

Agenda Item No:

NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY

REPORT TITLE:

CONTRACTS ACTIVITY

REPORT OF:

HEAD OF WASTE STRATEGY AND CONTRACTS

FOR SUBMISSION TO:

AUTHORITY MEETING

DATE:

10th December 2008

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This report informs Members on operational activities and associated issues dealt with by the Contracts section of the Strategy & Contracts team from April to September, 2008.

RECOMMENDATION

The Authority is recommended to note the contents of this report.

**Signed by Head of Waste Strategy
and Contracts**

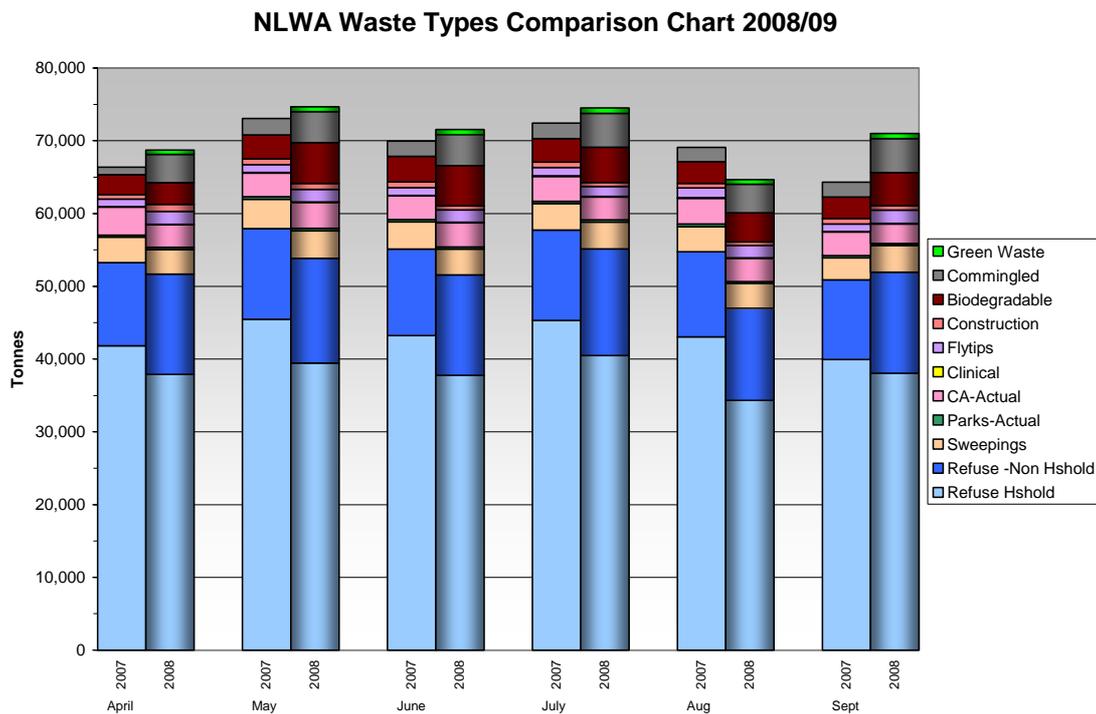
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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Contracts Section is responsible for managing contracts covering disposal of household, commercial, clinical and civic amenity waste produced by constituent boroughs, and is increasingly managing recycling and composting services.
- 1.2 The Section serves as the principal point of liaison between contractors and boroughs to resolve problems and find ways to improve existing services. It also assesses the practical implications of new legislation and investigates and secures new disposal methods/outlets as required.
- 1.3 It provides a full data reporting service on the Authority's operational activities to the boroughs and to central agencies.
- 1.3 A full description of the key sites and services is given in the Authority's Best Value Performance Report, sent to Members in June and available on the Authority's website.

2.0 TONNAGE INFORMATION – April to September, 2008



NB. This chart excludes Boroughs' own waste to reprocessors

3.0 MAIN WASTE DISPOSAL CONTRACT

- 3.1 The main waste disposal contract is monitored by the Contracts Section using random routine inspection of each LondonWaste Ltd (LWL) site. The aim is to visit each site on a weekly basis but where this is not possible, emphasis is given to the busier sites in order to monitor 1,100 loads per month in total. Between April and September, 2008 a total of 101 visits were made; Hornsey Street and Hendon were visited just over once weekly, and Edmonton was visited over double the target level. These inspections are designed to highlight issues of health and safety, check vehicle turnaround times and ensure the sites are meeting borough needs. During the period covered, sampling of 6.76% of delivery transactions (7,631 of 112,884 waste deliveries) was carried out and this data was reconciled against claims for payment by LWL.
- 3.2 Tonnage data for all transactions, covering refuse, street cleansing, civic amenity, bulky, clinical wastes and biodegradable and commingled recycling was also sent to borough technical officers each week, month and quarter so that they could carry out their own checks on transactions and highlight problems for the Section to investigate.
- 3.3 The same tonnage data is used to validate LWL's claims for payment, for the reporting to boroughs set out at section 6 below and for forecasting future tonnage arisings to assist resource planning and LATS modelling.
- 3.4 A fundamental part of the work is pre-registering waste vehicles used by our boroughs or their contractors so that LWL can receive this waste knowing it to be at the Authority's expense. The Contracts Section has direct access to LWL's computerised weighbridge system in order to authorise these vehicles. There are regularly over ten new entries and amendments every day. Usually, these are submitted by boroughs in advance, but on occasions time is critical as the vehicle is already in use, or already actually at one of LWL's weighbridges. Vehicles are de-registered automatically if set up as a temporary hired vehicle initially or manually when the borough disposes of it or returns it to the leasing company for 'permanent' vehicles.
- 3.5 Monthly contract liaison meetings are held with LWL to monitor and resolve issues under this contract and the Civic Amenity contract below. Five defaults have been issued during the period against the Main Waste Disposal Contract. Four of these were due to borough vehicles exceeding the agreed 20 minute turnaround time and one was issued because LondonWaste refused to allow access to tip to the same correctly registered borough vehicle on two occasions.

4.0 CLINICAL WASTE

- 4.1 Clause 3.3 of the Specification of the Main Waste Disposal Contract requires that vehicles delivering waste remain at the disposal point for no longer than 30 minutes, including queuing. The majority of vehicles delivering clinical waste are hand unloaded and as such take longer to discharge their loads than tipping vehicles.
- 4.2 Clinical waste also is subject to much more stringent controls in relation to its handling, treatment and disposal; it therefore costs the Authority more per tonne than ordinary waste.

5.0 IN-VESSEL COMPOSTING

- 5.1 The in-vessel composting facility at LWL's site at Edmonton has been receiving waste since September 2005, and was formally opened in March 2006 when the first loads of finished compost were handed over to constituent borough councils for local use. The facility is designed to receive and process up to 30,000 tonnes per annum of biodegradable waste.
- 5.2 In June 2007 LondonWaste Ltd started the construction of a building to enclose the maturation pad at the compost facility at Edmonton in order to combat odour problems. During the construction the maturation pad was unavailable for use and consequently the material removed from the second stage tunnels was transferred to the compost facility operated by Agrivert at Ardley in Oxfordshire. The building was completed in April 2008.
- 5.3 The compost facility is operated in accordance with the national 'Compost Quality Protocol' and the compost itself meets the Publicly Available Standard No. 100 (PAS 100) from the British Standards Institute.
- 5.4 Boroughs deliver biodegradable tonnage that far exceeds the 30,000 tonnes per annum that the compost plant can accommodate. Between April and September alone 27,000 tonnes was delivered. We, therefore, have to arrange for third parties to receive and compost the excess amounts which is bulked at Edmonton and transported by LondonWaste, through whom this service is contractually arranged at present. They are currently in negotiation with three outlets for the next calendar year.

6.0 COMMINGLED DRY RECYCLABLES

- 6.1 The Authority has an Interim Bulking Agreement which enables boroughs to deliver commingled recyclates via the Authority. 25,674 tonnes were delivered during this period. Vehicles from participating boroughs are registered under separate code numbers to allow them to tip at Edmonton and Hornsey Street. LWL then transport the recyclate to Materials Recycling Facilities as mentioned in 9.6 of this report.
- 6.2 This service is discussed elsewhere on this agenda as part of the new 'short-term' procurement.

7.0 CIVIC AMENITY TRANSPORT CONTRACT

- 7.1 There are currently nine re-use and recycling centres operated by the boroughs in the NLWA area generating some 18,917 tonnes of residual waste from April to September, 2008. Most boroughs currently make their own arrangements for recyclable and compostable wastes from these sites except Waltham Forest and Hackney which dispose of green waste under the Authority's recycling arrangements that are funded through the levy.
- 7.2 Site visits are made by Authority officers to ensure the quality of the service meets contractual standards. Monthly liaison meetings are held with LWL for this contract and the main waste disposal contract above. No defaults were issued against the Contract during the period.
- 7.3 The Contract was awarded in 2003 for a period of five years with an option to extend for a further two years. Service levels have been of a high standard over the full contract term, as only seven defaults have been issued since the start of the contract in 2003. The Authority approved an extension to the contract last December. The Contract now expires at the end of June 2010 and preparations are underway to renew the Contract.

8.0 WEEE DIRECTIVE

- 8.1 The WEEE Directive was implemented on 1st July 2007. The Authority registered 16 sites, on the boroughs' behalf, as Designated Collection Facilities (DCF's) for collection of up to five categories of household WEEE including fridges, televisions, lamps, and large and small domestic appliances. A total tonnage of 2,122 has been collected during the six month period of this report. Under this legislation waste is collected by a Producer Compliance Schemes ("PCS") under contract to the Authority and at no cost to the Authority.

- 8.2 The Authority's approved PCS is DHL and the current contract operates until May 2010. The level of service provided is very good and no complaints have been made against this contract during this period.

9.0 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND LEGAL COMPLIANCE

- 9.1 The Section deals with all aspects of data reporting for performance management and legal compliance purposes. It gathers monthly information from boroughs on over 30 categories of recycling materials. These are collated with other data from the main waste contract and ancillary agreements and submitted to Environment Agency/DEFRA via a national system known as WasteDataFlow (WDF). This information is used by the Authority, among other things, to project its likely position on landfill allowances and to establish the Authority's and the boroughs' National Indicator (formerly Best Value Performance Indicator) progress.
- 9.2 The Section carries out weekly surveys to establish the NLWA proportion of recyclate of residual waste at Edmonton. A survey is carried out annually at Hornsey Street Re-use and Recycling Centre to determine the user split between Islington and Hackney. A new annual survey has been introduced this year to check the amount of DIY waste disposed at household waste recycling centres. This allows the Authority and the boroughs to report such waste as non-household waste for National Indicator purposes, which improves household recycling percentages.
- 9.3 Similarly to DIY wastes, fly-tipped wastes are also excluded from National Indicator targets for household waste. Historically the Authority has relied on boroughs registering specific vehicles as delivering fly-tipped wastes so that their loads could be separately recorded. However, for clear operational efficiencies boroughs have been increasingly collecting fly-tipped wastes alongside other wastes on single vehicles. This had led to the Authority and the boroughs reporting different tonnages to WasteDataFlow, which was commented upon during the recent LATS visit (see section 11 below). In an effort to quantify and mirror the reported tonnage the section approached the EA, DEFRA and the Audit Commission and asked them to agree a survey methodology put forward by Hackney for measuring such tonnage. This has now been agreed and other boroughs have been invited to carry out surveys using this methodology or to come forward with robust alternatives.

- 9.4 The Authority has now reached agreement with constituent boroughs on methods establishing the level of non-household waste produced and non-household charges for 2008/09 reflect the new system. In order to quality assure and reconcile data submitted by boroughs we require updated information on a quarterly basis accompanied by a declaration signed at Director level. The system is settling in during the current financial year.
- 9.5 In accordance with the data derived from the above and with preliminary borough notifications of April-September recycling and composting tonnages (that remain subject to change), the current straight-line forecast for the Authority-wide recycling and composting rates are 19% and 10% respectively. This should be qualified, however, in relation to the high growth composting months having already occurred this year. The current projection on the Authority's LATS position is that there will be a surplus of approximately 200,000 tonnes, although this too is less certain than usual as the final impacts of a fire in the turbine hall at LondonWaste's energy-from-waste incinerator on 8th November are not yet fully known.
- 9.6 The Section also has responsibility for ensuring the Authority's compliance with Duty of Care Regulations. It maintains a register of waste management licences for all borough and contractor sites, authorised treatment facilities for WEEE, third party outlets for compost and materials recycling facilities for commingled recyclates. Regular visits are made to all such facilities to ensure compliance with Duty of Care. This year 18 sites have been visited at locations including Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Kent. Because of recent concerns about end destinations of reprocessed commingled recycle from material recycling facilities the Section carries out Duty of Care visits to MRFs in Bow, Greenwich, Rainham and Tilbury twice yearly and has undertaken audits to check documentation detailing end destinations. The Section is currently trying to get the Environment Agency to clarify the legal responsibilities and procedures around its checking of export documentation.
- 9.7 The Section keeps copies of all waste carrier registrations for any organisation likely to deliver or collect waste under the Main Waste Disposal Contract, the Civic Amenity Transport Contract and other ancillary agreements such as tyres, asbestos, CRTs etc. It also raises annual waste transfer notes for all waste streams with each borough and their contractors. There are currently around 100 notes which are signed by up to 5 relevant parties. Because all these copies must, by law, have original signatures this is not done by post but, rather, by physical visits to all those parties. The section also keeps copies of hazardous waste producer registrations and advises boroughs and contractors about such registrations.

- 9.8 Finally, the Section manages the third party re-use and recycling credit system, under which a range of organisations that reuse or recycle household waste that would otherwise have had to be disposed by the Authority can claim payment for each tonne diverted. The annual cycle is to invite such organisations to apply for pre-registration in December; to assess likely tonnages and measuring systems, verify legal compliance and make recommendations to the Authority in February; to receive, assess and pay claims to organisations approved by the Authority from April to the following March; and to put this tonnage towards local National Indicator and LATS performance targets.

10.0 CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

- 10.1 The Section is currently gathering data on borough working arrangements and liaising with contractors on the opening times of re-use and recycling centres and waste reception sites in order to co-ordinate collection and disposal service provision to an optimum level. This year extended hours have been negotiated to accommodate boroughs carrying out collections on the weekend following Christmas and New Year.

11.0 LATS VISIT

- 11.1 The Environment Agency visited the Authority in August to check our processes and performance in relation to meeting our landfill allowance allocation each year. They based their examination on data covering 2007/08. They were particularly interested in the quality and consistency of the data gathered and reported to WasteDataFlow by the Authority and its constituent boroughs. WasteDataFlow is the system used by the EA and DEFRA to monitor LATS and to establish borough recycling rates in line with National Indicators. A copy of the EA's report on the visit is attached as Appendix A.
- 11.2 Overall the report is favourable but the EA pointed out that in many cases data reported by boroughs differed from that reported by the Authority. The inconsistencies have been investigated with the boroughs, and the quality of current data is now much improved. The main outstanding area, however, is the assessment of the amount of fly-tipped waste in each borough. This is complicated because, for efficiency reasons, it is very often collected with other waste streams, so clear definitive weighbridge data does not exist as discussed above at 9.3.

- 11.3 Although the EA liked the Authority's system of auditing borough recycling claims, they held the view that as the Authority has statutory responsibility for all LATS related data and can be fined if data is incorrectly reported, the Authority should expand the audit to cover all such data. They have recommended that the Authority establish firm agreements with boroughs to ensure LATS data is reported in a consistent way by its WCAs and to agreed deadlines, and work is now underway on this.

12.0 CONTRACTS SECTION – OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES

- 12.1 The Section provides general office management support to the whole Strategy & Contracts Team and deals with enquiries from the public. It processes all non-contract orders and invoices. It maintains risk assessments for all the Team's office and outdoor work functions. It manages the Authority's website and the 'real nappy' subsidies for those boroughs not participating in Real Nappies for London. It has also recently agreed an I.T. Service Level Agreement with LB Haringey.
- 12.2 Tonnage and financial information arising from the Section is essential for much of the work of the Finance Officer, so a close two-way working relationship exists here.
- 12.3 The Section is comprised of a manager and four members of staff, one of whom is currently taking on the additional duty of managing the short-term procurement of merchant MRF capacity. Due to the significant increase in the numbers of transactions managed and the increased complexity of the performance management work, budget provision has been made in the draft 2009/10 budget elsewhere on this agenda for one additional post within this Section.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 13.1 The Authority is recommended to note the contents of this report.

14.0 COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL ADVISER

- 14.1 The Financial Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments to add.

15.0 COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL ADVISER

14.1 The Legal Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no comments to add.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to information

Documents used: None

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North London Waste Authority

August 2008

Report of Data Quality Visit for the Landfill Allowances and Trading Scheme

We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it **a better place** - for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency. Out there, making your environment a better place.

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Environment Agency
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Background

Creating a better place - the purpose of LATS

Household waste production remains one of the Government's failing indicators of sustainability¹ and needs tackling. Despite growing pressure for change, there needs to be more tangible evidence of commitment to implement the measures needed to bring about lasting change.

Household waste and some trade waste together are collectively known as municipal waste. We all need to minimise the amount of municipal waste we produce and improve our management of these wastes to prevent or reduce the negative affects of landfilling waste on the environment and human health.

Landfill gas is made up of the greenhouse gases; methane, and carbon dioxide. It is produced from decomposing wastes and so reducing the amount of wastes we landfill will reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we produce.

The EC Landfill Directive requires all member states including the UK to make a lasting change. There is a statutory requirement on each Country to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste that it sends to landfill. Key target dates are 2010, 2013 and 2020 and interim targets have also been set by Defra to ensure that these European targets are met.

Each Waste Disposal Authority in England has an individual contribution they must make to achieve the European and interim targets. Authorities can adopt a flexible approach to meeting their allocations by bringing on-line new facilities in order to meet their goals or buying additional allowances from another authority who is a high performer in terms of diversion. Waste can be diverted in a number of ways: minimisation, reuse, recycling, composting or recovery.

The Agency is committed to monitoring how well local authorities do in meeting their landfill allowance allocation. Success will bring about a better environment and more sustainable future for all of us.

¹ Government Annual Report 2002 – Achieving a Better Quality of Life. Published February 2003

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1. Introduction

The Environment Agency is the monitoring authority for the Landfill Allowances and Trading Scheme (LATS) in England. LATS was developed and introduced by Defra so that England can meet the requirements to divert biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) from landfill (Article 5 of the EC Landfill Directive). The scheme runs from 2005 until 2020 and the key European target years are 2010, 2013 and 2020.

We have a duty to monitor and report on the performance of each Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) in meeting its landfill allowance allocation for each year of the scheme from 2005 until 2020. We rely heavily on data submitted in WasteDataFlow (WDF) to monitor the performance of each authority.

We recognise that the quality and consistency of the municipal waste data reported in WasteDataFlow needs to be very good and very reliable.

To ensure the quality and consistency of the data submitted to WDF, we are visiting all 121 WDAs in England. In a programme made up of three rounds, we will visit each authority once and ask them to show us the systems and processes they have in place to cover three key data quality areas.

The areas we cover during our visits are:

- collecting municipal waste data
- quality assuring the data
- reporting the data

By the time we reach the first European target year in 2009/10 we will have visited all 121 local authorities in England.

The purpose of our visits is to:

- compare processes and systems across authorities
- identify best practice and things which work well
- identify specific areas where there may be room for review/improvement
- identify generic areas of improvement where we can develop guidance

In early 2007 we carried out our first round of visits to 24 local authorities across all parts of England. We spent between 1-2 days with each authority looking at processes, systems and evidence of the way they collect, quality assure and report municipal waste data. We published our findings as individual reports in July 2007.

In 2007/8 reporting year we undertook our second round of visits. Again we spent between 1-2 days with each authority looking at processes, systems and evidence of the way they collect, quality assure and report municipal waste data. However within this framework we adapted our approach in response to findings and feedback from the first round of visits. We paid particular attention to interpretation of municipal waste classification, two-tier authority reporting, reject rates from reprocessors, Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) operations and export of recyclates. We also gave authorities more information about the format of the visit and provided a preparation form. Completing this form prior to the visit helped them prepare and allowed us more time to check processes and data during the visit.

In 2008/9 reporting year we will visit the remaining authorities, in our third round of visits.

These series of reports publish our findings. We have used the same report format for each authority so that they can readily compare the three key areas, and we asked the same questions from each authority we visited. Our methodology for carrying out the prioritisation of visits and a summary of what questions we asked at each visit are described in annex A.

As with the previous round of visits, we have also given each of the authorities the opportunity to give us feedback. Feedback will be summarised and separately published when 2008/9 visits are complete.

2. Key Messages

Overall Performance

Of the authorities we have visited in 2008/9, we believe that the Authority demonstrated it has good processes and systems in place to ensure both consistent and accurate municipal waste data. Significant elements of the system were reasonable. We have highlighted in green the areas which we found were particularly good and can be used as best practice.

The challenges faced by the Authority are centred around data collection and partnership working with WCAs.

In our view

We particularly liked the processes and systems the Authority had in place for data reporting. The success of these processes and systems was evidenced by the comprehensive guidance and well organised records which led to ease of data reporting by staff. Staff demonstrated a good level of knowledge of waste data. The Authority gives high priority to waste data and recognises its importance.

This is a two tier authority. There are 7 Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs). There is increasing collaboration with the WCAs in relation to LATS.

The Authority's main waste disposal contract, until 2014, is with London Waste Ltd. The contract covers the management of waste transfer stations, transporting dry commingled recyclates to a MRF, green waste to composting, disposal of clinical waste, and transportation of residual waste to landfill and incineration. London waste supply the Authority with the bulk of waste data via a computerised weighbridge system call Gatehouse.

The Authority works very hard to quality assure the data they collect. Records and files checked during the visit were found to be very well organised and easy to find.

It was good that the Authority audits it's WCAs to check recycling credit scheme claims. We particularly liked this quality assurance activity and hope the Authority will continue to audit it's WCAs, and even expand the audit to cover all LATS related data.

It is good that the Authority supplies waste data to it's WCAs, it would be better if formalised mechanisms could be agreed to ensure data is reported on WDF in a consistent way.

The Authority conducts a manual survey of vehicles passing over weighbridges, in order to check electronic data supplied by their waste disposal contractor.

The Authority has an extremely comprehensive set of guidance documents for key LATS activities. We particularly like the guidance document for reporting LATS data on WDF, which helps to ensure data is entered on WDF in an accurate and consistent way.

Recommendations

We would like the Authority to give the following recommendations due consideration. We have listed them in priority order.

	Activity	What could be done	Date
1	WCA partnerships	Formalise agreements with WCAs to ensure they are reporting data on WDF in a way consistent with the Authority. Check data entered on WDF by WCAs. Include agreement for WCAs to report data to the Authority by agreed deadlines.	By 30 February 2009
2	WCA partnerships	Ensure WCAs are performing driver log sheet checks each month, and to an agreed deadline.	By 30 December 2008
3	Collecting landfill data	Obtain data direct from landfills to verify tonnages reported by contractor.	By 30 November 2008
4	End destinations	Seek regular information on UK end destinations of recyclates from MRFs.	By 30 January 2009
5	Gatehouse data	Agree with waste disposal contractor, a method to ensure data errors are amended in a timely manner.	By 30 January 2009

Review

We have made a number of specific recommendations, which we hope the Authority will acknowledge and take forward. We will contact each authority in the course of the next six months to see how they have taken the recommendations forward.

Through the course of both rounds of visits, we also gathered a number of more generic recommendations. In March 2008 we provided additional guidance to authorities in relation to these generic recommendations, particularly in interpretation of municipal solid waste definition for LATS. This publication, as a set of frequently asked questions, is applicable to 2008/9 data reported on WasteDataFlow. It is available on the LATS page of the Environment Agency's website.

3. Data Quality Assessment

Element	Assessment
<p>Overall LATS performance</p> <p>Overall performance is a qualitative assessment that, as a guide, is based on:</p> <p>To be improved – 2 or 3 indicators (collecting, quality assuring and reporting data) assessed as “to be improved”. No indicator assessed as “good” or “excellent”</p> <p>Reasonable – only 1 of the 3 indicators assessed as “to be improved</p> <p>Good – none of the 3 indicators assessed as “to be improved” and at least one assessed as “good” or “excellent”. Evidence of best practice</p> <p>Excellent – all three indicators assessed as “good” as a minimum and at least one indicator assessed as “excellent”. Evidence of exceptional performance and best practice that could be rolled out across England</p>	<p>Good. We believe that this Council is working very hard to collect/QA and report accurate and consistent municipal waste data. We have identified 3 key areas which we believe the Council is doing particularly well in and can be used to identify ‘Best Practice’ for other Councils. We have identified 5 key areas which we feel could help the Council to be even better. We will be in touch with the Council over the next few months to see how things are progressing.</p>
Collecting Data	Reasonable Further data on end destinations of recyclates, and verification of tonnages sent to landfill may improve quality of collected data. Access to contractor base data may also benefit the Authority.
Quality Assurance	Good The Authority works hard to quality assure the waste data they receive.
Data Reporting	Good The Authority has good processes for reporting LATS data.
Partnerships	Reasonable. The Authority may benefit from formalising partnerships with it’s WCAs.

4. Data Collection

During our visit we asked a total of 10 questions in relation to the type of data and the routes for data collection. Having accurate and consistent municipal waste data begins with data collection. We are looking at not only the quantitative data e.g. the tonnages but also the qualitative data e.g. where the waste came from and its final destination.

In order for us to have confidence in data reported under LATS we need to ensure that we can track 'from cradle to grave' all the waste streams handled by or on behalf of the local authority. This is especially true of wastes which have been diverted away from landfill through reuse, recycling, composting and recovery.

We need to have confidence that if wastes are being reprocessed in the UK or abroad, that this is taking place legitimately. Recently there have been a number of high profile cases involving the illegal export of municipal waste and we need to safeguard the robustness of LATS by ensuring that all wastes have been properly diverted from landfill.

It is the responsibility of an Authority to check the final destination of their wastes to make sure that that it is being reprocessed within the law.

The bulk of waste data is collected via the Gatehouse system, which is a database linked to all London Waste weighbridge stations. The Authority collects data on collected residual waste (and some recyclates) on behalf of it's WCAs. This data is supplied to the WCAs for reporting on WDF. The WCAs collect the bulk of data on collected recyclates, this data is supplied to the Authority.

The Authority's WCAs offer a commercial waste collection service.

Use of Materials Reclamation Facility

The Authority's waste management contractor takes kerbside collected recyclates from the WCAs to a MRF. Data is received via the Gatehouse system, although contaminants are calculated using a reject rate supplied via email by the MRF operator.

The Authority has raised concerns that the reject rate may not be representative of the WCA material that is input to the MRF, as the MRF is used by other authorities.

The Authority has struggled to obtain information on end destinations of recyclates from the MRF, it seems the MRF operator claimed this information is commercially confidential. It would be good if the Authority sought details of final destinations of recyclates, particularly with respect to UK reprocessors.

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)

The Authority has 9 HWRCs which are owned and operated by the constituent WCAs. The WCAs reported that approximately 39,000 tonnes of waste were collected for recycling or reuse in 2007/08 at the sites. The Authority sources outlets for WEEE, fridges, fluorescent tubes and large domestic appliances. The WCAs source outlets for the remaining materials collected at HWRCs, subsequently the Authority does not regularly receive information on the waste brokers or end destinations of these materials.

As one WCA does not have its own HWRC, residents are directed to use a neighbouring WCA's HWRC. A survey is regularly carried out on site to find the origin of residents using the HWRC, and based on this a percentage split is applied to the total waste collected at the site to apportion tonnages between the two WCAs.

Charities waste is accepted at 7 of the HWRCs, a charity registration document is required to deposit waste at 4 of the HWRCs. No commercial waste is accepted at any of the HWRCs.

Reprocessing

Paper and card is sent to reprocessors either directly through WCA contracts or via the MRF. As a result, the Authority does not receive data directly from paper reprocessors.

Green waste management

The Authority obtains data for green waste that 2 of the WCAs dispose of via the main waste disposal contract. Green waste is sent for windrow composting and then sold as a compost. The remaining 5 WCAs supply data on collected green waste. During 2007/08, the WCAs reported collecting approximately 19,000 tonnes of green waste.

Recovery

During 2007/08, the Authority reported sending approximately 444,000 tonnes of residual waste for incineration at an EfW plant. A further 1300 tonnes was sent to a separate EfW plant. Data on tonnage input is received via the Gatehouse system based on tonnages entering and leaving two of the three waste transfer stations used by the Authority.

Landfill disposal

During 2007/08, the Authority reported sending approximately 290,000 tonnes of waste to landfill. The Authority's waste disposal contractor, London Waste, utilises a number of landfill sites and the Authority can ascertain where waste has been sent via the Gatehouse system. Data is not received directly from the landfills.

Overall, there were reasonable records to demonstrate collection of waste through to disposal.

5. Quality Assurance

During our visit we asked 3 questions about how the waste data was quality assured.

Some authorities have been accredited under ISO9000 (or equivalent) and their waste data may be covered under this accreditation. Alternatively other systems or processes have been adopted to ensure that the necessary checks are made in the waste data being collected by the Authority.

We want evidence of how the waste data is checked to make sure it is both accurate and consistent.

Systems of internal control

The bulk of waste data is obtained via the Gatehouse system. The Gatehouse system is a database linked to all London Waste weighbridge stations, and is the main source of data for NLWA. Weighbridge data is extracted electronically and no hardcopy weighbridge tickets are retained. During the visit it seemed that the Authority's contractor, London Waste, could take weeks to make corrections reflecting tonnage amendments, and inaccurate historical data is often not updated at all.

Quality assurance of LATS data is undertaken by the Section Manager and one Service Information officer.

Although the Authority is able extract weighbridge data from Gatehouse, in order to verify the accuracy of the data used for LATS purposes, the data is compared against invoices received from London Waste. This is called the 'borough tonnage reconciliation'. The borough tonnage reconciliation is carried out on a monthly and quarterly basis to capture any data changes that occur throughout a quarter. The borough tonnage reconciliation is performed to ensure the Authority and its WCAs have accurate and up to date data.

The Authority can upload details of vehicles the WCAs use to collect waste – this ensures that the Gatehouse system will log the correct vehicles and origins of waste. WCAs are supplied with weighbridge data from Gatehouse to check against their driver log sheets to ensure the number of times a vehicle has passed over a weighbridge is recorded accurately. During the visit it appeared that the Authority has, at times, struggled to receive confirmation from the WCAs that this check has been completed.

The Authority also verifies the accuracy of Gatehouse system data by undertaking a vehicle monitoring survey over the course of each month. Approximately 1200 vehicles are sampled each month across three waste transfer stations used by London Waste. An officer observes vehicles crossing a site weighbridge and manually logs the registration, time and any related comments. This information is compared against invoice data received from London Waste (which ultimately originates from Gatehouse). Any anomalies are initially raised with the relevant WCA that operates the vehicle, and are then referred to London Waste for resolution. This type of quality check is particularly good, bearing in mind that hardcopy weighbridge tickets are not received.

Written working procedures for quality assurance of data were evident during the visit.

Working arrangements with contractors

The Authority has the ability to extract data from London Waste's Gatehouse database. When errors in the Gatehouse data are identified, it seems London Waste do not make corrections in the timescale required by the Authority. It would be good if the Authority could agree with London Waste a system whereby the Authority is able to quickly amend Gatehouse data.

The Authority does not receive weighbridge data direct from landfills. Via the Gatehouse system, the Authority is informed of the tonnages of waste they have sent to landfills through London Waste. The Authority does not seem to have confidence that the tonnages are correctly apportioned. Subsequently, a process based on tonnages input to transfer stations is applied to calculate the tonnages to landfill the Authority believes they are responsible for. It is strongly recommended that the Authority implement a system whereby weighbridge data from landfills can be checked against data supplied by London Waste.

WDA and WCA working arrangements

On a monthly and quarterly basis, the Authority sends each WCA details of their collected waste that goes through London Waste weighbridges. Two spreadsheets are sent; one to cover household and non-household residual waste, another to cover recyclates. Each WCA returns the recyclates spreadsheet having completed details about recyclates disposed through their own contracts.

The Authority regularly carries out a recycling credit audit to verify the recycling credit claims made by WCAs. Data sent to WCAs from reprocessors of recyclables is checked against the claims made by WCAs. When an audit is undertaken it covers 40% of the data for the main waste streams. Records of the audits were seen during the visit. It was extremely good to see the Authority was performing this sort of check for recycling data received from the WCAs. It was, however, unclear why data reported on WDF by WCAs appeared discrepant to data supplied to the Authority on the recycling credit claims. It is recommended that the Authority arrange to check data entered on WDF by the WCAs as part of the quality assurance process.

Risk management

It was evident that working procedures for quality assuring waste data were well supported by written guidance documents.

The section manager is currently training a senior member of staff for management duties to minimise risk in the event of key staff leaving.

Key LATS data is stored on servers with shared access and was found to be well organised during the visit.

6. Reporting Data

During our visit we asked 6 questions about how the waste data was reported. For the purposes of LATS, we are only interested in data submitted to us via WasteDataFlow (WDF), but we recognise that waste data is also submitted through other systems e.g. Flycapture.

In order for us to carry out our monitoring role under LATS effectively, we must receive accurate, timely and consistent data from authorities. We need to have confidence that the data being entered into WDF is timely, correct and being submitted under the correct questions. There are currently around 60 questions in WDF, which need to be completed quarterly by the Authority.

In two tier areas, there are a number of Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) within a constituent Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) area. Some WDAs enter data on behalf of their constituent WCAs, but in most cases the WDAs rely on the accuracy of data entered by their WCAs for the purposes of LATS.

We want to see evidence of how data is submitted into WDF, how many people can use the system and the checks that are being made to authorise the data.

Systems of internal control

Following the completion of quality assurance checks, a series of spreadsheets are used to calculate the total amount of waste the Authority has sent to landfill, incineration, and for recycling. The service information officer enters data on WDF with the aid on an in-house guidance document. The section manager checks the data before approving the submission. Random checks of data reported on WDF against data extracted from Gatehouse (following the tonnage reconciliation) largely revealed no discrepancies.

During 2007/08, to calculate the amount of collected commercial waste for each WCA, a percentage split is applied to the total amount of collected residual waste for each individual WCA. This provides the commercial and household element of total collected waste. The percentage splits were established in 1995 following a commercial waste survey. Although the WDA supplies each WCA with the calculated amount of collected commercial waste each quarter, during the visit it appeared that WCAs had not been using the percentage splits consistently with the WDA when reporting on WDF.

From April 2008, a new method for calculating the amount of commercial waste will be used. WCAs will inform the Authority how many bins or bags they have sold to commercial customers. A conversion factor will be applied to establish the weight from the volume of the bins or bags. It was good to see that the Authority has reviewed the method for calculating the amount of collected commercial waste, and has employed a method which is intended to be more accurate.

Training and consistency

The section manager and information service officer appeared to be very familiar with the use of WDF. A WDF manual is owned, and has been updated and supplemented with additional guidance. It seemed the Authority has also visited some of its constituent WCAs to provide training to encourage consistent use of WDF.

The Authority has developed a comprehensive guidance document for reporting data on WDF. The guidance clearly explains what data should be input against each question in WDF, and where the data can be found in the Authority's filing system. We particularly liked this guidance, and found it an extremely pragmatic way to ensure reporting on WDF is accurate and consistent.

Timeliness of data and validation

Quarter 3 2007/8 – data for this period was submitted and validated within deadlines.

Quarter 4 2007/8 – data for this period was submitted and validated within deadlines.

There have been no requests from the Authority to amend its validated data (known as Level 35 Rollback).

7. Partnerships

During our visit we asked 4 questions about consistency, best practice and partnerships in managing LATS data.

Partnership working

The Authority and its seven constituent WCA meet five times per annum for a technical officer group meeting, LATS is always on the agenda. The Authority evidently has regular contact with the WCAs to resolve any issues related to collecting LATS data.

With regard to the disparate reporting of recyclates, household, and commercial waste between the Authority and its WCAs; it is strongly recommended the Authority establish firm agreements to ensure LATS data is reported in a consistent way by its WCAs.

Annex A – Scope and methodology

Aims

To establish a consistent and transparent approach for the LATS compliance audit which is firm and fair. To ensure that our resources to monitor local authority compliance are used proportionately, efficiently and effectively. We are carrying out compliance audits in order to have confidence that the data within WasteDataFlow¹ (WDF) is accurate, consistent and wherever possible has been collected, entered and authorised using best practice.

Context

We have a five year plan, 'Making it Happen', that lays out our environmental targets. The 'Regulatory Book' explains how modern regulation will deliver environmental objectives in the most efficient and effective manner. This document explains how we will monitor LATS using compliance audits.

Our role in LATS is to monitor the performance of local authorities against their annual allowance allocations. We report on whether local authorities have succeeded in diverting biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) away from landfill to meet our annual allocations. In order to monitor the performance of local authorities, we must have confidence that the municipal waste data they supply in WDF is robust, accurate and consistent. We need to assess the effectiveness of the local authorities processes for collecting, checking and reporting data.

We used a risk-based approach to allocate resources for compliance auditing of all 121 local authorities. The criteria we use for risk assessment will include activities we believe are the most likely to impact on the quality of the data they report.

The risk based criteria

Section 1 – reporting

- Does the data reach level 30 on time?
- How good is data entry and authorisation?
- Does data get entered on Flycapture on time?
- Has the Authority received a formal notice under LATS?

Section 2 – validation

- Is data validated and reach level 35 on time?
- Have there been requests to change validated data?

Section 3 – communication

- What's the frequency and nature of calls to WDF helpdesk?
- What's Enviros's view of the Authority's response to validation?

¹ WasteDataFlow is a web-based data collection system for municipal waste, which is used throughout the UK

Section 4 – robustness of data

Has the total amount of MSW reported varied in the last few years?

Has the total BMW reported varied since the same quarter last year?

Is there variation in the recycling rates quoted year on year?

Are MRFs being used?

Is MSW being exported?

How does data compare between WDF and Flycapture?

Section 5 – strategic context

Is the authority a key player in MSW production?

Section 6 – training

How many people within the authority have been trained to use WDF?

How often do WDF contacts change?

We shortlisted 24 local authorities for a site visit in 2006/7 reporting year. In 2007/8 we undertook our second round of visits and all visits will be completed by the end of 2008/9. We spent between 1-2 days with each authority, asking a range of questions and asking them to provide evidence of their processes and systems.

List of abbreviations

BMW	Biodegradable Municipal Waste
CAS	Civic Amenity Site
EfW	Energy from Waste (thermal treatment with energy recovery)
HWRC	Household Waste Recycling Centre (also called CAS)
MBT	Mechanical Biological Treatment
MRF	Materials Recovery Facility
MSW	Collected Municipal Waste
UA	Unitary Authority
WCA	Waste Collection Authority
WDA	Waste Disposal Authority
WDF	WasteDataFlow

Report Ends