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Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

**North London
Waste Authority**

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Dear Sir/Madam

Ref: Food waste in England Inquiry

Thank you for providing North London Waste Authority (NLWA) with the opportunity to respond to the economic, social, and environmental impact of food waste in England.

NLWA is the statutory joint waste disposal authority for north London and as such is responsible for the disposal of waste collected by seven north London boroughs – Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest and serves approximately 1.9 million residents. NLWA also arranges for the recycling and composting of waste collected by the seven boroughs where requested and organises the management of reuse and recycling centres where the seven boroughs wish us to do so.

NLWA specifically has an interest in food waste reduction and has been running a comprehensive food waste prevention programme since 2012. Food waste is also one of the three priority waste streams included in the North London Waste Prevention Plan April 2016 – March 18 and as a result, a good proportion of NLWA's waste prevention budget is dedicated to food waste prevention work (£163,000 out of a total waste prevention budget of £461,100 for 2016/17). NLWA welcomes the Committee's inquiry into this important waste stream.

I trust that you find our response of interest, but if you have any additional questions then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Andrew Lappage
NLWA Head of Operations

Commons Select Committee
Food waste in England inquiry

Written evidence submitted by North London Waste Authority

1. Introduction

- 1.1. North London Waste Authority (NLWA) is the second largest waste disposal authority in the UK in terms of the tonnage of waste managed and provides a service for approaching 1.9 million people in the London. NLWA covers the London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest. Further information is contained in NLWA's Annual Monitoring Report of progress against the targets included in the jointly agreed (with the seven boroughs) 'North London Joint Waste Strategy' (NLJWS) which is available on our website.
- 1.2. Since 2007, NLWA has been running an extensive waste prevention programme. The aim of the 2016-18 North London Waste Prevention Plan is to reduce municipal waste arisings in north London, promote resource efficiency and improve the local environment through a comprehensive and sustainable programme of waste prevention activities. The Plan has an annual budget of £461,100 and it is estimated that through the two-year waste prevention programme, nearly 20,000 tonnes of waste will be diverted from disposal. Progress towards targets is tracked through diversion rates to indicate the proportion of a waste stream which is managed through waste prevention as opposed to disposal, or through metrics. NLWA responded to the consultation for the Waste Prevention Programme for England and, prior to that, to the Waste Prevention Call for Evidence that led to the publication of the Programme in 2013.

2. What is the economic, environmental and social impact of food waste in England?

- 2.1. A vast number of academic and national studies have been developed covering in depth the topic of food waste, and the response below will cover the consultation from a local authority perspective. As mentioned already, NLWA, as the waste disposal authority for north London, does not collect food waste, but rather arranges the processing of the material collected by six of the seven north London boroughs.
- 2.2. It is accepted that some amount of unavoidable food waste is inevitable; however it is desirable to both reduce the amount of avoidable food waste and ensure that the unavoidable food waste is managed in the most appropriate way possible. From the economic point of view, the main impact that any increase in food waste arisings has on local government is on the disposal and collection costs. Additionally, there are significant waste management costs associated with food waste arisings, such as

maintenance of landfills, transport costs, operations costs in treatment plants, and separation costs.

- 2.3. WRAP has estimated that in London alone, 890,000 tonnes of food is thrown away per year, of which 540,000 tonnes is avoidable. The cost to London boroughs of reprocessing/disposing of this food waste is estimated at over £50 million per annum. It costs consumers £1.4 billion per year to purchase the food and drink thrown away in London, and generates the equivalent of 2.1 million tonnes of CO²e.
- 2.4. Apart from cost to local authorities, increases in food waste arisings have a cost to local residents, too. National research shows that the average family throws away £60 worth of edible food per month. Price volatility as well as the increasing vulnerability of food production systems to climate change and loss of agro-biodiversity will make food even more expensive and potentially inaccessible for low income families in the future. Therefore, from a social point of view, waste of avoidable food can lead to further food shortages, increased food poverty and hunger and has an impact in particular on low income families in England. Global population is projected to increase to nearly eight billion by 2030 and more than 9 billion by 2050, with an even faster growing middle-class, creating demand for a more varied, high-quality diet requiring additional resource to produce. At the same time, a significant share of the world's population is suffering from under-nutrition or malnutrition.
- 2.5. Food waste has a great impact on the environment, too. Apart from waste of resources (such as energy and water and land use) food waste can contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and has a high Global Warming Potential, which in 2011 is estimated to be at least around 227 MT of CO₂ equivalents. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identified that reducing food waste can:
 - reduce greenhouse gas emissions
 - increase provision of ecosystem services via ecosystem conservation and sustainable management as well as sustainable agriculture
 - improve soil quality, reduce erosion, increase ecosystem resilience and
 - increase enforcement of existing policies for sustainable resource management.
- 2.6. In 2013, WRAP calculated the greenhouse gas emissions, water footprint and land requirement associated with avoidable household food waste in UK. The water footprint was 5,200 Mm³ equivalent to 6% of the total UK water footprint, and the land footprint 19,000km², equivalent to an area about 91% the size of Wales.
- 2.7. Overall, food waste is a wide and multifaceted problem and considering the economic, social and environmental implications across the supply chain of the impact of food waste will assist in realising the complexity of the issue.
3. **What measures could be most effective in reducing food waste by retailers, the hospitality sector, local government, and consumers?**

These can include redistribution, recycling and recovery, and improved packaging and labelling.

- 3.1 From the perspective of a municipal waste disposal authority, as food waste prevention includes many behaviour patterns, there is a need for a multi-faceted approach which combines a variety of measures linked to waste prevention attitudes and behaviour patterns. NLWA has developed a range of informational strategies to target food waste accompanied by easy-to-use instructions for residents. More extensive behavioural change campaigns have also been developed aiming to encourage residents to try new activities to reduce food waste that develop into routine habits. NLWA believes that the profile and visibility of waste prevention can be significantly raised by identifying specific activities in which residents can actively participate. However, with the current pressures on local budgets and the challenge posed by lack of robust methodology and monitoring systems to measure food waste prevention, justifying expenditure remains a big barrier for local authorities in order to continue promoting the food waste reduction message.
- 3.2 On the basis that regulatory and legislative strategies are occurring on a national level, local government can help food waste reduction by changing behaviours locally and effectively implementing the 4Es' behavioural change model; enabling people to make a change, encouraging actions, engaging with the community and exemplifying what is being done by others. NLWA finds action-oriented activities encompassing all the above elements of particular effectiveness and the current food waste programme is focusing on informational, educational and promotional initiatives.
- 3.3 Levels of food waste can also be affected by regulatory approaches to matters such as food marketing standards, food hygiene, date labelling, animal health and waste management including bans or restrictions of food waste to landfill disposal. Bans or restrictions on food waste to landfill
- 3.4 Although this response is focusing on effective measures from a local authority perspective, retailers have an important role to play to achieve food waste reduction across the food chain, with optimisation of the supply chain, use of modern technologies with regards to packaging and labelling and redistribution of safe surplus food to those in need. The hospitality sector can contribute to food waste reduction by increasing consumer choice with regards to portion sizes, making take-away of leftover food from restaurants a norm and by redistributing surplus portions.

4 What proposals are necessary to further reduce food waste?

- 4.1 To further reduce food waste additional legislation and regulatory measures are required related to waste, food donations and use of by-products from the food chain for feed production. The new circular economy package has a list of measures to reduce food waste. Proposals cover the full lifecycle of products: from production and consumption to waste management and the market for secondary raw materials.

- 4.2 NLWA believes that a common methodology and indicators around food waste prevention is necessary in order to quantify food waste levels for a solid evidence base as well as assess impact and considers that this should be a priority in order to assess the impact of any measures proposed. It is widely accepted that this is a complex task, due to the lack of available harmonised data and statistics, and to the multi-faceted nature of food waste generation. However, measuring food waste accurately would help reduce food waste by enabling companies to increase their accountability on this topic and policy makers to shape well-tailored (and integrated) public policies to tackle the issue. Furthermore, measuring the success of food waste prevention activities is a challenging process as at present there is no common set of tools or indicators that can be widely used by local authorities, central funding agencies and other stakeholders to measure the relative and absolute impact of food waste prevention initiatives.
- 4.3 NLWA also considers that restrictions on sending some types of food waste to landfill would also be beneficial. In its response to the 2010 Defra and Welsh Assembly Government consultation on the introduction of restrictions on the landfilling of certain wastes, the Authority noted that it would be relatively difficult to introduce producer responsibility legislation for this waste stream throughout the food production and distribution stream, (including to householders). However, to encourage the reduction of excess food waste the Authority recommended that a ban on commercial and industrial food waste to landfill would be useful.
- 4.4 A ban on commercial and industrial food waste would also tackle food waste produced at the manufacturing stage. A study carried out DHL Excel Supply Chain for WRAP (2009) showed that 27.2% of the total waste arising from the UK food and drink supply chain (not all of which is food) is wasted at the manufacturing stage, 7.6% at the retail stage and 64.7% at the household stage.
- 4.5 A ban on commercial and industrial food waste to landfill would have the benefit of diverting industrial food wastes from disposal, including the quantity of food waste from small restaurants and shops, thus making food waste collections potentially more viable for these premises and potentially further stimulating the market for anaerobic digestion. However, it may also have the unintended consequence of encouraging retailers to sell more short-life food to householders to avoid sending the food to relatively expensive AD and composting outlets; which would have to be guarded against.
- 4.6 The Authority supports the principle to move to reduce biodegradable waste to landfill on the basis of:
- the reduction in landfill gas resulting;
 - the contribution that the introduction of any landfill restrictions can make towards achieving overall carbon reduction targets and the implications of this; and
 - the positive impact as far as climate change is concerned.

4.7 However, we would comment that if any restrictions on landfilling food wastes were to be introduced this would require additional waste management infrastructure, which aside from the requirement for funding will need to overcome the challenges of securing appropriate consents through the planning and permitting systems. Therefore the introduction of any such restrictions should take account of the planning framework and would need to be sequential to existing policies and instruments. Accordingly dates should be set sufficiently far ahead (7 to 10 years) to allow for planned implementation and associated communication programmes before, during and after actual implementation.

5 How effective are existing voluntary initiatives in England and is there a need for legislation?

5.1 NLWA's view is that voluntary initiatives will work better as a precursor to legislative backing. Firstly, there is need for thorough assessment of the effectiveness of existing voluntary measures in order to investigate where legislation needs to be introduced. A number of voluntary initiatives exist in England at present, such as food sharing clubs, food banks, Fareshare, the gleaning network which coordinates volunteers, farmers and food redistribution charities to salvage fresh fruit and vegetables that are wasted on farms (<http://feedbackglobal.org/campaigns/gleaning-network/>) and the pig idea (<http://thepigidea.org/>), a campaign, aiming to encourage the use of food waste to feed pigs. However, without any requirements and standardised methodology for measurement and collaborative reporting it is not possible to ascertain the impact of these initiatives and reach meaningful comparative conclusions.

5.2 With regards to the Courtauld Commitment, according to WRAP, food and packaging waste in the grocery supply chain reduced by 7.4% over three years and successful examples include a manufacturer of pre-prepared foods identifying how to cut food waste by 25%, a retailer and supplier working together to optimise how bananas were supplied to store and examples of how bagged salad can be reduced by between a third and 80%. However, the Commitment appeals to large retailers and smaller businesses are not part of the initiative. Therefore an important part of the retail sector which has a significant presence in north London is not directly influenced by the Commitment.

5.3 The Hospitality and Food Service Agreement, launched in June 2012, is a voluntary agreement to support the sector in reducing waste and recycling more. The target is to reduce food and associated packaging waste by 5% and increase recycling rate to 70%. The Agreement has 230 signatories and supporters and signatories and supporters work towards delivering collective goals, and also influence their peers and supply chains. Interim results show that there has been a 3.6% decrease in food and packaging waste and 57% recycling rate. There is a range of published case studies detailing successful approaches to reduce waste, for example a meal supplier to the public sector cut waste by 60% through small changes to the size of cooking batches.

- 5.4 Overall, NLWA's view is that there have been initiatives that demonstrated successful results. However, when an initiative is driven by an individual organisation or sectors it does not force any requirements for standardised reporting and NLWA cannot comment on how effective the initiatives are without knowing the evaluation methodology used and frequency of reporting. One of the problems we identify is that at the moment there is no requirement for voluntary incentives to report on a consistent manner or report at all.

6 What are the comparative approaches to reducing and managing food waste in the devolved nations, and across Europe?

- 6.1 A number of successful actions have been developed nationwide and across Europe to reduce and manage food waste. These vary from policy and legislative approaches, to awareness raising initiatives and collaborative projects. NLWA has highlighted a number of good practice examples, as follows:
- 6.2 The Food Surplus Entrepreneurs Network (FSE Network), a European community connecting social innovators reducing food waste or valorising food surplus. It is a learning network facilitating exchange and collaboration between food surplus entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it gives visibility to these innovations to encourage replication.
- 6.3 The Menu Dose Certa project (Portugal) which aims to reduce food waste by 48.5 kilos per restaurant client per year and attempts to change attitudes and behaviours by raising awareness of food waste. The goal is to support restaurants in creating menus that generate notably less food waste. The project is a partnership between LIPOR (Inter-municipal Waste Management of Greater Porto), the Association of Portuguese Nutritionists, the local authorities of Espinho and local restaurants.
- 6.4 'Stop Wasting Food' is Denmark's largest movement of private consumers against food waste. The movement is founded to raise public awareness of food waste through campaigns, publicity, press, discussions, debate, events and other information channels and to equip consumers to minimise food waste. 'Stop Wasting Food' also inspires consumers to act locally, for example by donating edible surplus food to shelters for homeless people. Denmark has more initiatives against food waste in Europe than any other state, from awareness campaigns and partnerships to government subsidies for food waste projects and supermarkets selling products after the sell by date in order to reduce food waste.
- 6.5 The 'Slow Food Youth Network' in Germany came up with the Disco Soup idea to raise awareness of food waste that has now become a global phenomenon. People come together in a public space to communally prepare a soup from vegetables that would otherwise have gone to waste to the backdrop of live music and a festive atmosphere. Similar examples in the UK include the Pumpkin Rescue Festival that environmental charity Hubbub has developed and that NLWA supports, having hosted the annual flagship event in north London for a second consecutive year.

- 6.6 'European week for waste reduction', a project targeted on waste reduction and on promoting awareness of waste reduction strategies. Program promotes sustainable waste reduction across Europe by encouraging cooperation between different stakeholders. The main aim is to induce positive changes of the Europeans consumptions habits and NLWA has been supporting the Week since its pilot edition in 2009.
- 6.7 In France there has recently been a ban on food waste from supermarkets. France has become the first country in the world to ban supermarkets from throwing away or destroying unsold food, forcing them instead to donate it to charities and food banks. It is expected that Italy will soon follow the French example and ban supermarket food waste, too. Businesses will be able to record donations in one simple form every month and will not face sanctions for giving away food past its sell-by date, and will pay less waste tax the more they give away.
- 6.8 The Scottish Parliament has adopted a phased approach to rolling out key measures in the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012, including requiring all businesses, public sector and not-for-profit organisations to present metal, glass, paper and card (including cardboard) for separate collection from 01/01/14; food businesses (except in rural areas) producing over 50kg of food waste/week to present that food for separate collection from 01/01/14; food businesses (except in rural areas) which produce over 5 kg of food waste per week to present that food waste for separate collection from 01/01/16 and a ban on key separately collected recyclables being incinerated or landfilled from 01/01/14 (plastic, card/paper, glass, metal, food waste).
- 6.9 The Brussels Environment 'Good Food' strategy, which aims to achieve a 30% reduction in food waste by 2020. The seven axes of the strategy are; production, supply, demand, good food culture, food waste, innovation and governance. Food waste, is a key focus of the strategy, with the objective of a 30% reduction by 2020, the introduction of initiatives like the 'rest-o-pack' (doggy bags) and re-distribution of unsold products.
- 6.10 Catalonia has developed its Waste & Resource General Program 2013-2020 and it is promoted by the Catalan Waste Agency (Agència Catalana de Residus). The food waste prevention objectives are to halve food waste quantities by the end of 2020 and to set a food waste reduction objective for the agro-food industry and wholesalers before the end of 2016.
- 6.11 ForMat is a collaborative programme in Norway, initiated by the food industry and financed by a range of partners. The goals of the project are to contribute to a 25% reduction in food waste by 2015, changing attitudes and improving knowledge and routines. Four years following the programme results show a reduction in food waste relative to production from 4.8% to 4.0% between 2010 and 2013 for the selected product categories, which represents a decrease of about 16% in the period.