



29<sup>th</sup> May 2009

**Circular No. WPRR 04/09**

**Update on progress in respect of implementing the waste management provisions of the Programme for Government**

I am directed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to update you on progress in respect of implementing the waste management provisions of the Programme for Government, and in particular the commitment to conduct an international review of waste management policy.

The Programme for Government makes major commitments in relation to national waste policy. In particular, there is an emphasis on moving away from the high reliance on incineration foreseen in the National Development Plan and reflected in the regional waste management plans for which the local authorities have statutory responsibility, generally operating in regional groupings. In this regard it is intended that there be an increased commitment to the use of alternative technologies, including those known as mechanical and biological treatment.

The Department's Statement of Strategy 2008-2010, which is published on the Department's web site and which was noted by Government in July 2008, states:

"The new Programme for Government indicates a further development of waste and resource policy in the direction of sustainability, in particular, to move away from mass burn incineration towards alternative technologies and to minimise waste going to landfill, subject to the outcome of the review of the waste management strategy. This major international review being undertaken by the Department will address how best to implement waste prevention and minimisation, and the emergence of new technologies in waste management."

### Progress on the review of waste management strategy

Consultants have been retained to conduct the study of waste policy options which will underpin the conclusion of the overall review later this year. This work is well advanced and a series of interim reports has been considered by the Review Steering Group. It is considered that the study itself should be concluded on time, July 2009, with policy proposals being brought to Government shortly thereafter.

### Interim policy measures

While this work is on target, it is acknowledged that progress towards meeting Ireland's targets under the Landfill Directive and the requirements of the recently adopted Waste Framework Directive cannot wait. Therefore the Minister is pressing ahead with key initiatives which are compatible with the overall objectives of the review in order to meet the targets. These include:

- increase in the landfill levy and the introduction of a levy on incineration;
- roll-out of brown bin collections;
- intensifying efforts to promote at source/home composting;
- supporting small-scale local composting initiatives;
- encouraging access to waste streams for composting/anaerobic digestion, recycling and other processes high on the waste hierarchy; and,
- source segregated collection of commercial biowaste.

The Minister has also initiated a Strategic Environmental Assessment on proposed policy directions to the EPA and local authorities which would (in relation to their functions under the Waste Management Acts and any instruments made thereunder), *inter alia*, require the recipients to:

- limit incineration capacity to ensure that waste is not drawn to incineration which could have been dealt with by recycling or other methods higher up the waste hierarchy;
- refrain from exercising their powers in such a way as to direct waste to landfill or incineration.

The proposed policy direction is subject to consultation with both the public and all stakeholders, including local authorities.

The above are interim actions intended to help meet the Landfill Directive targets while implementing the commitments in the Programme for Government. The Minister considers that they are in line with the policies emerging from the overall review.

Queries in relation to this Circular may be addressed to the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

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