried about dioxins emitted from these Plants but there are more dioxins emitted from fireworks than there would be from an Energy from Waste Plant.

There is a fear of Energy from Waste Plants in Aberdeenshire and we recently had to consider an application for an Energy from Waste Plant in Peterhead. The public do not know what to believe. On one hand you hear that there are virtually no fumes and on the other you hear that the chimney fumes are toxic and will spread with the wind.

This fear is common. The planning system will look at the design, location and the impact on transport of Energy from Waste Plants. There needs to be an incentive for the community to accept these Plants, such as design. You need to be engaged in the planning process from an early stage and prepared years in advance. The media also need to be involved and shown what a good job is being done.

It is all about risk and we need to be more upfront and honest about this. More people die in waste management than from working in Energy from Waste Plants.

In your role as Vice-Chair of the Institute, do you have any observations on how well Scotland’s local authorities currently meet Scottish Government targets for waste minimisation and recycling? Are there any widespread concerns amongst your members about plans to meet the future targets?

Overall, I think we should be proud of what has been achieved in such a short time in Scotland. In terms of performance there is a typical profile. Rural, and semi-rural, affluent areas are always high performing in comparison to urban areas. Rural areas are hard to reach but residents care more about where they live and are often more willing to transport their waste to a recycling point. The facility does not need to be on their door-step.

There are often questions about how you pay for residual waste. Some of the bigger local authorities can generate money themselves and others get “off-the-hook”. Municipal solid waste should not be collected by local authorities. A two-year grace period will see the numbers fall as will bans on landfill.

Members need more drivers to fight the case for the Zero Waste Plan but where will the money for investment come from?

There has been a massive change from where we were to where we are now. When you look at the statistics, the UK is about average for recycling plastics
in Europe.

[Mr Simpson showed slides illustrating the above and the relative environmental impact of planes]

6. From a national overview, how well does Aberdeenshire appear to be doing in its approach to providing waste services to its communities? Does Aberdeenshire get the balance right in trying to ensure equality of service provision across all its communities?

DS This is a tough question and Aberdeenshire faces some tough situations. There are rural settlements and settlements nearer the coast. Collecting waste in Aberdeenshire in tough due to the size of the area. There are areas which can be improved. Access to recycling does not have to be on the door step. On the basis of environmental measures, is it better to have vehicle collecting from the kerbside in rural areas? Communities need to be engaged in the process and helped to deal with waste issues relevant to their area. Communities in Aberdeenshire will engage better because they like living here. This is not the same in cities.

7. What does the Institute think are the challenges for Scotland’s local authorities in collecting and disposing of municipal waste – are there lessons from other countries which could be explored?

DS There must be planning to get the right infrastructure together. This needs the right timeframe and right finances. Contracts also need to be watertight. Communication with the public is key and there needs to be budget for marketing. Local authorities must communicate with people. For example, in Denmark, people know how much it costs to have their bin collected. That is not the case in the UK.

8. The Government’s new Zero Waste Plan has recently been launched. Are there elements of this which the Institute would welcome as being potentially effective, or areas where greater challenge may be discerned?

DS The feedback that I get from our members is that the Zero Waste Plan is a good aspirational plan. However, there will always be 5 – 10% ash which will be made up of a concentration of materials which can only be disposed of by landfill. We should aim to have as little waste as possible. A cap of Energy from Waste Plants will be difficult and anaerobic digestion will be good for the future. We need to know what will help us reach the targets. Where is the money coming from? Where are the drivers to help Waste Management Companies?

9. From your experience, what is your perspective on the concept of energy from waste (eFw) as a possible solution to the challenges of waste in Scotland? THIS QUESTION WAS NOT ASKED AS COVERED ABOVE.
16 August, 2010 – transcription of letter from the Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has considered the questions raised by the Scrutiny and Audit Committee and our answers are set out below.

Question 1
Landfill fines – will we ever be asked to pay these retrospectively? The Committee has been advised that fines accrued will not be levied this year (at the Minister’s discretion). Would you confirm that this is the case?

It is most unlikely that local authorities will become liable for penalties applied retrospectively under the Landfill Allowance Scheme. The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment has made clear that penalties and trading under the scheme are suspended until 2011. Local authorities would only become liable for penalties if these were notified by the Scottish Ministers. Accordingly, local authorities need not record the liability as a year-end accrual but instead simply disclose the contingent liability in their accounts.

Whilst a final decision has yet to be made by Scottish Ministers, it is likely that the Landfill Allowance Scheme will be revoked once new measures proposed under the Zero Waste Plan are implemented.

Question 2
Is there any possibility of alteration to the currently proposed 25% cap on Energy from Waste (EfW)? Is this cap linked to planning permissions – if so, would an unused approval for one operator stop another plant from processing waste from a particular local authority area?

Scottish Government will introduce regulatory measures to support the delivery of landfill bans, by ensuring energy from waste treatment is only used to recover value from resources that cannot offer greater environmental and economic benefits through reuse or recycling. These measures will supersede the current 25% cap which currently applies only to municipal waste. The 25% cap remains in place however until the regulatory measures are introduced. The Zero Waste Plan sets out a number of actions to be taken forward to deliver Zero Waste policy. The Plan can be found here: Zero Waste Plan.

Conditions attached to planning consents are a matter for Planning Authorities themselves. However, it is recommended that until the new regulatory measures are introduced Planning Authorities should attach a condition to consents for EfW plants requiring that no local authority sending municipal waste to a facility may send more than 25% of its total municipal waste for treatment. Where authorities are working in partnership, the planning condition should lay down that no more than 25% of the combined caps of the local authorities concerned should be treated by plants subjected to the cap.

In certain circumstances, Scottish Ministers have a statutory role in relation to the land-use planning system, where a proposed development raises an issue of national importance, or where proposals represent a significant departure from the
approved structure plan and/or national planning guidance. In these circumstances, Ministers will enforce the 25% cap in their decisions.

**Question 3**
How is it intended the local application of the national Zero Waste Plan will be carried out? Will there be a scheme of local Zero Waste Plans, and if so, will these follow the local authority geographical groupings previously used for the Area Waste Plans?

Delivery of Zero Waste aims and objectives at a local level is very much the responsibility of individual local authorities. The new Zero Waste Plan makes clear that Scottish Government intends to introduce legislative measures that will need to be complied with, and we will expect local authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure that the requirements of the Zero Waste Plan are met. To help ensure this happens Scottish Futures Trust and Zero Waste Scotland will be working closely with local authorities across Scotland to provide guidance and assistance in areas such as waste prevention, procurement of waste infrastructure, best practice and education and awareness programmes.

**Question 4**
Is/has consideration been given to altering the current legal definition of “municipal” waste to be more close to that used in mainland Europe? If so, how, and to what timescale, will this be applied in practical operations?

Following discussions with the European Commission it was agreed that the UK’s definition of municipal waste should change from household and commercial wastes collected by or on behalf of local authorities, to all wastes similar in composition and nature to household waste, irrespective of where the waste is produced and irrespective of who collects it. This change brings the UK into line with the approach taken by other Member States. The Commission acknowledged and agreed the UKs new approach by letter on 22 March 2010.

This change in definition meant that the scope of waste falling under the definition of municipal waste increased, resulting in consequential changes to the 1995 baseline, upon which Landfill Directive targets are based, and changes also to the landfill diversion targets for biodegradable municipal waste. As a result of these changes Scotland has not only met the landfill diversion target for 2010 but has also achieved the 2013 target.

**Question 5**
Are present comparisons with Europe valid, given the differing definitions and remits of “municipal waste”?

As highlighted in the answer to question 4, the issue around the definition of municipal waste has been resolved in agreement with the Commission.

**Question 6**
Is there any intention to help underwrite the costs associated with the provision of the necessary infrastructure to allow more modern waste disposal, given the apparent lack of investment (compared with Europe) for
the last 30 years or so (encouraged by the historically low cost and great availability of landfill)

Over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 Scottish Government is providing local authorities in Scotland with an additional £80 million of funding from the Zero Waste Fund to help meet the costs associated with delivery of Zero Waste Policy. You will appreciate that Scottish Government is not in a position at this time to comment on future funding for local authorities.

There is no doubt that the costs to local authorities associated with the collection and management of waste are going to increase considerably, primarily down to annual increases in landfill tax. Currently, landfill tax is £48 tonne, but this will rise annually by £8 to reach £80 per tonne by April 2014. Scottish Government considers that landfill tax alone should be incentive enough for local authorities to take appropriate action.

**Question 7**

Given the shift of authority from SEPA to the Scottish government with the Zero Waste Plan replacing the previous national waste strategy/plans, where will the operational application authority lie? Will those staff currently seconded to the government from SEPA be retained centrally to undertake this work?

Scottish Government will continue to work closely with SEPA on the delivery of Zero Waste policy. As part of delivering waste policy, SEPA staff with particular areas of expertise will also continue to be seconded from SEPA to Scottish Government as and when required.

Actions under the new Zero Waste Plan include introducing certain legislative measures. Once these new measures come into force Scottish Government anticipates that SEPA will be the relevant authority in respect to monitoring and enforcement.

**Question 8**

The Committee is aware of the recent consultation on Zero Waste Plan will take some time to distil into working policies and decisions – but could you give some indication of areas where current operations may be changed?

The Scottish Government published its Zero Waste Plan for Scotland on 9 June. The Plan clearly sets out a number of actions that will be implemented over the coming months and years. The Zero Waste Plan is available on the Scottish Government’s web site at [Zero Waste Plan](#).

Any new regulatory measures to be introduced under the Plan will of course be subject to full statutory consultation, with local authorities being key stakeholders in that consultation process.

**Question 9**

Where do the current landfill targets come from? If it’s from a real life cycle, has this assumption been validated? Is it reasonable for these to be based on
Landfill targets for the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste are based on biodegradable waste arisings from 1995. The EC Landfill Directive requires Member States to reduce biodegradable waste to landfill by 75%, 50% and 35% of 1995 levels by 2010, 2013 and 2020 respectively. As the targets are set by the Commission, Member States have to comply.

The landfill reduction targets allocated to each local authority are based on a static 1995 baseline, and no account is made for fluctuations in household and/or population growth. This of course may mean that some local authorities face more of a challenge due to a growing local population and this is something that the Scottish Government recognises. This aside however, the overall objective is to ensure that Scotland as a whole meets its share of the UKs landfill target, and, as my answer to question 4 makes clear, we have already done so in respect to the 2010 and 2013 targets.

**Question 10**
**How can local authorities meet targets to reduce municipal waste when in some areas of Scotland the number of households is increasing - so even if more recycling achieved per household, there will still be an increase in waste arising?**

Scottish Government recognises that reducing municipal waste arisings will be more challenging for those local authorities with a growing population. However, the Zero Waste Plan for Scotland has waste prevention at his heart, and Scottish Government will be bringing forward a Waste Prevention Programme for all of Scotland’s waste – not just the 15% under the control of local authorities - in order to place prevention at the heart of Zero Waste policy.

In addition to this, Zero Waste Scotland will develop and implement, in cooperation with local authorities, a targeted, coordinated and phased education and awareness programme to drive reductions in waste and improvements in recycling performance.

**Question 11**
**Does setting targets for individual activities reduce the focus on the overall provision of service expected by each local community?**

It is the view of the Scottish Government that the setting of long-term waste targets should not lead to a reduction in the quality of local services being provided by local authorities – quite the contrary in fact. Indeed, the new Zero Waste Plan encourages high quality recycling and adoption by local authorities of best practice for collection and other waste services.

**Question 12**
The Scottish Government appears to have recognised that the majority of Councils have achieved the “quick wins” and that to improve further on current recycling rates will require substantial investment of time and money.
How realistic is this in the current economic climate, when Councils are facing severe financial pressure in a range of service areas?

Scottish Government anticipates that it is the private sector, not local authorities, that will be the driving force for delivering much of the new waste treatment infrastructure required to deliver long-term waste targets in Scotland.

Scottish Government does of course recognise that local authorities face challenging times owing to the budgetary cuts that will inevitably arise. However, as was highlighted in the response to question 6, the costs associated with waste management are going to increase significantly due to rising landfill tax. A recent study undertaken by SQW Energy on Scottish Government’s behalf showed that doing nothing – essentially maintaining present recycling rates and continuing to landfill almost all the rest of Scotland’s waste – will cost more than taking action to meet targets when using an approach that is based on high levels of kerbside collection. It is therefore in the interests of local authorities to take action to minimise waste going to landfill.

It is also important to note that there will be opportunities for local authorities to reduce the amount of funding and investment required for waste collection and management in the future through the adoption of more efficient practices, joint working and improving recyclate quality therefore increasing the demand for and price received for recyclable materials.

I trust the above answers the Committee’s questions.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN NICOLSON
Environmental Quality
**Friday 3 September, 2010**  
**Committee Room 2, Woodhill House, Aberdeen**

**10.15am** Meeting with Jack Clark, Waste Manager – update and response to Scottish Government responses

In Attendance Councillors P W Bellarby (Chair), A J Allan, T A Fleming, I W Gray and I S Tait.

Jan McRobbie, Corporate Improvement Officer (Scrutiny & Audit) and Jackie Buchanan, Principal Committee Officer.

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<td><strong>1. PB</strong></td>
<td>Can you give us an update on the current state of negotiation with SITA re general waste?</td>
<td><strong>JC</strong></td>
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<td>We have met with SITA and gone through a draft agreement/contract. There is another meeting scheduled for 16 September when we will go through a revised agreement. Hopefully we will be finalised on the majority of points in September this year. There are no fundamental problems.</td>
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<td><strong>2. IT</strong></td>
<td>Is there flexibility to adapt/ augment/ alter the SITA contract, a 15+ year contract, should it be required to meet the changing legislation promised in the Zero Waste Plan?</td>
<td><strong>JC</strong></td>
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<td>There is a “change in legislation” clause and an agreed procedure as to how any such changes will affect the contract terms. These provisions are fairly standard in our contracts and there is provision for disputes to be dealt with by arbitration. Aberdeenshire Council will have a continuous contract as and when it is in place. There could be an additional cost to us if any change in legislation puts additional costs on to the contractor. The contract is designed in such a way so as to meet diversion targets that is to divert biodegradable waste from landfill. The Scottish Government won’t really change that aspect of the law. There are aspects of the new Zero Waste Plan in its present form which may impact on the contract but the position is not clear due to doubts over definitions. For example, items which would have previously counted towards our recycling targets cannot count now. We had thought bottom ash if recycled would have been included as part of our targets but this is in doubt now due to EC legislation.</td>
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<td><strong>IT</strong></td>
<td>Is there not something about EC targets and the fact that other countries count commercial waste towards their waste targets? Is this not changing in terms of the Zero Waste Plan?</td>
<td><strong>JMcR</strong></td>
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<td>I understand that the Zero Waste Plan extends the definition of municipal waste beyond household arisings.</td>
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<td><strong>JC</strong></td>
<td>Yes. The Zero Waste Plan does impact on industrial and commercial waste but under the Plan the proposal is to discount commercial waste and have targets solely on household waste.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PB</strong></td>
<td>The Zero Waste Plan introduces a carbon metric measurement for waste</td>
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and we have heard different opinions as to whether this is a good or a bad thing.

In relation to Aberdeenshire Council the carbon metric measurement will have more benefits for us than for example Fife or Clackmannanshire Council because they recycle a lot of rubble. In fact, I understand that 40% of Clackmannanshire’s recycling figure is rubble. The carbon metric measurement changes things because it places more importance on materials which cause damage, in other words biodegradable materials. Also, it is not just a case of recycling biodegradable waste but the method by which we process it that is important. For example, Aberdeenshire Council compost all their garden waste. The proposed factor for composting is 0.3. If we were to use an anaerobic digester to process garden waste the factor is 1.7.

Does the way in which SITA process waste have a knock-on effect on our recycling waste?

No. They only deal with residual waste after we have taken out all the waste that can be recycled.

We know that a lot of the current waste awareness is already coordinated and sponsored by the Scottish Government. How will the Government’s own Zero Waste Plan education plan, as voiced in the reply to our questions, fit with local awareness/education practices?

I am not aware of what The Scottish Government sent you back but we have been pressing, with other local authorities through COSLA, the Scottish Government for a national campaign on recycling and re-use and they are now doing something. Their last effort was a bit minimal. We may need to scale back as a Council in light of the cuts and rely more on national campaigns and it would be helpful if we could plug into that.

The Scottish Government’s response was rather vague unfortunately.

The Scottish Government could organise things better. Zero Waste Scotland are now dealing with this and taking it on.

You mentioned scaling back your own efforts, what exactly do you mean?

It would involve basically stopping all our media campaigns and concentrating on a number of events. It’s a major cut-back and really a backward step. In the past we have done quite a lot through funding from the Scottish Government which came from the Strategic Waste Fund. This is now subject to the Council’s budget review.

Do you have details of the figures showing what was spent on publicity awareness campaigns?
£250,000 which we obtained from the Strategic Waste Fund. This funding is no longer available as the Strategic Waste Fund no longer exists. Basically this funding now forms part of the Council’s budget as a whole as a result of the Single Outcome Agreement.

Have Zero Waste Scotland indicated that there will be a cut-back in the sums in the Single Outcome Agreement and will the Scottish Government give money to Zero Waste Scotland to pass on to Councils?

No. The Scottish Government give funds direct to Councils now. It used to be ring-fenced but it is not now. Under the Single Outcome Agreement the fund is handed directly over to the Council. There is a Zero Waste Fund Grant which we were given for three years but it ends 2011/12. I don’t know if it will continue but I think it is unlikely.

Will this mean that there will need to be new innovative ways which the Council will require to come up with in order to highlight issues?

We will concentrate on events and maximise publicity through Corporate Communications rather than through media advertising. There are a lot of events which Aberdeenshire Council organise and we will raise awareness through these. We will also visit different groups. The programme that we had through the Scottish Waste Awareness Programme was scalable. It could be done as a national campaign, a Grampian campaign or an Aberdeenshire campaign so that we could use the same materials. I don’t know if it will be the same for the new one.

The issue is trying to get interest. Community organisations and groups don’t see that they should get involved in advertising waste awareness. They are keener to get involved in recycling. Community groups could play a major role in waste awareness. What they need to understand is that benefits from such a campaign are not always tangible or can be easily measured.

Previously we had a representative in from a Community Council who spoke about the Council’s reference to recycling targets being “Aberdeenshire Council’s recycling targets” rather than “our” recycling targets. It was his view that the reference should be to the whole community and by such a reference members of the public would be more inclined to participate.

On that point, the Scottish Waste Aware Group used real life situations in their advertising and did this in order to encourage public participation. They would get people from the locality who had done something to advertise recycling. It is however very difficult to get communities to take this onboard.

If recycling increases in volume and is of increased quality, can the markets cope with increased supplies?

This is really outwith my remit. From past experience I would say no but
markets have greatly increased in scale. We used to be simply dealing with the UK markets then Europe; it is now the world. For example, if the UK paper price is high, perhaps a company from Germany would flood the markets then the price would fall but we have to remember countries such as India, Sri Lanka, etc. are now also onboard. Consequently, I would say that we need to concentrate on quality not volume. Currently the system relies on a push from us in order to encourage the use of recycling materials. If there was an incentive to manufacturers to use recycling materials, this would help greatly. People need to remember that although it is our waste or rubbish it is someone else’s raw material and they can demand a high spec.

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<th>TF</th>
<th>Can you play the markets to your advantage?</th>
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<td>JC</td>
<td>We don’t work on price but on continuous supply to the market, otherwise it creates chaos with householders. Basically we need a constant steady demand for a product to match our supply. Sometimes this means when the value for a product is high we suffer as we have a fixed medium price. But of course it helps when market price is generally low.</td>
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5. PB

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<th>JC</th>
<th>In your opinion, will increasing volumes of recyclates impact on money we get for those bits we currently sell? - i.e. more around = pay less?</th>
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<td>TF</td>
<td>It will be a case of supply and demand. What tends to happen is that the quality of the material becomes more important. In relation to lower quality material the price will fall first. With high quality material the price tends to stay level. Our material is of a good quality. In fact we get calls chasing our material. We have an occasional problem with brown cardboard. This is a difficult concept for householders but it is the same for brown envelopes. Brown envelopes can go into the cardboard recycling. Segregation confuses people. The mill we send our paper to is the biggest in Europe so they can afford to be particular about the products they take. They use a process to produce newspapers which does not involve bleach so their supply needs to be clean.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JC</td>
<td>What about envelopes with cellophane windows?</td>
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<td>TF</td>
<td>They are not a problem; the mill can deal with these.</td>
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6. AA

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<th>JC</th>
<th>Will increased quality and volume make spot contracts, as opposed to long term stable arrangements, for recyclates the more attractive option to recoup recycling costs?</th>
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<td>JC</td>
<td>We prefer not to use spot contracts as I have said. We like to develop relationships which keep materials moving. This type of relationship also allows us to develop markets. For example we have a good relationship with our contractor who takes our plastic bottles. This contractor knows that we want them to accept mixed plastics. They will be willing to look at this because they realise that this may be a requirement in the future if they want to keep our material. To this end they now have new processes so that they</td>
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can deal with more materials themselves rather than export anything that we supply them with. They have an assurance of supply so are willing to do this. Certainly we could have someone else who would take all our plastics but then simply export what they don’t want. Our way allows us a bit of control and assurance. There is only one place that take aluminium cans and that is in Warrington. It is a fairly fixed market.

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<th>IT</th>
<th>Is it possible to have a mixture of contracts both long-term contracts and spot contracts? Would it be worth your while, for example, accumulating brown envelopes and then having a spot contract for these?</th>
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<tr>
<td>JC</td>
<td>We do in fact do this already. We have a spot contract for brown cardboard which goes to a different mill so we do have a mixture of contracts. For high value material such as glass and paper a long-term contract is better. We have flexibility in relation to glass. If we discover that we can get a better price we can walk away from the contract with our current contractor provided in the first instance we provide him with an opportunity to meet that better price. There is no specific length of time for a spot contract so by its nature it is just a one-off. Our contract for recycled glass is currently on a three year term. The contractor takes all colour separable glass. The other material I mentioned is paper. Our contract for recycled paper is a longer term agreement. This is what the contractor wants and because they are situated four hundred miles away we basically take the best deal we can get at the time of agreeing the contract. Logistically, we could not possibly have all our contracts as spot contracts.</td>
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| PB       | I notice that at the recycling centres the glass has separate containers but this is not the case at the kerbside. |
| JC       | Glass is sorted before it is picked up at the kerbside and put in the lorry. We need to keep clear glass as pure as possible in order to get the highest price. |

| 7. PB    | Would you please clarify for us, best practice re plastic bottles – is it lids or no lids? Is the difference in collection procedures due to different end users’ preference, or income generated? |
| JC       | Where the lid is made from the same type of plastic as the bottle the best practice is to either flatten the bottle and then replace the lid securely or push the lid inside the bottle and then flatten it. It is down to the process that is used by the contractor in relation to plastics. Basically the contractor fires off the plastic with a jet of air while the bottles circulate around a large drum. Bottle lids by themselves don’t fit neatly into the process and this is why they need to be secured on to the bottle or placed inside the bottle. |
| **TF** | Do milk bottle lids have a high resale value? I know of someone who sends milk bottle tops down south and gets £40 per ton for them. |
| **JC** | Not particularly. Milk bottles themselves have a return of £80 per ton. It depends really what the top is made out of. Not many people take the tops by themselves. The volumes that we deal with make it difficult to keep it separate. It is the same with cans. We bail cans therefore don’t want them squashed flat as they cannot be bailed then. Ideally, it would be best if the ring pull from the can was put inside it and then it was nipped at the top. |
| **PB** | If the aluminium cans are squashed what do you do? |
| **JC** | If it’s only a small amount it’s OK because they can be put in with the other cans. If we have a large amount of flat cans it is an issue. We do flatten steel cans but we don’t want the aluminium cans bent. |
| **IG** | In order to reduce the volume of goods in the bin lorry is there a way in which some piece of equipment can be obtained to allow the bin lorry itself to squash down items? |
| **JC** | We have looked at devices but the devices themselves take up as much room as the additional volume taken up by items which haven’t been squashed so in effect we don’t gain anything. |

8. **PB** The Zero Waste Plan speaks of greater source segregation – will this have an impact on cost? Also how can we best manage the impact on public awareness if guidance keeps changing or if it differs across neighbouring authority areas?

**JC** It was in order to improve public awareness that we had the Grampian Waste Aware campaign. It dealt with the uniform regulation of items across Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, but it is very much the case now that we have different methods for the different Councils in relation to how we deal with recycling.

Source segregation should not have a major impact on us as we do this already either at the recycling centres or at the kerbside. There is slight contamination at the recycling centres but on the whole the public are pretty good at segregating items there.

**IT** The food waste pilot in Banff, I understand, was very successful.

**JC** Much of the purported success was down to the way the Scottish Government and WRAP, who funded the project, reported figures. It was slightly different to the way in which we do it. They measured the number of participants so even if the individual only participated once every six weeks they were included. We tend to measure the success of new schemes by the put out rate. For this pilot therefore there was a 70% participation rate but only a 40% put out rate. The pilot was therefore not as successful as we would have liked. In terms of the Zero Waste Plan there should be source
separation of food waste by 2013 and by 2015 a ban of food waste going to landfill. The issue is however the funding of food waste collection and how this will be done.

In view of the financial restraints, should the Scottish Government not ask supermarkets to avoid encouraging so much food waste?

The Scottish Government is working with a group of retailers regarding this. For example, Buy One Get One Free is a classic example of food waste so there is a proposal to have an alternative scheme whereby the consumer would buy one and then get one free when they next require it.

Would it be worth recommending to the Scottish Government that perhaps the requirement in the Zero Waste Plan should be looked at again and efforts redoubled in relation to supermarkets? This is on the basis that we don’t have the resources to do food waste.

We will look to see if we can incorporate food waste into what we are doing already, for example, could we incorporate it into the weekly collection of recycling? There is a report being done which will spell out how to do it but it will entail extra costs.

Will this mean that we will need to cut back elsewhere?

This is really up to the Members. The dilemma really is that the Council has tighter budgets but wants to extend and improve its services.

Is then what the Scottish Government proposing not an unrealistic demand?

The Scottish Government will say by creating a food waste scheme we are reducing costs because of the landfill tax we will save. It will still cost to reprocess food waste. It costs a lot of money to collect in Aberdeenshire due to its size.

Once the recycling waste is taken out, is there sufficient waste left to make incineration viable?

It depends on the definition in the Zero Waste Plan of energy coming from waste. It is off the agenda in any event at the moment because if the contract we are negotiating with SITA goes ahead we will not need to concern ourselves with this for the next fifteen to twenty years.

Is it better to put out bins when they are quarter full or simply hold on to them until the next collection?

It is better to put out bins when full as this avoids the pick up lorry having to stop at so many locations. It is more cost efficient to put out when full.

In relation to the tie up with the EU, where in the European League do we sit?
| JC | The problem is that EU countries measure things in different ways. |
| TF | There are people who say that Denmark, for example, is streets ahead of us. |
| JC | Consumers in the UK would not agree with the same system as in Denmark. Some countries have pay as you throw which means that they pay to have their residual waste taken away. They also pay for recycling goods to be uplifted. The funds are then used to put in place an infrastructure. There would not be public acceptance for this here. |
| JC | There is a possibility that the Council could introduce free bins so that we as a Council would be in control of them and thereby control the number of bins we put out. If, for example, we were to introduce Diamond Bins they could be collected 25% faster so this would be a cost saving. There are various proposals in relation to waste collection going to the Waste Management Working Group. |
| IG | I’ve heard that there is a good system in Southern Ireland where basically consumers pay so much per year for their waste to be uplifted. For items they want to recycle they buy a specific type of bag and then just put it out for collection. |
| JC | This is a variation on the pay as you throw scheme. I have heard that it has problems however. The consumers select their own refuse collector but it means that you can have four different collectors in one area. |
| TF | Is there anything you can do about people who just simply refuse to recycle anything? |
| JC | Provided a consumer can fit all their waste in the bin there is nothing that can be done to stop this. There is no absolute requirement to recycle. I would also say that there is no way you can fully tell if a householder doesn’t recycle because some people don’t put any recycling out for kerb collection and prefer to take it themselves to the recycling centre. Only 50% of household in fact recycle through kerbside. |
2.00 p.m. **Meeting with Planners**

David Jennings, Strategic Development Plan Manager (Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority);
Alison Hogge, Policy Planner, Development Planning and
Katherine Donnachie, Development Management Planner, Buchan.

**Present:** Councillors P W Bellarby (PB), A J Allan (AA), and T A Fleming (TF).
Corporate Improvement Officer (Jan McRobbie) and Committee Officer
(Jackie Buchanan)

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<tr>
<th>1. PW</th>
<th>Would you please tell us about your role and how it relates to waste provision planning and approval in Aberdeenshire?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DJ</strong></td>
<td>I am the Strategic Development Plan Manager for both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. Under the Planning Act 2006 a Strategic Development Planning Authority was set up with six Councillors from each Authority. It includes the whole of the City and Shire less the Cairngorms National Park. The main function of the Authority is to prepare a Strategic Development Plan. Waste is an issue that the current Structure Plan covers and one which the Scottish Government would expect to be covered in the Strategic Development Plan. The SDPA have a role in commenting on regionally significant planning applications and this includes waste management applications. It is only one of many subjects that we deal with.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AH</strong></td>
<td>I am a Policy Planner based in Woodhill House, Aberdeen, and currently my specialist topics include waste management facilities, although this is likely to change due to staff turnover. During the preparation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, I reviewed the 2 policies on waste management facilities in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan and updated them. I also provide a policy response on planning applications (as do the other officers for proposals in their area). I also attended regional meetings on waste management facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KD</strong></td>
<td>I am based in Peterhead and I deal with all different types of planning applications. I have input into the Waste Policies in both the Strategic Development Plan and the Local Plan. I am also assisting COSLA inputting to the planning workstream of the Zero Waste Plan. In relation to the planning application for the Energy from Waste Plant in Peterhead I was responsible for the input from a national policy prospective.</td>
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| 2. AA | Would you please tell the Committee how infrastructure to support waste facilities is included in the new strategic and local plans? |

**DJ** Waste only takes up one paragraph in the Structure Plan. It is dealt with on a general basis in paragraph 4.9 on page 15. It addresses the scale of waste in the North East which is approximately a million tonnes a year. This includes all waste. It recognises the scale and early timing of changes required to waste management as a result of new legislation and other drivers. There are 2 principles highlighted. The first principle is the waste hierarchy. The second principle is the proximity principle which means keeping the value of any recycled materials local and also limiting the transport of such materials. The plan recognised that the Scottish Government’s policy position was under review. The new framework will be reflected in the future Strategic Development Plan. One target in terms of the Plan relates to the diversion of bio-degradable waste from landfill. Our problem was that it was difficult to prepare a Structure Plan when we did not know the content of the Zero Waste Plan. We discussed this issue with SEPA. Supplementary guidance is to be prepared.

Another aspect is the spatial strategy of the plan, in other words the idea that the Plan should focus growth of regionally significant waste management facilities in the identified strategic growth areas. Locally this would mean in Aberdeen City or along the A96 and A90 from Peterhead down to Laurencekirk. The plan provides for a generous supply of employment land in these areas.

We are currently working with various bodies on this and around what the supplementary planning guidance would do. What we need to do is provide a clear policy framework which gives confidence to Councillors so that they either approve or (if necessary) refuse an application for planning consent for a waste management facility for sound planning reasons.

A view expressed by SEPA is that market forces should determine the location of a waste management facility. There are however discussions with SEPA over this because this does not sit comfortably with the role of the planning system to plan positively for waste management. We are trying to have the supplementary planning guidance to assist this problem and COSLA are taking an interest to see what lessons can be learned from this.

**PB** What is SEPA’s response to an alternative view to that of market forces determining the location of a Waste Management Plan?

**DJ** Their response has been fairly strident. They seem to see Regulations as a solution.

**KD** SEPA said that the Zero Waste Plan was going to control Energy from Waste through landfill bans and that criteria will be set for what can be incinerated. This would control what goes into the sites. It is important that their interpretation of the Zero Waste Plan is checked.

**DJ** We are trying to work with SEPA. What we need to do is decide what is required locally and then in turn what is required generally in the North East. SEPA’s response would lead to a reactive system which is not good and would create difficulties for planning authorities.

**KD** The Zero Waste Plan sets out that Government and SEPA need to develop a tool to
identify the infrastructure that is needed. Already this happens with housing land. A similar approach is required for waste. Waste industry already holds a huge amount of information on waste and it is easily accessible. The hope is that we can work with SEPA/the Waste Industry to ascertain the existing waste infrastructure and the amount of waste arisings.

**AH**

In relation to the local plans, it is not ideal to identify specific sites for waste management facility use. The Waste Team based in Inverurie have said that this would not work as the need for a waste management facility in a certain location may change and in turn a bigger or smaller site may be required. The best option is to use an existing or planned supply of industrial land because these tend to be on larger sites that have the transport infrastructure in place with (or with the possibility for) services.

Planning policy in the proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan supports waste management facilities on employment land, Class 5 land (general industrial use) and Class 6 land (storage and distribution use). Class 6 land is suitable for a waste transfer station or materials recycling facilities, as they have higher lorry movements. In saying that however each facility must meet other planning policy criteria also. In summary, we do not have a site specific policy but a general policy in relation to the location of waste management facilities.

**KD**

The current Local Plan sets out criteria that waste management plants must comply with. There is Supplementary Planning Guidance which is to be prepared. This had not been progressed as yet. With regard to the new Structure Plan, we await supplementary guidance also. We have none at present really. We rely on the National Guidance which has been diluted now. The Zero Waste Plan does not given any direction either. This makes planning applications very difficult to deal with. What happens is that a developer needs to do an area search and then in turn provides us with the details. This is not an ideal system.

**DJ**

I don’t disagree with this but do have a problem in providing the level of guidance that would be helpful. These issues have been aired before and the private waste management sector is not keen on site specific allocations, they prefer an “area of search”. The Scottish Government have said that this is not now an appropriate way of doing this. The problem is that the tensions that exist between planning and waste management have not been resolved and these have been going for 10 years.

The matter is complicated by local authorities. When preparing the Structure Plan we asked Aberdeenshire Council what their strategy was for waste. The response was that they were putting a contract out to tender for the management of residual waste and would go with the cheapest option. This is a reactive response not a strategy. You cannot make a plan based on this.

**PB**

You mentioned that the Scottish Government is moving away from areas of search and does not like site specific criteria being set down, what other option is there?

**DJ**

In certain circumstances a site specific approach would work if the land is owned by a willing landowner and the plant has been planned in conjunction with the Local
Development Plan. If you go down the tender option once the tender is approved a developer cannot wait for the Development Plan to be produced which takes several years so if the waste management plant is not included in the Development Plan, this makes the planning application more difficult to approve. Aberdeen City Council went down the route of having two waste management plants approved where they were the landowners and had included the plants in the Development Plan.

KD Scottish Government like the term “Growth Corridors” rather than area search. There is to be a revised Planning Advice Note issued. (This is a revision/updating of Planning Advice Note 63 on waste management planning.) In terms of this, some guidance is required as to the proximity principle particularly as we are apparently losing the Area Waste Plan.

AH We could invite bids (proposals) for waste management plants in the same way as we do for housing provision. This could be looked at in terms of the Development Plan.

DJ It is my understanding that there is nothing to stop this happening in relation to waste management plants. However waste management contractors do not work on these types of timescales and are not in on the system. They don't see this process. Although the Scottish Government is to provide a reviewed Planning Advice Note, it is also working towards reconciling the tensions between the Zero Waste Plan and the Scottish Planning Policy.

KD The private waste industry bodies are critical of Development Plans but don’t participate or comment on Development Plans or planning applications as housing developers do. They simply don’t get engaged in the process.

AH In terms of the Local Plan, areas are allocated for housing and for employment. There is no specific barrier to waste and we have had some for wind farms but not a waste management facility. Waste management plants could be “reserved” in the Local Development Plan rather than “allocated”. If land is allocated for employment there is no detail given as to what type of employment it is but if it is reserved for waste management there is a requirement to tell the local population exactly what is planned. Consequently, there tends to be a backlash against this.

3. The Committee have been advised that until new regulations are agreed, the previous 25% cap for Energy from Waste (EfW) is to stay in place. How will development control applications be dealt with in the interim?

KD When we were drawing up Planning Conditions in relation to the Peterhead application in the event of it being approved we had to provide that would be a 25% cap for EfW. Suggested wording was as follows:

- Unless otherwise agreed with the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA, the total amount of municipal waste treated in the energy from waste plant shall not exceed 25% of the municipal waste arising in any year from Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils.

- Reason: To retain effective control on the amount of waste being processed
by thermal treatment in accordance with national waste policy.

Another condition as follows was suggested to control where waste came from and records from SEPA could help assist in enforcement.

- Waste received and processed at the facility shall be restricted to waste arising within the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City administrative areas. For the avoidance of doubt, waste generated outwith these areas but transferred via transfer stations within these areas to the facility is not classed as being generated within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire and should not be processed at the facility. To this end the operator must maintain a log confirming the nature and source of waste entering the facility; if waste is delivered via a transfer station the log must detail the primary geographical source of the waste. This log shall be made available to the Planning Authority on request.

- Reason: To retain effective control on the amount of waste being processed by thermal treatment and ensure that wastes are not being transported from outwith these areas for treatment in line with the proximity principle and Council planning policies on waste management.

It is not clear if the cap as noted in the Zero Waste Plan now applies to municipal waste only. Consequently, if the original application had been granted and a second plant came along, it may nor may not be an issue. Our only option, therefore, would have been to refuse the next application in order to comply with the cap. We have tried to get a response from the Scottish Government on this but it has not been clear. Really, we are not sure what to do. Guidance is to be produced on the 25% cap.

| PB | What is not clear is whether the 25% cap applies to each EfW plant individually or in total. If individually, and the Council had 4 plants, then all their waste could be incinerated. |
| DJ | There is also an issue with the 25% cap in that it is not clear whether this limitation should be dealt with through planning or dealt with through SEPA regulations. |
| KD | If the Peterhead application had been approved and say for example there was a second EfW plant planned in Inverurie, it may have been acceptable if they were dealing with commercial and industrial waste only and provided they showed need on a commercial and industrial basis. In relation to the Peterhead plant it was made clear that they could have sought to make a needs case based on commercial and industrial waste. |

The expectation seems to be that the planning system will control the cap. It should ideally be Government controlled.

| 4. AA | What are the long term strategies for the allocation of sites for waste related purposes across Aberdeenshire and City? |
| DJ | The intention is to work with the Scottish Government and SEPA to get a clear idea |
of the scale and nature of the problem. If we know, for example, (figures are hypothetical) that EfW plants are appropriate for 500,000 tonnes of waste then a plant which will process 100,000 tonnes of waste in Peterhead may not be unreasonable. If, however, the limit for the whole of the North East is 100,000 then Peterhead is not an appropriate location and the size of the site there would be wrong (contrary to the proximity principle) but we need to know quantities/sizes we are dealing with so that we can put the applications into context.

We are still focusing on scale so that we can then determine where and how many. We need to know the baseline for 2008/2009 which is difficult, let alone having long term planning. This lack of information means that waste management site applications are dealt with on a very ad hoc basis. I commented at a recent meeting that we would not want all EfW plants to be located in the North East of Scotland but the whole of Scotland but the representative from SEPA could see no problem with this!

KD We are also in direct contact with the Scottish Government in relation to policy at the moment. There was work done a few years ago in terms of the North of Scotland Strategic Option Review which looked at residual waste treatment and potential corridors of development. This work was never published but would be very useful to inform the current ongoing work. It led to potential sites being identified. From the information gathered we could use location of waste arisings, transport corridors etc to flag up potential sites.

AH With regard to the proposed Local Development Plan we are only looking at the short to medium term. In relation to new developments there is a requirement in the proposed policy on Developer Contributions for waste and recycling facilities in relation to proposed housing. This gives reassurance that waste management facilities (e.g. recycling bins and recycling points) will be delivered rather than simply be an aspiration. We ensure that as far as possible waste management facilities are as close as possible to the source of waste.

The Proposed Local Development Plan also identifies where there is a need for larger waste management facilities in Schedule 3, Table 3 – Waste and Recycling Facilities. This need is also repeated in the Settlement Statements for individual settlements under the subheading Settlement infrastructure.

5. PB It’s easy to see how, in new zonings, allowances can be made for infrastructure to be incorporated as the community develops. How are the requirements “retro fitted” to service existing communities?

AH The proposed Local Development Plan makes provision for brownfield land to be used provided certain factors are assessed. As I said already Class 5 and Class 6 land can also be used for a waste management facility.

KD Councils can have small recycling centres where they fall within the permitted development rights. Under planning if there are new developments we can consult with Waste Management Officers to look at waste management in relation to the new development and existing developments. There must be some work done in the communities themselves so that they appreciate that facilities are required to
deal with recycled materials and to deal with residual waste. People need to understand that waste needs to be dealt with within their own locality. There is a major problem in relation to taking waste from other areas, however. The re-new, reuse, recycle awareness raising programmes have been very successful and similar work is now needed to explain why new facilities are required too.

DJ This falls outwith my remit. I do know however that retro fit is more difficult because of a whole host of reasons.

KD We need to be sure that we consult with the waste management service on planning applications. This is very important. This avoids future retro fittings. Waste management must be treated in the same way as essential infrastructure such as roads and the same amount of importance applied to this.

AH We have very much taken on board this matter and a necessary part of a planning application must be the waste management facilities in the development. We have an appendix in the Proposed Local Development Plan, which details what the waste management facility requirements are depending on the type of the development. This is to avoid the need to retro fit in the future. Not only do applicants need to include details of the waste management facility (e.g. recycle bins) but also details of vehicle access/turning areas etc.

DJ The Supplementary Planning Guidance and the Strategic Development Plan are moving forward and we hope to run them both together in the short term so that there is consistency. However, we need staff resources to do this and there is an issue with funding.

AH We need to engage more with the waste management facility providers. We would like to be able to speed up the process for them. Reserving sites in the Local Development Plan for a specific waste management facility could benefit them hugely.

DJ This was one thing I tried to suggest at a recent meeting. There has been a bit of positive feedback on this but was told that this is not how the waste management industry works. They don’t seem to understand the importance of getting onboard in relation to the development planning system.

KD Any link to heating planning is very positive and this can help counterbalance the negative views that exist in relation to waste management planning. There are a lot of benefits too. COSLA are involved in a project with Highland Council to see where high heating needs are and the potential for situating heat producing developments (such as Energy from Waste) close by. This has been done elsewhere in other countries and SEPA have done work on this. There is a Zero Waste Conference being held in November. I am not sure who is attending from Aberdeenshire Council but we need to raise this issue with the Government and the industry itself.

DJ Paragraph 4.1 in the Structure Plan deals with combined heating and power usage. Developers need to examine the technology for this in relation to new developments. A combined system is much more efficient. A huge amount of heat is created in Energy from Waste plants. This heat needs to be utilised. There could be a system
where there is industry usage during the day and household usage at night. This is a very efficient way of using heat.

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<td>Based on data that has been produced it has been shown that smaller facilities can make a much better use of combined heat and power systems – SEPA Thermal Treatment Guidelines provide more information.</td>
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**Additional notes added by KD after Evidence Session:**

- The important role of masterplanning and development briefs in considering waste needs at early stage and building this into the planning process.
- The potential role of the Energetica project in considering links to energy, waste and planning.
- The importance of SEPA’s thermal treatment guidelines which are a material planning consideration and highlight the key planning considerations for any thermal treatment proposal (which includes anaerobic digestion not just incineration) – these guidelines set out efficiency criteria to be met and the need to use heat and power locally available on this link together with much information on health impacts, etc, etc.
- Work by SEPA on awareness raising including production of cds etc on waste management in Europe and Shetland which may be useful. More information on this link
- Together with information on different technologies etc which may be of interest
2.00pm **Meeting with Woodhill House Facilities Managers**
Gillian Francis, Team Leader (Facilities Management)
Liz Wood, Catering Manager.

**Present:** Councillors Bellarby (PB), Allan (AA), Duncan (SD), Fleming (PF) and Tait (IT).
Jan McRobbie, Improvement Officer and Jackie Buchanan, Committee Officer

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<th><strong>Can you tell us about your role in Aberdeenshire Council’s facilities management, and in particular with reference to Woodhill House?</strong></th>
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| PB | I joined the Council in May 2009 as Facility Team Leader with part of my responsibility being waste management in respect of Woodhill House and other corporate offices. The waste audit which was done by the Trade Waste Services gave me a good steer on the way that we handle waste. My aim is to reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill and increase the amount of waste we recycle.

I need to find innovative ways of reducing waste. One such proposed initiative is to remove individual desk bins, or if kept, ask the employee to empty the bin themselves into a suitable centralised waste bin station. This would encourage employees to think about waste. Currently there are approximately 1200 individual desk bins in Woodhill House. They take a while to empty so if they were taken away this would reduce cleaning time and ultimately make people think about waste.

We have also explored a tender for waste for Woodhill House. Aberdeen City say that Woodhill House is an Aberdeenshire site and Aberdeenshire say that it is an Aberdeen City site so we use a private contractor. We are still talking to Trade Waste from Aberdeenshire to see how we can get them on board. The hope is to create a waste village so that we have larger containers and thereby reduce the number of uplifts and in this way get Trade Waste to take the contract on. |
| LW | I started working as a Catering Manager here seven years ago. In the last few months I have taken on Gordon House too. I look after all the catering. I have recently moved upstairs and my role has changed but I am still very hands on.

Waste is always an issue in relation to two areas, namely food waste and disposable waste. Our disposable waste is high. Three years ago, I did a feasibility study for Fiona Graham comparing costs of using bio-degradable containers as opposed to polystyrene. Bio-degradable containers came out so much more expensive. In my view, we should try and get a better price for these. As a Manager I would like to reduce the amount of our disposable waste but this has a cost implication. In the coffee bar for example, all containers and utensils are disposable. If the position was otherwise we would have to install a dishwasher which in turn would require to be manned. |
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<th><strong>PB</strong></th>
<th>You mentioned that your role has recently changed?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LW</strong></td>
<td>Yes. When I was only dealing with Woodhill House, I seldom saw my line manager. Now I am under the Transportation &amp; Infrastructure Service rather than Planning &amp; Environmental Services, I am directly answerable to a new manager. For example, I am now writing reports, looking at where to make savings and also where to modernise the catering service. I need to consider innovative ideas. I still need to be hands on however. I am slowly getting to grips with Gordon House although staffing problems at Woodhill House meant that this has taken me longer.</td>
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2. **TF** What are the current waste collection arrangements for general waste from Woodhill House? Do we have a trade waste contract with Aberdeen City or how is it managed? If so, what are the volumes and costs?

| **GF** | We do have a trade waste contract with Shanks. They provide a waste management service in relation to cardboard, paper, re-cycling and general waste. The general waste makes up about 70% of our total waste. The annual budget for waste management at Woodhill House is £21,000. Last year the spend was £37,500 and a major part of that increase was in respect of general waste. A large contributor last year was the Kaizen projects and the major clear outs that took place. We have now agreed with the Kaizen team that as part of any future KDI projects, they deal with the waste so that they can learn about waste management. Over and above the Kaizen project, we also had a lot of general waste. The aim is to bring this down so that we have more re-cycling - 50% general waste and 50% recycling. The key element is to make people think about waste.

Along with Liz, we are trying to reduce the amount of disposable waste. Neither Costa nor Starbucks appear willing to recycle their cups. This is very disappointing. We would like them to take more responsibility for their waste. Already we have run over budget for the year to date. Waste stations are going to be introduced in the next couple of months. I would hope that by doing this we will reduce waste and increase re-cycling. Shanks are on board in relation to this.

We would also look into food composting if we could find space on site to do this. Having looked into this, the main part of our general waste seems to be banana skins, coffee cups and paper towels. You may have noticed that recently we have introduced hand drying machines in the toilets, rather than paper towels. Even taking into account the capital cost of the new dryers, we should achieve a £40,000 saving over four years. We are looking to roll this out across Aberdeenshire. |

| **TF** | What happens with the big sacks of confidential paper? |
| **GF** | The overriding factor is the risk associated with transporting confidential material. It was decided therefore that it would need to be shredded on site. A company called Shred-It provide a truck loaded machine which shreds everything on site so it never leaves the site whole. This has been rolled out across Aberdeenshire Council. Schools are increasingly coming on board. |
| **AA** | When does the Shanks contract run out? |
| **GF** | A temporary 1-year contract was initially put into place to establish volumes and usage. It ran out in August 2010 and has been running on a month to month basis since. Shanks are quite happy to proceed on this basis provided they get an opportunity to tender for the new contract. |
|  | As a result of the Kaizen exercise I mentioned earlier, we were left with a huge number of surplus lever arch files. We managed to re-use them however, by donating them to an adult learning group in Fraserburgh. We even negated the transport costs by only transporting the files in vehicles that were going to Fraserburgh anyway. We also have membership with Creative Waste in Aberdeen and we can donate to them any items which we do not require and they use the money that they make from selling them on to give to charity. Furthermore, we propose to work with our stationery supplier to avoid buying in new lever arch files when we have a surplus of them. The only exception is when it would be inappropriate to use second hand lever arch files for example, if presentation was an issue. The main problem we have with holding on to so many lever arch files is storage. |
|  | The contents of the lever arch files have been shredded or put with the paper to be recycled if they are not confidential. Used stationery is recycled as much as possible. |
| **IT** | Can we have central stock information regarding stationery so that if we have an excess of a certain item, other departments could use this if they needed to? |
| **GF** | Yes, this is feasible but there would need to be a dedicated person dealing with this as it would involve a lot of stock control. We would also have to have a storage facility. |
| **IT** | Would it not be possible to hold it at its original location until it’s needed? |
| **GF** | Yes. A scheme sort of like this already exists within the Council. It’s called “Requip” and is accessible through Arcadia. A service can advertise if they have equipment they no longer require. If no one claims it, the service is left to dispose of it. As an alternative it could be moved to a main holding facility instead. We could certainly bring in the supplier and ensure that they are aware of the excess stock we have and don’t supply that item to any other department within the Council. In relation to any contracts we have, we require to have three tenders if they are over £20,000 in value. If the contract is worth more than £60,000 the Central Purchasing Unit, (CPU) becomes involved. Currently, we use a company called Lyreco for our stationery supplies. We |
also use Whytemyres who supply both the City and the Shire. Through the CPU, we could put a link in place in respect of these contractors so that they would not supply items if we had confirmed to them that we had a surplus.

**PB**

It is my view that we should not really be in a position where we have an excess supply of any thing and we would not like to encourage this.

**JMcR**

I can certainly obtain information on the size of the clearout that took place after the Kaizen. *(Information, including slides, was obtained subsequently and presented to the Committee).*

**LW**

With regard to Question 2, I have no involvement in this. I have a bit of a problem with glass. One of the issues is in relation to staff carrying glass out to be disposed of. Currently we only have plastic bags. There is a Health and Safety issue there. The proposal is that we get more appropriate bags for containers for glass.

My food waste is complete waste and it goes down the food disposal unit. By food waste I mean only plate waste. Other than that, my waste is minimal.

**TF**

There obviously is an inherent value in lever arch files and it would seem a pity to shred them.

**GF**

As I mentioned, we donated a lot of lever arch files to the project in Fraserburgh but also can provide them to Creative Waste. But we can also buy items from Creative Waste instead of using Lyreco so we do have options available.

**IT**

So you could have a situation therefore where you donate items to Creative Waste and then at a later stage purchase the same items back?

**GF**

Yes, that could happen. The problem we have is with storage of stock. We do not have room to store excess items.

**3. PB**

What arrangements are made for collecting recycling - paper/ confidential waste etc from Woodhill House - and what's the volume produced?

**GF**

Volume for paper waste at Woodhill House is 18%. In relation to confidential waste we don’t have a tonnage from Shred-It. We know that last year their cost for shredding confidential material was £7,000 but the contract with them only started last April. We need to see the figures for this financial year. The criteria for confidential waste is, if the information were released into the public domain it could cause stress or harm to the individual.

We have an ongoing issue educating staff to ensure that only confidential waste is shredded. As I said, we paid out £7,000 for shredding confidential waste. Currently we do not get any money back for the value of the paper that is shredded. It is only a one year trial with Shred-It. When we go to tender again we will obviously try and negotiate value for the paper.
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<tr>
<td>4. SD</td>
<td><strong>Is there a separate collection for recycling aluminium cans, glass, etc? If so, who does it and what does it cost?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GF</td>
<td>There are separate bins for aluminium cans. Glass recycling is not done properly because there is not enough of it for Shanks to carry. As part of the tender, we are looking at glass recycling albeit it’s a very small amount.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LW</td>
<td>The only glass in fact is from the members’ catering, e.g. the orange juice and tomato juice in glass bottles. I did try to change it and use cans or plastic containers as provided in the staff canteen. I was not allowed to use it, however, on basis is that it didn’t look good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GF</td>
<td>We cannot even take it to the recycling centre because technically it is trade waste.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LW</td>
<td>Another point which I would like to mention is that staff take cutlery from the canteen and do not return it. It got so bad in relation to teaspoons that I simply don’t supply them any more. Occasionally I will have a cutlery and crockery amnesty advertised on Arcadia where I ask staff to bring back any cutlery or crockery that they have. This does not work terribly well. In fact, staff even bin cutlery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>This is very disturbing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GF</td>
<td>I think that the project to reduce bins will help this problem; that will stop people binning cutlery.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>In relation to the glass issue, could you not simply use jugs?</td>
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| LW | We do sometimes use juice in jugs but this is only really if an order comes in late and we don’t have sufficient time to get the requisite number of bottles. I think it may create issues with members because there would be a reduced choice.  
In fact, to be honest, the biggest food waste comes from Councillors. For Monday and Thursday, I have an average to work with in relation to the number of members meals that are required to be prepared. I never have detailed confirmation of which members are staying for lunch. I also never know when and if they are going to arrive. I cater for 25 lunches and have it sitting warm for two hours. After that the food must be binned because of health and safety requirements. It is quite a big issue. |
| PB | Would it be possible for staff and Councillors to lunch together? |
| LW | I have no problem with this and it would avoid such a great amount of waste. If Councillors felt they did not want to sit in the dining room with staff they could certainly collect their lunch in the staff canteen and then take it through to the
Councillors room.

AA I understood that perhaps staff also had an issue sitting with Councillors when this was suggested before.

TF Could staff not use the food where members didn’t arrive?

LW The food cannot be eaten by staff as it’s been sitting for 2 hours and I’m not permitted to keep it any longer than that and I need to keep it for up to 2 hours in case councillors come in late.

TF Is there a better selection in the staff canteen?

LW The selection is in fact the same but the selection perhaps looks better as all the food is laid out. The staff can see what they’re getting. I did have a trial at one point putting a hot cabinet in the members’ lounge so that they could simply help themselves. The members didn’t like it, however. I’ve started a salad bar in the staff canteen which is very successful and I’m going to add a pasta bar soon, too.

AA I do appreciate that some Councillors may object to any changes in the current system but I think it’s necessary, particularly in the current climate for changes to be made.

LW With the cuts that are proposed it is very important to look at costs.

5.

IT The Committee are very aware of the challenges of food waste, which is highlighted in the Zero Waste Plan as a priority target. Is there currently, or will there be in the future, consideration to food waste collection?

LW I cannot comment on the Zero Waste Plan as I do not know what it is. There is not a lot I can do about the food waste. We did look at having a composter at the back of the building outside but there was an issue in having to get staff to change their clothes to go outside there and then come back in. For all there is, it is not worth it. Also our kitchen is tight and badly designed and it couldn’t accommodate several different bins.

IT From what you’ve said the main source of waste is plate waste and there is nothing you can do about it if someone chooses not to eat what is put out on the plate. If Committee Clerks were to let you know how long the Committee meeting would last would that help?

LW No, because the food is ordered and cooked in advance. In fact, in relation to the voucher system which exists in the Council I tried to introduce a system where we get notice in advance but the problem is there are last minute changes and the system then doesn’t work. What I found from experience is the best thing to do is just to cook for an average number each day. If we get a huge rush which wasn’t anticipated, we always keep fish or scampi in the freezer which we can use. I do what I can to reduce any food waste.
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<tr>
<td>TF</td>
<td>So basically you have plate waste and then corporate waste from food that is put out for corporate events/members and is not used.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LW</td>
<td>I cannot recycle the corporate/members’ waste so it just goes into the bin the same as plate waste.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. PB</td>
<td><strong>What happens to the current food waste and what is/ can be done to mitigate in-house wastage of food given the fluctuations of staff using the dinning facilities?</strong></td>
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<td>PB</td>
<td>We note you have answered that already.</td>
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<td>7. AA</td>
<td><strong>Is there any policy on waste that is usable food as opposed to scraps left after eating - e.g. are there any arrangements with local charities re surplus food distribution - or could there be future consideration of this, or of FareShare initiatives?</strong> <em>(<a href="http://www.fareshare.org.uk/">http://www.fareshare.org.uk/</a></em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LW</td>
<td>No. I don’t have this issue. FareShare only want food which is within its use by date. They need really to use supermarkets or large organisations which can give them a bulk supply. They don’t want a small amount. They also have an issue about transporting it, who is going to come for it? It should be borne in mind also that even cold food only has a limited time when it can be used and it wouldn’t be suitable for passing on.</td>
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| 8. PB | **Has consideration been given to replacing “carry out” plastic/ polystyrene and even paper cups and plastic cutlery with biodegradable containers and utensils?**   
   
I note that you have already spoken about this Liz. |
| GF | The intention is to make the café bar a bit more self service and reduce the number of disposable cups by substituting them with real cups and installing a dishwasher. In the medium term, we hope to introduce the same system in the restaurant too. |
| LW | We do have a labour issue because clearly this would involve more work by the catering staff. We would also need to ensure cups simply don’t disappear in the same way that crockery and cutlery have. Using a dishwasher however would be more cost-effective than paying landfill tax. Current price differential between a box of polystyrene plates and a biodegradable box of plates is 10p per plate. In my opinion the CPU should do more to ensure they get a better price particularly as all schools currently use disposable plate and cups too. The solution would surely be to go direct to the manufacturers. |
| AA | Could staff perhaps bring in their own cups, for example thermal cups? |
| GF | This would not really work as we would have to provide washing-up facilities for staff to wash their cups. |
| LW | If we put a logo on the cups this may help reduce the number of cups disappearing. |
It should be noted that whilst this and the following note of evidence are presented as two separate records, the session with the representatives of Peterhead Community Council was held jointly. The record also includes additional information which was not orally presented to the Committee.

Wednesday, 10 November 2010

Committee Room 2, Woodhill House, Aberdeen

10.15 am Meeting with Community Council representatives Messrs John Askey (JA) and Bruce Buchan (BB), Peterhead Community Council

Present- Councillors Bellarby (PB), Cullinane (NC), Duncan (SD), Fleming (TF), Gray (IG), Hood (FH), Sullivan (MS), Tait (IT) and Thomas (RT) Officers Jackie Buchanan, Committee Officer and Jan McRobbie, Corporate Improvement Officer

Mr Bruce Buchan read much of the undernoted narrative from a written note which he provided at the end of the meeting responding to the questions asked.

**Item 1: How well do you feel your communities are served by Aberdeenshire Council’s waste and recycling strategies?**

**How easy was it to have altered policies and procedures from those to which you were accustomed under the previous district councils?**

SEPA’s Waste Data Digest system offers a review of the performance of the Council’s waste and recycling strategies, over the period 2001 through 2009/10.

**Table 1: Aberdeenshire Council WDD data for the years 2001 through 2010**, below, details total wastes managed by the Council, the recycled and/or composted volume, and percentage of total waste per annum deflected from Landfill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL (tons)</th>
<th>RECYCLE (tons)</th>
<th>COMPOST (tons)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>TOTAL (tons)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WDD 1</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>137,585</td>
<td>4,884</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>137,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 2</td>
<td>2001/2</td>
<td>132,527</td>
<td>4,895</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>132,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 3</td>
<td>2002/3</td>
<td>115,837</td>
<td>6,145</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>115,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 4</td>
<td>2003/4</td>
<td>149,626</td>
<td>14,191</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>149,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 5</td>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>144,203</td>
<td>18,518</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>144,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 6</td>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>150,817</td>
<td>26,056</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>150,817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 7</td>
<td>2006/7</td>
<td>155,123</td>
<td>27,691</td>
<td>4,184</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>155,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 8</td>
<td>2007/8</td>
<td>143,342</td>
<td>30,571</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>143,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 9</td>
<td>2008/9</td>
<td>153,731</td>
<td>38,432</td>
<td>9,549</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>153,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDD 10</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>150,372</td>
<td>38,941</td>
<td>9,684</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>150,372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Working with the data provided, and using WDD 1 info as a base line, and we observe:

\( \frac{150372}{137585} \times 100 = 109.29 \), or a 9.2% increase in waste in WDD 10, relative to WDD 1.

Reviewing the % of waste deflected from landfill over time, and we observe:

\( \frac{32.3}{3.6} \times 100 = 897.2 \), or an 897.2% increase in deflection of waste in WDD 10, relative to WDD 1.

In terms of volume of waste deflected from landfill over time, our communities are served very well by the Council’s waste and recycling strategies.

However, there may be an opportunity for additional deflection of waste through recycling and composting systems.

WDD10: Key facts and trends, page 12 records:

Scotland recycled and composted 34.3% of its municipal waste in 2008–2009. This is almost double the rate of 17.5% in 2004–2005. Eight local authorities recycled or composted more than 40% of their waste, 18 recycled or composted more than 30%, four recycled or composted more than 20% and only two recycled or composed less than 20%.

Rates achieved by individual local authorities ranged from 18.6% to 44.9%.

The recycling and composting strategies adopted by the above 8 local authorities could be mirrored in Aberdeenshire, and other authorities.

If it does not already exist, it may be prudent to establish an information-sharing, collective action network between local Authorities.

(I would return to this subject in item 6)

Considering how easy it was to have altered policies and procedures from those to which you were accustomed under the previous District Councils……...

There was a time District Council waste policy simply involved throwing waste into a local landfill site.

For a variety of reasons, the UK can no longer rely on landfill as a means of final disposal of waste.

Over time, waste management has been subject to an ever-increasing array of legislation and control mechanisms.

Present day Council waste policies and procedures are directed by targets for deflecting waste from landfill, preferably towards reduce, reuse, recycling, and composting systems, although residual wastes may be subject to thermal processing, (incineration, pyrolysis or gasification) typically with energy recovery.
The above targets are promoted by the application of economic power resources.

It is very difficult for Aberdeenshire Council to devise waste policies and procedures which are a ‘fit for purpose’ socially acceptable alternative to landfill, within the parameters of the political, economic, and environmental constraints imposed by higher Political Authority.

Logic dictates that the economic carrot and stick approach to waste management cannot be directed solely at Regional Authority indefinitely, without impacting on functional capability.

I understand that Council have:

1) Invested in a composting process, to convert organic wastes (Garden and Kitchen Wastes) to soil improvers and/or organic fertilisers.

2) Negotiated a Waste Management Contract, which aims to reduce waste to landfill by 70% in only 3 years.

The Contract has a value of over 150 million pounds.

Once the contract is signed the process is almost complete, and details of the agreement may then be made public.

A 70% reduction would be a significant achievement, but suggests it may involve thermal treatment processes having the potential to achieve volumetric reductions in waste.

**Aberdeenshire Council are very well aware that the Buchan CHP Proposal acted as a catalyst for unprecedented public mobilisation in Peterhead, with Objectors focus on the potential for Social and Environmental damage arising from incinerator operation.**

**Similar proposals have twice been rejected in Aberdeen.**

**Considering the above, Council must understand that proposals for thermal treatment of waste involving incinerators are socially unacceptable.**

We have entered a very difficult economic period, with massive cuts in public spending, which may impact on the above contract, before it is acted upon.

We need Aberdeenshire Council to support community projects, e.g. aluminium cans should be used as a resource in Aberdeenshire rather than transported outwith. We would also like Aberdeenshire Council to extend any programmes that we as a Community Council initiate about Aberdeenshire as we haven’t got the resources to do this.

**FH** Are there any items which the Council are not recycling at the doorstep that could be?
BB  Potentially there are 17 different components which could be recycled. There is a pilot project in Banff in relation to food waste and if this is combined with green waste it would meant that about 45% of waste is being recycled. The infrastructure is absent to allow all the various components to be recycled but we need to support the Proximity Principle so that we deal with all our own waste in the North East.

**Item 2: Are there areas of unresolved issues where you feel the Council has failed to deliver what it said it would? If so, do these relate to the policies themselves or their operational application?**

My input relating to this item focuses on what the Council has done, rather than a failure to deliver what it said it would.

My comments do relate to Council policy, and in this case, operational application. This discussion may be equally applicable to Item 3, but please bear with me.

I understand that as a public Body, Aberdeenshire Council are limited in what they may say, or do.

However, I would take issue with a Policy allowing Council to negotiate a £150 million Contract behind closed doors, with the details not being made public until the Contract becomes legally binding.

It is almost certain that Council, and the community it serves will be bound by this contract for a considerable period of time.

Considering the above, I would have expected that the waste management options involved in a Contract of this value and duration would be subject to Public Consultation.

I also am concerned about UPVC window frames. Lifespan of the first batch is now up. How do we deal with the waste when these are no longer required? Some companies have a Scrappage Scheme. This closes the loop - they process old ones and recycle them. This matter requires careful attention but surely we must be able to recycle the window frames, an example would be greenhouses. This needs to be looked into further. The matter needs to be examined by The Scottish Government and facilities provided by Local Government.

SD  You seem to have a deep understanding of the Council’s problems in relation to waste. It seems that semi-detached and detached properties are good for recycling but flats and terraced properties are more of a problem.

BB  There is a practical solution. There are regional waste recycling centres. The Council should have local ones too. This would simply involve scaling down the HWRCs so that they are fit for purpose. Such a project could be piloted and an assessment made as to how it works. If it does work use it elsewhere.
RT   Peterhead has a large HWRC and mini ones too. It is quite well catered for.

BB   Some people require to go a considerable distance to use them however and if they don’t have transport can’t use them. The facilities need to suit the residents. We would hope that the Council would not resist such a plan.

PB   There are difficulties in scaling down the recycling centres, for example they cannot be manned but also the wide range of items that can be recycled would not be available on a smaller scale.

FH   Would you support someone to put up a massive warehouse and then have workers who pick out recyclates from the residual waste?

BB   Yes provided warehouse only provided with Peterhead’s waste.

FH   There are of course recyclates put in the residual bins and these can be removed. Encouragement could be given to the private sector to set up this facility as they could get value from the recyclates.

BB   This opens a whole range of topics for debate. In particular the issue of economy of scale so Peterhead produces approximately 7,400 tons of waste per annum. There would be no money in recycling from such a small amount.

BB   With the forthcoming prison development it may be that a suitable labour force might be found but this is subject to consultation with Prison authority. We’re meeting the Prison Authority later this month and we will raise this matter with them.

IG   Glasgow City Council use an autoclave and I know that recently there was an exhibition in Caley Thistle’s ground for one in the Highlands. There is money in this. It allows a single collection and the recycled items can be used as fuel.

BB   It is not sustainable in the long term with large volumes of waste.

BB   Without an infrastructure which removes recyclates from our waste items we just won’t get very far. We need the whole package.

IG   What if you were to have items being removed for recycling and then the autoclave?

BB   It depends what items go into the autoclave.

SD   You would have to stop people putting food waste into their bins as you couldn’t remove items for recycling if there was food waste there so it just wouldn’t work.

BB   We’ve suggested that a penalty be imposed. There’s more than one way to deal with this.

SD   That may lead people to dump their rubbish elsewhere.
BB A “Name and Shame” policy would perhaps be more appropriate.

**Item 3: Do you think the Council explains why changes are made to waste and recycling collections adequately to let the public understand why decisions are made?**

I understand the Banff Area was subject to a kitchen waste kerbside collection Pilot Scheme, which recorded a relatively low (3 from 10) residential take-up.

Take-up of the scheme was resisted for a variety of reasons, which include a common concern about its potential to attract vermin to residential areas.

Plans are in place for kerbside collection of food waste to be extended to other areas, of which Peterhead is one.

To my knowledge, the Council has not given any information to the Peterhead Community to explain why this change to recycling collections is being made.

Given the low take-up of the pilot scheme, I feel that an explanation for this particular addition to recycling collections is to be expected.

In support of the scheme, the explanation should detail the potential for both reduction in waste to landfill, and extent of economic gain, measured in terms of reduced landfill disposal costs.

It is all about education and giving an economic carrot and stick. Although the Council may be wary about adopting such an approach it may be what is required.

RT Any notion of penalising people in relation to waste is deeply unpopular and resented by large sections of the public. Can you tell me please; was the change to a two-weekly residual waste collection well received?

BB The change was made and people just deal with it. There is a limit to the amount of change that people will deal with but we’ve not reached it yet. I appreciate that the Council can only do what they have money for. Any project needs to be economic and take account of the Proximity Principle.

RT The Scottish Government now has the Proximity Principle applying to the whole of Scotland as a whole rather than local areas as before.

BB The idea of information sharing between Councils is a very good idea. Councils across Scotland need to resolve issues and employ resources to do this. For example supermarkets require to be prodded in the right direction. In order for the Proximity Principle to work for the whole of Scotland we need to act in a uniform direction with consensus.

RT We only have a statutory duty in relation to dealing with household waste. Industrial and commercial waste is huge. We only collect a small amount of commercial waste and we charge for this.
BB There have been targets set by the Scottish Government and the EU in relation to household. They are not so keen to set targets in relation to commercial and industrial waste.

SD Perhaps if we made it compulsory for people to visit landfill sites it may push the public in the right direction.

BB There is a widespread lack of knowledge and interest in waste by the public. They don’t see the cost of it because they don’t know what the cost is. If we were to tell them what percentage of the Council bill goes on dealing with waste, let people know what the Council could do with that money instead, then perhaps the public would sit up and pay attention.

I would like to return to this matter when discussing Item 6.

**Item 4: How well do you think Aberdeenshire Council’s current policies apply fairly to both rural and urban areas?**

Audit Scotland considers Aberdeenshire to be a ‘Rural’ area.

For the avoidance of confusion, if we define ‘Rural’ to mean a specific area with a population of less than 2000, we can now consider this issue from a practical perspective.

At a recent Community Council forum held in Mintlaw Academy, Strichen CC reported that they had very limited waste recycling facilities.

The Community Council Network recognises that there is a need to observe ‘economy of scale’ logistical considerations when deploying waste recycling resources.

However, the combined populations of rural communities form a considerable proportion of Aberdeenshire’s total population.

They would argue a case for Aberdeenshire Council to support ‘small community recycling, reuse infrastructures’ as a matter of policy.

I would also like to return to this issue when discussing item 6.

MS In Denmark domestic waste is separated and put out in containers at the end of streets. Do you think that would work here?

BB It all depends on the split of components, how the containers are serviced and size of the areas involved. It also depends on take-up.

**Item 5: How well do you think education on waste recycling is carried out?**
Education on waste and recycling is carried out reasonably well; but there may be room for improvement.

Waste, and the way it is managed is becoming a serious social issue.

The Education curriculum is an ideal mechanism to increase awareness of the social and environmental impact and effect of waste, and the way it is managed.

Rather than present an indoctrination of the ‘institutional position’ on waste, the curriculum should include modules covering the position of NGO bodies, such Friends of the Earth, and Greenpeace, for example.

Referring again to the above CC Forum, and Strichen CC reported on an educational visit by ‘the waste bus’ very well attended by Strichen residents of all ages.

It is unfortunate that many of the waste avoidance, reuse, recycling mechanisms promoted by the waste bus were not available in Strichen.

I would comment further when discussing item 6.

BB Public needs an incentive so an economic carrot is effective even if it is just displaying the costs of dealing with waste or rewarding people for recycling.

IG There’s always someone who will refuse to recycle. We need the law to deal with them.

FH There are a lot of migrant workers in the Peterhead area - how well does the Council engage with these residents?

BB Migrant workers from the more rural communities tend to have very little waste. They tend to re-use as much as they can and are aware of the resource value of what others may regard as waste.

SF I agree that education should be provided for everyone. What do you think of the educational leaflets for adults? Do you think the literature is too long?

BB I think we should keep it very simple. Tell the public about the cost of waste, what we could get instead if the Council weren’t spending that money on waste. The education of children is very important too but the content requires to be appropriate.

IT Has Peterhead Community Council visited schools or provided education on waste?

BB We had considered this, but on investigation discovered waste specialists are already involved in the curriculum to cover this matter, the Waste Bus for example.

**Item 6: Is there anything which Aberdeenshire Council does which you feel is not worthwhile with regard to waste and recycling? Or are there other services which you would like to have which are not provided?**
Please bear with me.
I’d like to touch on a bigger picture.


We have the third highest waste arisings in Scotland behind Glasgow & Clyde Valley and Lothian & Borders.

This Report considers a range of categories:

Manufacturing, (287 000)
Retail, Hotel and Restaurants, (249 000)
Banking, (133 000)
Education, Health & Social Work, (93 000)
Energy & Water, (87 000)
Other Services, (44 000)
Mining & Quarrying, (35 000)
Public Administration, (28 000)
Transport & Communications, (24 000)
Fishing, (4300)

Waste Management Strategy is generally influenced by the body, or bodies able to deploy the most power resources.

I would like to see the Aberdeenshire Council, Waste Education Agencies establish a waste forum between the public and private sectors.

It may be that the involvement of the Collective Action Council Network (mentioned in Item 1) would be required to deliver sufficient power resources to influence C&I stakeholders at a National level.

As a major actor in the Retail sector, Supermarket chains comply with current waste regulation and control measures.

However, they have the economic power resources to make significant reduction in waste, if they can be persuaded to do so.

There are many ways for supermarkets to reduce wastes entering the household waste stream, and promote the reuse and recycling infrastructure, should they wish to do so.

I offer a few examples.

As an individual, I am aware several supermarket chains provide home delivery services, and a significant proportion of customers live in rural areas as defined above.
I contacted some of these companies, trying to persuade them that this service could easily be extended to include recyclate collection.

Hygiene concerns could easily be resolved by the provision of a small trailer towed by the delivery vehicle, or a dedicated vehicle, serving rural communities.

If this could be achieved, this may partially resolve the absence of Rural Recycling infrastructure as discussed in Item 4.

Buy one get one free promotions should be limited to items having a reasonable shelf life, rather than perishables. (The Banff pilot noted that when buy 1 get one free involved pineapples, most participating households threw out the second pineapple).

Deposit based schemes.

Supermarket chains have the economic power resources to influence the supply chain.

The Soft drinks supply chain, for example, could be influenced towards a deposit-based scheme promoting re-use, rather than recycling of plastic bottles, a major component of recyclate.

Moving on now to Community Involvement Programmes, and Peterhead Project’s 2Reuse Programme.

Aberdeenshire Council actively supports this scheme, which, as the name suggests reuses household items no longer required.

I tried to bring forward a social project which complemented, and supported Council’s proposed food waste kerbside collections.

Following my increased awareness of the Banff pilot, I tried to bring an optional alternative to kerbside collection to the Household Waste recycling Centre at Peterhead.

It was to be a 200 litre food waste bin, serviced on a weekly basis.

It was my hope that it might prove to be more popular, and have a greater take-up than did kerbside collection in Banff.

I had negotiated a 12 month, 25% discount on service charges, and was preparing a social fundraising project to fund the project.

Aberdeenshire Council officials effectively blocked the project, for a variety of reasons, which included it’s potential to detract from take-up of the planned kerbside collection.

Finally I mentioned earlier that the regulation and control, economic carrot and stick approach to waste management cannot be directed solely at Regional Authority indefinitely.
Under the current system, Local government and the tax payer live at the bottom of a waste avalanche, and pay to clean it up.

On the understanding that it is better not to produce waste in the first instance, rather than deal with it after the event, I have been promoting EPR as an alternative to landfill, and an extension to the Producer Responsibility Obligation.

I have contacted all Aberdeenshire Councillors, my MSP, the Scottish Govt., and MEP Hudghton in the hope of support for EPR.

I have received a general agreement with the concept of EPR, indeed, some EPR mechanisms are already in place.

I have also come to realise there is an ‘Institutional Resistance’ to challenging the status quo:

I have come to realise the Scottish Government have a preference for voluntary agreements such as the Courtauld Commitment, and the Zero Waste Plan, rather than resort to legislation when dealing with C&I.

I would argue that there is a limit to the waste reduction that can be achieved through voluntary agreements.

EU, UK and Scottish Government do not have a problem regulating and controlling Aberdeenshire Council’s waste management options using the economic carrot and stick approach.

There is a sense that in terms of resource and energy consumption, the current system discounts the present at the expense of the future.

It may be time for the economic carrot and stick to be directed at C&I, rather than local government and the tax payer.

I understand the UK cannot adopt EPR as a single state; to do so would disadvantage our C&I stakeholders in the international realm.

FH You seem to be saying that it is not realistic to have the same system throughout Aberdeenshire so there is a need to be flexible. If a large food recycling bin works in one area - good. If individual food collections for householders work elsewhere then that’s good too.

BB The intention is to complement the kerbside food recycling scheme not to compete with it.

In support of my promotion of EPR, would it be possible for Aberdeenshire Council Agencies and Offices to model, and report on the political, social and economic impact and effects of the EU adopting EPR?

PB We will consider that and let you know.
It should be noted that whilst this and the previous note of evidence are presented as two separate records, the session with the representatives of Peterhead Community Council was held jointly. The record also includes additional information which was not orally presented to the Committee."

WEDNESDAY 10 NOVEMBER, 2010, WOODHILL HOUSE Aberdeenshire Council

10.15 a.m. meeting with Community Council Representatives Mr John Askey (JA) and Mr Bruce Buchan (BB)

Present: Councillors Bellarby (PB), Cullinane (NC), Duncan (SD), Fleming (TF), Gray (IG), Hood (FH), Sullivan (MS), Tait (IT) and Thomas (RT).

Officers: Jan McRobbie, Corporate Improvement Officer (Scrutiny and Audit and Jackie Buchan (Committee Officer).

Mr John Askey read much of the undernoted narrative from a written note which he provided at the end of the meeting responding to the questions asked.

To consider the actions which Aberdeenshire Council has taken for the minimisation of waste and the reduction of landfill. To investigate what more could be done, and is intended, through potential improvements, for the future including:

(1) options for incineration or other energy from waste systems;
(2) composting and alternative methods of reducing waste going to landfill;
(3) how successful is the current recycling programme?
(4) how can a reduction in waste arisings be achieved?
(5) what is the remit of the Waste Management Working Group?
(6) will current policies and proposals for contracting waste treatment and disposal meet the targets for landfill and avoid the financial penalties which government can impose?

1(a). (SD) How well do you feel your communities are served by Aberdeenshire Council’s waste and recycling strategies?

(JA) Aberdeenshire has tripled its recycling rates in recent years, as has been reported, the household waste recycling centres and the mini recycling points are well used. The Council have progressed Capital Plan projects for new facilities and upgraded existing sites. Just a few years ago there was only 10% recycling and this has now trebled, which is commendable, however it could be improved and the current rate of around 30 to 35%, half the target figure, is still leaving the potential for alternative methods.

What is done in recycling is done because of market forces, weight value and how easy it is to collect. Education of the public is based on what is found in the bins but
general information seems to be effective, tv ads, radio, events, leaflets, school programmes, the travelling bus etc are all good.

Problem is even with all this it is only thought that a maximum target of 45% can be reached.

Homes in Aberdeenshire produce around 150,000 tonnes of waste every year, of which 50,000 tonnes is sent for recycling whilst the remaining 100,000 tonnes is presently sent to landfill. Around 70,000 tonnes of this is currently disposed of at SITA UK’s Stoneyhill landfill at Peterhead. The new contract will see the remaining 30,000 tonnes per annum being delivered to Stoneyhill. Under the terms of the contract, SITA will develop new facilities in order to recover additional value from the waste with treatment aiming at reducing landfilling as much as possible in line with the ‘zero waste’ objectives. How will that be done is the question.

(CG) Do you think the current recycling schemes offered by Aberdeenshire Council to the public should be expanded upon or do you think Aberdeenshire Council could introduce other new strategies?

(JA) Towards the end of my note I mention a zero waste initiative run by Monmouthshire Community Recycling in relation to the village of St Arvans. This involved intensive recycling of course but the principles could be applied elsewhere. In my opinion residual waste collection could be reduced to once a month if residents were willing to recycle as much as possible. I have 11 recycling bins at home. There should be more incentives to recycle and authorities should be willing to monitor the weight of bins and penalise where residual waste produced by householders is excessive.

(CG) Is there not a danger you would turn people off? There is also an issue in relation to space – a lot of people do not have capacity at home to have a huge number of recycling bins.

(JA) I do acknowledge that space can be an issue. It is amazing however what you can do. People can also use recycling centres. It comes down to attitude. People need to be made more aware of the consequences of not recycling their waste. It was the threat of the incineration plant which was proposed at Peterhead which led me to realise I can do much more to reduce my waste. It does not make sense to put items into the residual waste bin when the items can be put to good use. As it has been shown with various recycling enterprises there is a social benefit when recycling can be encouraged.

(PB) Clearly it is important to encourage people to recycle. Is Peterhead Community Council doing this?

(JA) We are working on this. As an individual, it was a John Brownlee, my colleague on the Community Council, who started the project at Peterhead. A container has been installed at the recycling centres and volunteers asked members of the public who visit the centres if they can take certain of their items and put them in this container. These items go to a good cause. There is a shop which can resell the items and although it is a not for profit organisation it does seem to cover its costs.
This is a good social cause and it is developing and we would like to see it expanded throughout Aberdeenshire. We do appreciate that we need special advice in relation to waste management as we do not have any background in this. We would like to think that Peterhead could develop a reputation for recycling. We are keen to get the community involved and include matters such as investigating air quality. When recycling is encouraged it can lead to businesses such as Keenans in New Deer.

1(b) (SD) How easy was it to have altered policies and procedures from those to which you were accustomed under the previous district councils?

(JA) In the very recent past there was generally no emphasis on recycling and awareness of what we were doing or where the practice of landfilling was leading us. Now there is great pressure to find alternatives to landfill but we have to be very vigilant that this does not include incineration and that means literally doubling our efforts in recycling and reducing and making manufacturers responsible for the waste they produce along with the commercial and industrial sectors.

2. (IG) Are there areas of unresolved issues where you feel the Council has failed to deliver what it said it would? If so, do these relate to the policies themselves or their operational application?

(JA) The websites and all the splendid information that is available is fine, the efforts are good, but the result is only 35% recycling of municipal waste with the significant threat of another incinerator proposal to meet the targets.

(IG) Economic restraints can change recycling policy almost on a daily basis.

(JA) I know that there are food boxes sitting in Banff ready to be issued. Their distribution is on hold due to economic issues in relation to the collection costs. This really needs to be looked at although I appreciate there are financial issues. Community engagement is also an issue here. Perhaps part of the reason the food recycling project did not fair too well was because people cut back on their food waste once they appreciated how much of their food was going in the bin.

(IG) I would just say that it costs £65 a tonne for Aberdeenshire Council to dispose of the food waste.

(JA) I know that a lot of it is down to allocation of money. In my opinion Aberdeenshire could divert money from other projects.

(IT) The Council allocates budget heads for each department. How would you challenge decisions that the Council has made as it is a complicated process?

(JA) There is a requirement to look at everything. Recycling however is a critical matter. There is so much waste going on with valuable items which are in effect a resource going to landfill. We need to encourage localised recycling.

(IT) If you were to draw a graph with waste going up on the vertical side and time going along the horizontal side we would see that in relation to recycling there would
be a steep peak to begin with and thereafter any progress slows down considerably. I appreciate however what you are saying. These are fresh ideas and I agree that budgets need to be looked at.

(JA) The vast majority of people would recycle if it was easy.

(IT) What you are saying is that it would be effective to set up recycling on a neighbourhood basis.

3. (RT) Do you think the Council explains why changes are made to waste and recycling collections adequately to let the public understand why decisions are made?

(JA) It is difficult to get the importance of recycling over to the public who are not sure how to do it. Are imposing penalties a definite no no?

(PB) Nothing has been ruled out.

(RT) I would say that nationally penalties are deeply unpopular and resented by a large section of the public.

I think a great many people are not interested in recycling. I think they think it doesn’t matter if they put a 12 volt battery in their wheelie bin because somebody else will deal with it; it will be lost in the landfill and won’t do anyone any harm. I don’t think that many people even think about it; once it is in the bin and the lorry arrives it’s out of mind. The council could put up 40 foot posters and it wouldn’t get the message across to some. But most people would recycle if it was practical in the home.

At home we have 11 separate ‘bins’ for different waste, but many people haven’t got the room, or the inclination and commitment and indeed we have only become this conscious because of the incinerator battle.

4. How equitably do you think Aberdeenshire Council’s current policies apply fairly to both rural and urban areas?

(JA) There needs to be more everywhere.

5. (TF) How well do you think education on waste and recycling is carried out?

(JA) Well, but are people listening and getting the importance of the message? The people on the waste bus told me last week that generally they are preaching to the converted.

There is a lot of information on the website but the message is not getting across. Generally people simply put their waste in the bin and as far as they are concerned it gets collected and that is it. We need higher visibility as to what is going on in order to encourage people. An example of this is the food waste programme. It needs to be advertised so it leads to greater awareness. It needs to be localised too so that people can see what can be done.
(IT) Does Peterhead Community Council intend to carry out any education in the schools on recycling and waste issues?

(JA) We will be doing that. The current membership of the Community Council is quite new. But we do intend to make education part of what we do perhaps getting CRNS involved.

6. (PB) Is there anything which Aberdeenshire Council does which you feel is not worthwhile, with regard to waste and recycling? Or are there other services which you would like to have which are not provided?

(JA) Prevention is vital to recycling. Recycling – in particular food waste collection – makes waste more visible, which encourages prevention. In the food waste trial in the North the food waste reduced over time probably because people realized what they were throwing away simply by keeping a separate bin. Pineapple story. The food bins are waiting to be rolled out and it’s vital that the present economic climate does not affect the programme of collection.

We need to share best practice from the rest of the UK and beyond. We need to create plans and set targets. The Government needs to create a waste prevention plan. Producers need to be liable.

I understand the European Commission will examine the potential for EU waste prevention targets, with the aim of putting in place targets for 2020 in 2014. Huge amounts of goods are currently wasted. Businesses such as Keenans must be encouraged, I understand they nearly didn’t survive and only did survive by a small cash injection from a family member at a critical time when nobody was willing to support them.

If it is biodegradable then municipal residual waste needs to be diverted from landfill in order to reduce climate change impacts and meet Landfill Directive targets.

Residual waste drives the need for residual waste infrastructure. The more residual waste there is, the more landfills and treatment facilities are required.

In order to address these issues, we need to look to the top of the waste hierarchy

Waste prevention is the best environmental option, avoiding resource use and saving energy and carbon dioxide (CO$_2$) emissions.

Reuse reduces the need for resources and manufacturing, saving energy and CO$_2$ emissions.

Recycling reduces the need for extracting and reprocessing new materials, saving energy and CO$_2$ emissions

Recycling in the UK is already saving around 10-15 million tonnes of CO$_2$ equivalent per year, equivalent to taking 3.5 million cars off the road.
Composting returns nutrients and structure to soils; displaces other fertilisers; captures carbon by keeping it out of the atmosphere; and, in the case of anaerobic digestion, produces methane which can be used as a 100 per cent renewable energy source.

There are other benefits to reducing residual waste. Waste prevention and increasing recycling, composting and reuse are cheaper than the alternative of landfilling or incineration, and much more acceptable to the public. The process of recycling and composting, from kerbside collection to the sorting and reprocessing of recyclables, creates more jobs than incineration and landfill.

Many waste reuse and recycling projects also deliver social benefits, linking to social inclusion or community development objectives. In Peterhead we have ‘Peterhead Projects’, a group who now have about 15 volunteers who are on duty at the recycling centre and who ask people driving in with their rubbish if they can have appropriate items, these can have a new life when reused to meet the needs of good social causes. They run a shop and have several other projects on the go. I believe they make a significant amount of money per week which is ploughed back into good causes. This has huge advantages

- Diversion from landfill
- Provision of furniture, electrical goods etc at low cost or no cost
- Creation of employment network of re-use shops
- re-conditioned goods
- social scheme/ income from sales
- Discounts available for people in need, or free

Residual waste is expensive to collect and dispose of, and costs are set to increase. This is a crucial time for local authorities to ensure that they are doing everything possible to reduce residual municipal waste. In addition to increasing landfill prices, there is the threat of potential penalties under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme. Local authorities will be fined £150 per tonne if they landfill more than their allocation of biodegradable municipal waste.

In a true ‘zero waste’ world there would be no residual waste. Avoiding residual waste increases resource efficiency. Everyone claims they want to minimise residual waste – Yet many technologies depend on a continuous stream of it...Some councils even sign a 25 year contract guaranteeing it!

We should be ensuring products are designed to last i.e. Compulsory minimum guarantees and ensure products are reusable or recyclable at the end of their life

The California Integrated Waste Management act of 1989 mandates that each local jurisdiction in the state divert 50% of discarded materials from landfill. Every city and county in California could face fines of up to $10,000 a day for not meeting the 50% diversion goal. The Board of Supervisors has adopted goals of 75% diversion from landfill by 2010, they achieved 56%, and zero waste to landfill or incineration by 2020. This policy includes urging greater consumer responsibility, including mandatory participation in diversion programs.
The San Francisco Environment Code prohibits the use of polystyrene disposable food service ware and requires the use of biodegradable/compostable or recyclable food service ware and further it provides for penalties for violation.

Businesses should
- Use fewer materials whenever possible.
- Make products with recycled materials when possible.
- Make products that are readily reusable and recyclable.
- Price products to reflect the real costs of using virgin vs. recycled materials.
- Provide detailed information so consumers can make informed purchasing choices.
- Encourage innovative waste reduction ideas among employees.
- Provide recycling containers in the workplace.
- Provide reusable coffee mugs and charge less per cup when they are used instead of disposable cups.
- Use recycled paper products.
- Photocopy on both sides of paper.
- Post or circulate memos when appropriate, rather than printing multiple copies.
- Share reports and periodicals instead of duplicating or purchasing multiple copies.
- Use e-mail.
- Make reports and data available online.
- Use shredded waste paper rather than purchased packing material.

People should
- Buy products in recyclable containers and recycle them.
- Buy paper products with post consumer recycled paper content.
- Buy durable, reusable items rather than disposable ones.
- Buy in bulk.
- Don't accept bags for small purchases.
- Use reusable cloth or mesh shopping bags.
- Write to companies to express their opinions on their products and packaging.

Everyone should
- Repair items whenever possible, rather than throwing them away.
- Reuse boxes, other containers, and aluminum foil before recycling.
- Support organizations that promote waste reduction.
- Start a recycling program in their home, area, or company.
- Write on both sides of paper before recycling.
- Use scrap paper for notes, lists, message pads.
- Share magazine subscriptions with friends or neighbours.
- Save boxes, paper, ribbons, egg cartons, fabric, etc. for kids' art projects or donate to school art departments.
- Give clothing, furniture, appliances, toys and other items they no longer want to charitable organizations for reuse or sale.
- Form a hand me down chain in the neighbourhood or organization.
- Donate used books to the library or a charitable organization, or have a book swap in the area.
- Compost garden wastes, food scraps, and other organic material.
- Write to your government representatives to urge action, register complaints, or offer support.
- Request to have your name taken off mailing lists for products and services you
A zero waste village initiative, run by Monmouthshire Community Recycling (MCR), has seen some of the best recycling rates in Europe with 95% of residents in the village of St Arvans recycling (1500 people) and recycling rates in urban North Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, almost doubling from 36% - 69%, in just three months. In fact in St Arvans they reached a recycling rate of 77%. (1500 people in 2001)

MCR decided to set up the Zero Waste Village initiative to see what could be achieved when efforts were focused on two very different areas; St Arvans village and urban North Abergavenny.

The concept was simple;

• Make it as easy as possible for people to recycle as much as possible on their doorstep

• Provide everyone with two recycling boxes marked with their address to help them recycle more

• Knock on every door to offer advice and encourage people to recycle

• Listen to what residents say and act on their feedback

• Introduce new initiatives based on what residents say they want

• Motivate everyone to carry on recycling by having ongoing community fun days, events, launches and feedback

And what a success!

The project was launched in June 2007

In St Arvans

• 18 materials can be recycled on the doorstep including food and garden waste

• Additional materials were subsequently added to the existing kerbside service, such as plastic bottles and other rigid plastic and paper drinks cartons

• Printer and toner cartridges, mobile phones and household batteries were added

• In response to residents’ feedback in St Arvans, where many of the villagers have wood burning fires - ash is now being collected as part of the green waste collection.

In North Monmouthshire

• 12 materials can be recycled including plastics and cardboard

• In response to residents’ feedback, 100 residents were helped to set up home composting (in addition to the food waste collection service already being provided)
As part of the project and in association with Keep Wales Tidy, MCR carried out a litter analysis in Chepstow; an area with a high number of tourists. It showed the area suffers from litter caused by a high number of plastic bags.

In response, through the Zero Waste Village Initiative, MCR in partnership with Transition Chepstow, introduced ‘My Chepstow Bag’ – a highly popular reusable shopping bag that is now stocked by over 50% of the shops participating in the project.

David Roman, Executive Director of MCR commented. “We are delighted to receive this Award on behalf of all the residents, shopkeepers, recycling crews, staff and our council colleagues, who have worked so hard to put Monmouthshire on the map when it comes to being the best in terms of recycling. We now have plans to roll out Zero Waste initiatives throughout the whole of the Wye Valley, in the south of the County and beyond.

“We certainly feel it’s a model that could be replicated throughout the UK and shows just what can be done by recycling contractors working in partnership with local authorities, residents and businesses”.

**Waste-recycling plant proposal hailed**

**BY RITA CAMPBELL**

Published: 29/10/2010

A planned £20million waste recycling plant at Inverness harbour would create jobs and renewable energy and take thousands of heavy lorries off Scottish roads, it was said yesterday.

Developer Shore Energy wants to turn waste from the Highlands into recycled materials and biomass fibre which can then be burned as a source of renewable energy.

The development at Inverness harbour promises 30 permanent skilled jobs, and to create many more jobs during construction.

Jon Garvey from Shore Energy said one of the major benefits will be a reduction in the number of HGVs currently travelling on the A9 Inverness to Perth road and A96 Inverness to Aberdeen road hauling Highland waste to landfill sites in the central belt and Aberdeenshire.

He said: “We plan to move much of the recycled material and biomass fibre via ship from the harbour and this could reduce the heavy goods traffic in and out of Inverness by as much as 840,000 HGV miles each year.”

Inverness Chamber of Commerce chief executive Stewart Nicol said: “I am hugely supportive of this. I think it is a fantastic development and initiative for a number of reasons. It creates new jobs and creates wealth for Inverness and the Highlands, it is
tackling a number of issues that we have got in Inverness around recycling.

“The other factor which is welcome is that it takes HGVs off our trunk road network.”

The plant will use a system called auto-claving. The process reduces the volume of waste, extracts valuable recyclable material and creates a biomass fibre.

The plans for the new facility, which will be strictly regulated by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa), will be on display at Inverness Caledonian Thistle Stadium on Wednesday November 10 between noon and 8pm.

Highland Council and local businesses must reduce the amount of material they send to landfill to meet targets under the Scottish Government’s Zero Waste Plan. Landfill produces methane which is one of the most aggressive greenhouse gases, more than 20 times worse than CO

The plant will also significantly increase the recycling performance of the Highland community by using mechanical sorting equipment to extract valuable recyclable material, such as metal and plastic, from other waste.

Mr Garvey said: “This will cut the substantial cost to the local community of transporting 100,000 tonnes of waste by road to landfill sites in the central belt. We can offer a 21st-century solution for the Highlands at an attractive cost, which is particularly important for the council at these times of austerity.”

Inverness Harbour Trust chief executive Murdo Macleod said: “We believe this development would be good news for everybody. It would be good news for the environment because our waste could be used to create bio-fuels and it would be good news for the Highlands, with the reduction in HGV traffic. It would also be very good news for the harbour as the biomass fibre and recyclable material would be taken elsewhere through the port, by ship.

“We are keen that people come along to view what will be another new chapter for Inverness harbour.”

More information is at www.shoreenergy.co.uk

Risk of adverse reproductive outcomes associated with proximity to municipal solid waste incinerators in Japan.
Department of Technology Assessment and Biostatistics, National Institute of Public Health, Wako, Saitama, Japan.
BACKGROUND: Great public concern about health effects of dioxins emitted from municipal solid waste incinerators has increased in Japan. This paper investigates the association of adverse reproductive outcomes with maternal residential proximity to municipal solid waste incinerators.
METHODS: The association of adverse reproductive outcomes with mothers living within 10 km from 63 municipal solid waste incinerators with high dioxin emission
levels (above 80 ng international toxic equivalents TEQ/m3) in Japan was examined. The numbers of observed cases were compared with the expected numbers calculated from national rates adjusted regionally. Observed/expected ratios were tested for decline in risk or peak-decline in risk with distance up to 10 km.

RESULTS: In the study area within 10 km from the 63 municipal solid waste incinerators in 1997-1998, 225,215 live births, 3,387 fetal deaths, and 835 infant deaths were confirmed. None of the reproductive outcomes studied here showed statistically significant excess within 2 km from the incinerators. However, a statistically significant peak-decline in risk with distance from the incinerators up to 10 km was found for infant deaths (p=0.023) and infant deaths with all congenital malformations combined (p=0.047), where a “peak” is detected around 1-2 km.

CONCLUSION: Our study shows a peak-decline in risk with distance from the municipal solid waste incinerators for infant deaths and infant deaths with all congenital malformations combined.

The Board of Supervisors finds and declares the following:
A. People who live in, work in or visit San Francisco generate 1.8 million tons of solid waste annually with more than half of these materials recovered through waste prevention, recycling and composting.
B. The State of California through its California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, Assembly Bill 939 (AB 939), requires that each local jurisdiction in the state divert 50% of discarded materials (base year 1990) from landfill. Every city and county in California, including the City, could face fines up to $10,000 a day for not meeting the above mandated goal.
C. The Source Reduction and Recycling Element (SRRE) for San Francisco adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1992, recognized the importance of recovering wood, metals, and inerts from construction and demolition activities in order to meet the state mandated waste reduction goal.
D. The Board of Supervisors adopted Resolution No. 679-02 setting a goal of 75% diversion from landfill by 2010 and promoting the highest and best use of recovered materials and authorizing the Commission on the Environment to adopt a zero waste goal, which it set as 2020.

[Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance.]

ORDINANCE NO.
3 Ordinance amending the San Francisco Environment Code by adding Chapter 17,
4 sections 1701 through 1709, to: (1) require the use of compostable plastic, recyclable paper and/or reusable checkout bags by grocery stores located in the City and County of San Francisco, and (2) provide penalties for violations.

[1] “Overconsumption? Our use of the world’s natural resources”, Friends of the Earth Europe/Sustainable Europe Research Institute, September 2009:
In Britain we throw away about 455,000 tonnes of plastic bottles every year - that's around 9.1 billion bottles!
LEAD SERVICE FOLLOW UP SESSION – 10 NOVEMBER, 2010
Meeting with Ian Robertson, Head of Service (Waste and Protective Services)

Present: P.W. Bellarby (PB), N Cullinane (NC), S. Duncan (SD),
T Fleming (TF), I Gray (IG), F Hood, (FH) and M Sullivan (MS).
Corporate Improvement Officer, Jan McRobbie (JMcR) and Committee
Officer, Jackie Buchanan.

The Chair, Councillor Bellarby, explained that Christine Gore had intended to also be present at the session. Unfortunately she was required urgently at another meeting in relation to the budget. Christine Gore had said, however, that if any issues arose which required further clarification she would be more than happy to assist.

1. **Update on recent reports to Infrastructure Services Committee on service provision.**

   **IR**
   1a. There was a report on standardising opening hours of household waste recycling centres (HWRC) throughout Aberdeenshire from end of November. The hours of opening are to be 9.00 a.m. - 5.00 pm Monday to Friday, 10.00 am -5.00 pm Saturday and Sunday, with late opening on one night, currently looking like a Tuesday. We came to this view following an assessment of use of HWRCs.

   **IG** Was this a pre-budget decision and is it budget dependent?

   **IR** This decision is not budget dependent. The main aim was to have harmonisation in the system albeit there has been a cost benefit assessed at around £70,000. I can confirm that as we will have two employees at each site, the HWRCs will be open throughout the day and there will be no need to close at lunch-times.

   1b. There was a report put before committee on the Scottish Government’s proposal contained in the Zero Waste Plan (ZWP) to have compulsory recycling of kitchen waste from 2013. We are waiting for more information on this from COSLA’s waste office network.

   1c. Landfill Bans.

   These are to be introduced but the details are yet to be determined.

   1d. Use of Carbon Metric.

   This is a scientific way of determining carbon emissions from recycling efforts. We need more guidance, however, from the Scottish Government.

   1e. As a result of funding from the zero waste fund we introduced as a trial in March 2010 recycling collections on a weekly basis in a small part of
Aberdeenshire rather than fortnightly. It was quite successful and in the long term we intend to be able to accommodate this in urban areas of Aberdeenshire but not the rural areas. We ran a kitchen waste trial in a rural area but found that there was a very poor uptake and it was very expensive. We may be forced, however, to offer re-cycling of kitchen waste to all households in Aberdeenshire as a result of the proposals in the Government’s ZWP.

FH Is it possible the poor uptake in this rural area was because there is minimal food waste a consequence of people’s lifestyles, e.g. they tend to minimise their waste by giving food waste to their animals?

IR Yes, or it may be because they compost the waste themselves. The collection of kitchen waste in rural areas will be expensive if it turns out to be required by legislation.

I would add that in relation to HWRCs, we increased personnel to two per site because of health & safety issues. It also allows assistance to be provided to people with bulk items and of course as an added benefit the centres do not require to close over lunch-time.

We have a person on secondment at the moment who is promoting recycling containers within the Council’s own buildings and within schools. This has been very successful and we have “give and take” days I shall come back to that.

We have also issued blue boxes to householders for recycling instead of sacks. Sacks caused real problems in that they blew away on windy days.

FH With regard to HWRCs, we heard last week at our formal committee that there are instances of small traders from Aberdeen dumping trade waste at Aberdeenshire’s HWRCs. Such people need to be challenged more. From what we heard they tend to use vans and pick-up trucks with no business names.

This may well form a recommendation in a future report.

IR I agree, we don’t want this practice at all. There are occasions, however, where people are simply using their works vans at the weekend for domestic clearouts. I hope that our staff can tell the difference and realise when people are abusing the system.

MS I am very much in favour of encouragement when it comes to recycling. Waste is a resource and where it comes from should not always be a primary consideration particularly if it is beneficial and can be re-used. If businesses are using the HWRC to a small extent, I would think there should be an absence of a deterrent and more encouragement given to them. There is a sign outside Stonehaven’s HWRC which includes a warning that fly tippers would be prosecuted. This is not an
encouragement for recycling. The whole ethos of encouragement should be delivered in principle.

IR There is not a problem with small businesses using either the kerbside recycling facility or the community recycling banks and within Aberdeenshire for example, we allow pubs to use the glass banks. Any businesses using our facilities pay £18 per year. This includes use of the mini re-cycling centres. This approach was approved by committee earlier this year.

PB When we had Matt Davis at the formal SAC Committee last week presenting a fly tipping report, he mentioned that there is a shortage of places where small traders can take waste.

IR With reference to the Zero Waste Plan, the emphasis is on business being responsible for dealing with their own waste material. Increasingly I think you will find that there will be commercial outlets for waste. Within Aberdeenshire, there are quite a few already. What we don’t want though is for HWRCs to be inundated with traders to the detriment of householders.

2. Update on SITA contract – is it in place and how financially robust is it in the light of potential finance reconsideration at both local and national level?

IR The contract is not as yet signed. SITA have queried some of the terms of the agreement although when they put in the bid for the contract they were in full knowledge of these terms. I am hopeful that it will be signed within the next three weeks. The contract is with SITA at the moment. Meantime, we are utilising a SITA owned landfill site which also involves a separate contractor who takes a proportion of our waste there.

PB Am I right in saying that the contract doesn’t need to go before Policy & Resources again before it is signed off?

IR Yes, that’s right. Delegated authority has been given to the Head of Legal and the Head of Finance to sign off on the contract but I would add that we don’t expect there to be any financial issues or constraints which will affect finalisation of the contract.

We are going to move the privately owned recycling bulking point in the Crimond area to Inverboyndie and use our land there as a bulking point. This will create a saving. We also intend to appeal to the public to maximise the use of the re-cycling opportunities otherwise we will be required to make large savings elsewhere in the council. Several hundred thousand pounds can be generated from materials which can be recycled currently but are not. We will be appealing to the public on this.
FH: I take it then you will be appealing for more plastic bottles, cans and newspapers or is it in relation to other materials?

IR: We will be appealing for the public to recycle the commodities that we can pick up, there are about six or seven at the moment. These all generate income. Consequently if we recycle more of these within Aberdeenshire it will be equivalent to a large saving given the financial constraints.

FH: So that will include paper, glass, cans and plastic bottles?

IR: Yes.

RT: What details of the SITA contract are in the public domain?

IR: There was a press release done at the time the negotiations with the contractor started.

RT: Do you know if it refers to the process they intend to use?

IR: I am sure on that detail but it didn’t mention the location of the plant. It is up to the contractor now to take things forward in relation to planning permission.

IG: From my experience there are some people who simply refuse to recycle. Do you think it would be appropriate to use the law to enforce people to recycle?

IR: Some people certainly abuse the system in Aberdeenshire by putting out more than one residual waste bin. It may come down to enforcement if you find there are people consistently abusing the system. When we discover people putting out excess residual waste, we also check to see if they are putting out any recyclates. We do try to educate people on this and want to encourage the habit of re-cycling. We think that financial incentives are a good way to encourage people, that is by showing them that savings can be made if they recycle their waste rather than put it in the residual waste bins.

FH: I would imagine that the crews in the waste trucks must know areas or streets which are poor in relation to recycling. I would like to see reassurance that work is being done to educate these people to recycle. I appreciate that just because someone is not using their recycling box, this does not mean they aren’t going to a recycling centre. However, you have communities in which less than 50% of the houses are putting out their recycling boxes - should be work done to improve that? I can see little point in employing special teams to determine levels of recycling where the people who collect the recycling boxes can quite readily confirm the position.

IR: Yes, we do rely on the crews through their supervisors. We recognise
that people aren’t recycling by the excess residual waste that they put out rather than through the minimal use of the recycling boxes although that certainly is an indication as well. I do agree that certain areas are not so good at recycling. In fact, we are targeting certain areas at the moment to encourage recycling generally.

SD  So you target areas rather than individuals?

IR  We will in turn come to individual houses but at the moment we are dealing with areas.

SD  What do you think about a name and shame policy in relation to people that don’t recycle?

IR  We need to be careful how we tackle the problem whether it be by formal legal means or by naming and shaming.

PB  

3. Feedback on success – or otherwise – of “Give and Take” events – did people come, do both – or just dump stuff for Council?

IR  There are six events planned in the current year, in Inverurie, Huntly Stonehaven, Banff, Westhill and Peterhead. “Give and Take” events have already taken place in Banff, Inverurie, Huntly and Stonehaven. There are two more events planned, one in Westhill and one in Peterhead. They have been successful. There was a large number of people attending and very few items left over after each event. A charity normally takes away what is left. We are developing a toolkit for communities’ use.

FH  The six events you mentioned were just a one off?

IR  Yes.

FH  Do you plan to have any more on a regular basis?

IR  Essentially we would hope the communities would take this on board. This is why we are developing the toolkit. It is envisaged that these would be taken on through the various community groups. I would hope the toolkits would be available in the next financial year.

PB  

4. Building/ construction waste – possibly linked to facilities for small businesses/ sole traders – are there any future plans (especially given the Council’s own role as producer of construction/ building wastes).

IR  We are trying to reduce the amount of waste we handle. Construction waste is very heavy. To increase our collection of it would have an
adverse implication on our waste reduction efforts.

**FH**  Recently on the Garioch Committee we signed off on a large project which will involve replacement of UPVC framed windows. Is there an outlet where the Council can recycle these?

**IR**  Not as far as I am aware. The material goes into the general skip. Coincidentally, I was asked about this material in the last week, and I will see if it can be recycled. I would imagine there must be a limited market but I will check.

**PB**

5. **Availability of kerb-side recycling to small businesses – how well known/ used?**

**IR**  As I mentioned earlier, we are currently developing a scheme from a decision of a previous committee where there is a charge of £18 per annum for small businesses to use the kerb recycling service and also the HWRCs. We are encouraging this. We are not however publicising the facility on the website at the moment as we are checking to ensure that we have sufficient resources to cover it. A Business Pack is being developed and there will be information on the website in due course.

**FH**  This £18 scheme is very good. I understand however that there is limited knowledge of it in the public arena. We need to publicise it and encourage it.

**RT**  I would suggest that the FSB is made aware. It is a good scheme. The charge is moderate and it helps businesses.

**FH**  Another good contact would be Bob Collier of the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce. There are a lot of members in Aberdeenshire.

**IR**  Matt Davis is producing a briefing note on the scheme which will be on its way to you very soon.

**PB**

6. **Use of “licences”/ pre-paid vouchers for traders to use Household Waste and Recycling Centres – in the absence of weigh bridges at all locations, how do these operate, what’s the take up and could these be extended and applied more as may happen in other authority areas?**

**IR**  We don’t want Attendants dealing with money. In relation to HWRCs any commercial waste that is to be left has to be done by a prior arrangement, e.g. through the use of a weighbridge or use of the carrying capacity of the vehicle. We don’t intend to extend this. I’m not sure either if there is a huge demand—although we can accommodate small businesses.
How do you define small businesses?

Basically, these are businesses with small vehicles who have infrequent attendance at the HWRCs. We are not really geared up for anything else. It will increase our tonnage of waste and that's not the intention.

7. Unit cost assessments of waste provision – can we get below north / central and south totals to inform area specific choices?

I assume from this that you are asking for what the costs are in relation to each of the three areas?

It would be extremely difficult to determine this as the lorries cross boundaries all the time. In fact we try to encourage this in order to maximise routes.

I am not minded to ask for things which will incur cost. Do the Committee agree not to pursue this matter? (the Committee agreed to this)

8. Community ownership – they may not expect identical, “equitable” / one size fits all provision but rather prefer suitable to their needs/ wants?

At the moment we have a separate collection for urban areas and one for rural areas. One of the problems in extending it to make it more of a mix and match is that it leads to confusion amongst the public as to actual provision. We believe that the two system approach that we have is appropriate for Aberdeenshire. Say a community were to ask for kerbside re-cycling in rural areas, we may find that there is insufficient waste to pick up and it is costly to run if it is not used. We have to be careful that we don’t have an unrealistic perception as to what a community wants which at the end of the day is wasteful in relation to the public purse.

This matter was brought up by the representatives from Peterhead Community Council this morning. They are very keen on recycling. Their view could be summarised by - one size does not fit all. The Community Council have ideas as to how they would like to see recycling developing in Peterhead. Could they do this?

We are very much looking for community interest and communities to take ownership particularly in light of the current financial issues. We would need to have specifics in relation to Peterhead.

They mooted the idea of a 200 litre size bin for food waste at the HWRC.
IR This matter was raised and discussed at the Waste Management Working Group meeting. The problem is that it is very attractive to rodents, insects etc. There is also potential odour problem. It would mean that the bin would require to be serviced daily which is not cost effective unless large quantities were generated on a regular basis. We are however willing to consider suggestions.

PB 9. Community involvement – aren’t targets met by the communities of Aberdeenshire rather than the Council? If so, why not mark in press coverage?

IR I agree absolutely. We were trying to highlight this for example through the message on the side of our vehicles which says something along the lines of “thank you for recycling 25% of your waste.” We do realise it is all down to household participation.

PB 10. Community waste project seed grants – as other local authorities have – is there potential to consider these more in terms of community empowerment/ ownership and partnership working rather than direct council provision?

IR This relates to funding available from Scottish Government. We did start certain projects within Aberdeenshire e.g. the Magpie/Boxroom project or the real Nappies Project and Community Composting which was helped by Aberdeen Forward. We need to generate enthusiasm to get these schemes going but there is not the same money available from Scottish Government as there was.

RT If a new project is going to save the Council money and provide an enhanced service that’s good but if it costs money to bolt on, that is not going to happen. There requires to be funding outwith the Council.

PB 11. Zero waste plan – application – any detailed thoughts on Scottish government response to questions/ issues raised re carbon accreditation not tonnage?

IR The carbon accreditation leads to the new carbon metric measure which is based on the concept of recognising the use of recycled materials as opposed to virgin products. It is in the early stages. There is nothing new to mention at this stage.

RT There was a paper before COSLA last Friday which concerned the proximity principle and the new change which means that rather than apply locally within Scotland, proximity principle relates to Scotland as
a whole. This may be a disincentive to new local projects as if anywhere in Scotland falls within the definition of proximity, there is no incentive to provide recycling projects locally.

IR I can only agree.

PB 12. Zero waste plan – educational aspect – targeted information reported to be more effective elsewhere in Europe in getting participation – is there more could be done to make sure people get the guidance / advice clear and tailored to their circumstances?

IR We do have targeted marketing but there are costs. I think that we could do more in local community newsletters as the cost is very little but otherwise we are talking about big money.

PB 13. Contact centre comments – recently focus on missed collections – at beginning of year weather related – any option to have default re-try position (as in English la with next week promise – i.e. will collect recyclates on black bin week and vice versa if scheduled collection impossible?) If fall back position known in advance, may be possible to build into schedules and also let the customers know?

IR This was a major issue last winter. We need to make sure we are ready again this winter. We could not copy the English local authority position with a next week promise simply because bad weather can last a lot longer in Aberdeenshire. We’re trying to get out the message that householders should keep their waste out and will be picked up as soon as possible. We cannot give guarantees but are willing to accept bags left at the side of bins. I appreciate we need to publicise this more.

PB 14. Council as exemplar – aware new bins in Woodhill House and commend – but – is there nothing that can be done re trade waste private contract for waste here – given understand Shire vehicles literally drive past?

IR In relation to the removal of recyclates and ordinary waste, there is a private contractor deployed, though the contract is going out to tender again soon. Contrary to what some people say, none of our own lorries pass by Woodhill House so there would be an added cost if they were to come in from Aberdeenshire to deal with Woodhill House. That being said we have put forward a bid but the additional cost is counting against us. This will be the first weekend when there will be no litter bins at people’s desks in Woodhill House and we will see what happens. I think it is a good idea. It gets employees thinking about waste and forces them to take it to the communal bins
strategically located.

**FH**  Can you tell me please are the coffee cups recyclable?

**IR**  I am not sure what the case is in relation to the coffee cups.

**JMcR**  For clarification, when the Commitee had Liz Wood as a witness she explained that for the main staff canteen polystyrene cups are used which cannot be recycled. Apparently, Costa Coffee has recently changed the make-up of their cups so they are recyclable. Starbucks’ cups are not recyclable.

Liz had mentioned the possibility of biodegradable cups but said these were too expensive. She also put forward a proposal that each person within Woodhill House has their own mug which they can wash. Another alternative is to use paper cups.

**IR**  I appreciate that we need to do a bit more work in relation to this. It is not beyond technology to introduce recyclable coffee cups.

**PB**  In relation to the new bins for waste in Woodhill House I do appreciate that it involves a bit of a culture change and this takes time.

**IR**  I feel that if we are asking the general population to recycle, this needs to be mirrored in our offices.

**SD**  The Canteen Manager indicated that this should help with the cutlery situation.

**PB**  Are there any further questions?

**MS**  **Do you look at research either in the UK or internationally in relation to techniques for waste treatment?**

**IR**  Yes. There is lots of information out there.

**MS**  Is it frequently referred to, e.g. would you look at practices in say China or India?

**IR**  In relation to specific countries, I can’t say that I would know the current state of play but I could find out.

**FH**  In Scotland we have only two anaerobic digesters whereas in Germany they have 3,000. In fact, we use German equipment.

**RT**  I am sure through the Scottish Government there is grant funding available for research work.

**IR**  There is a working group in COSLA that is investigating the use of anaerobic digestion in relation to kitchen waste, looking ahead to
Keenans at New Deer take kitchen waste and are in fact stepping up their waste food processing. They have invested in large equipment to do this so the equipment is available.

Keenans use in-vessel composting rather than an anaerobic digestion.

What happens to the kitchen waste in Woodhill House?

I am not aware of what happens to the kitchen waste, I would need to check.

There has been a desire expressed for a trial of mini re-cycling facilities, in other words shared recycling on a small community basis as opposed to individual houses.

In Peterhead we have installed such a facility in Kirk Street. It is a pod type system. It has a number of different pods and each deals with different recyclates. It was installed four months ago. It seems to be working well. We are keen to expand this type of facility for flatted properties. If I recall it was given free by the manufacturer.

This endorses what was said earlier that one size does not fit all. We need to be flexible. As long as we can work on a way of emptying any such containers without the need to make a special trip.

In relation to the Peterhead pod system, this can readily be emptied by the lorry which picks up from the mini recycling centre.

Is kitchen waste sustainable if it costs such a lot to process? I understand it is £65 per ton.

In urban areas it is ok as we can adapt the fleet to collect food waste. It is a problem though for rural areas – we need to wait on guidelines from COSLA and the Scottish Government to see what is required here following the ZWP. We need to balance this against the gate price for disposal by landfill which will exceed £65 per tonne given landfill tax.

What does the pod facility in Peterhead collect?

The pod collects different commodities. I cannot recollect the exact materials but will provide further information.

I understand that yoghurt tubs are a problem to recycle but I have also heard that diesel can be made out of them.

Yes. This can be done. In fact there was a planning application for a
private enterprise that wanted to do this in Fraserburgh but I have not heard of further progress. The Scottish Government has indicated that they want a plastic factory in Scotland which will take all types of plastic which will include yoghurt tubs. Currently low grade plastic cannot be re-cycled in Scotland.

FH There is a company in Edinburgh which is starting to process low grade plastic.

IR This could be the facility that the Scottish Government is trying to encourage. I will try and obtain further information.

PB Do we do anything as a Council in the area of producer responsibility?

IR The ZWP makes a lot of this. It needs to be driven forward by central government though, but COSLA could get involved.

FH Would it be possible for the Council to lobby COSLA on this?

IR I am content that COSLA are looking at this.

MS Some supermarkets have no containers for recycling outside. Are there any future proposals to specify that supermarkets beyond a certain size need to have recycling facilities?

IR It is currently required under planning. I will check any that don’t seem to have facilities available.

MS The representatives from Peterhead Community Council suggested that where supermarkets were delivering food through their on-line facility they could also perhaps pick up food waste.

IR I will take a note of this.

MS There may be a problem with hygiene and to avoid this, the suggestion was that a trailer be fitted to the back of the vehicle.

PB It has also been suggested that we could approach major employers and speak to employees at their place of work on a large-scale basis. This could be used as a vehicle of education.

IR Yes.

FH In relation to migrant workers it would help if we had a translator as well as a waste officer so that information could be provided in an appropriate language.

IR I know that our guidance is already translated into the common Eastern European languages.
I can certainly provide you with more information in relation to the pods with photographs. I can confirm that the current levels of recycling in Aberdeenshire is approximately 34%.