

Why do we need more facilities to treat our rubbish?

Fact Sheet 1

Can't we continue to send our rubbish to landfill?



There are a number of reasons why we cannot continue to send our rubbish to Landfill:

Number of available landfill sites is reducing

Landfill sites in use at the moment are nearly full and there are very few areas available for new ones to be created.

Restrictions on sending rubbish to landfill

Disposing of green waste and kitchen waste (biodegradable waste) in a landfill site can cause methane, which is one of the most powerful greenhouse gases to be produced. This is why targets have been set by the EU (European Union) to help us to divert the biodegradable (green waste and kitchen waste) part of our household rubbish away from landfill. We must meet these targets or we will face high fines for every tonne of waste we continue to send to landfill.

Growing Rubbish Mountain

Historically in Wales we have dumped most of our rubbish in landfill sites. One of the main reasons for doing this is because landfill is very cheap. Landfill tax is paid to deposit rubbish on the site and in the UK landfill tax is approximately £14 per tonne of rubbish, whereas in Europe it is around £40 per tonne. Landfill tax will increase greatly over the next few years to help us to make a move away from landfill, but every year we are also producing more and more rubbish. This means that we are going to have to find a way to treat it all.

Risk of Pollution

Landfill sites are strictly regulated by the Environment Agency, but in the past when controls weren't so tight, landfills could be a source of nuisance to neighbours causing odours,

flies, litter and noise in the surrounding area. Pollution incidents have also happened with chemicals (leachate) from the rotting rubbish leaking into the surrounding land or water.

We are losing valuable resources

By burying our rubbish we are losing all of our valuable resources. There are lots of materials that end up in landfill sites that could be recycled. If they go to landfill they are lost forever. For example, it takes 4 tonnes of raw material (bauxite) to make 1 tonne of aluminium. Bauxite mining in countries such as Ghana & Jamaica are increasing the destruction of the rainforest. Why would we send aluminium cans to landfill when we can recycle them and help to protect the environment?

If we can't send our rubbish to Landfill what can we do?

There are a number of different options for dealing with our waste. We need to turn our **rubbish into a resource!** Firstly we need to try and limit the amount of rubbish we produce by thinking about the products we buy – do you need another plastic bag, or can you take your cloth bag to the supermarket? Secondly we need to reuse the materials we are ready to throw away – can someone else use your old bicycle? And thirdly we need to try and recycle and compost as much as we possibly can.

Environment Strategy for Wales 2006: "We aspire to there being no additional landfill for municipal waste in Wales by 2026."

What happens to the rubbish that's left?

There are a number of options for the waste that remains:

1. **Biological Treatments**
 - In vessel Composting
 - Windrow Composting
 - Anaerobic Digestion
2. **Mechanical Biological Treatments (MBT)**
 - MBT
 - BMT
3. **Thermal Treatments**
 - Energy from Waste (EfW) – including CHP
 - Advanced Thermal Treatment (ATT)
 - Pyrolysis
 - Gasification

These are all ways of trying to gain value from your rubbish, whether it's by turning it into compost or by heating it so that electricity and heat can be produced from it. You can find out

more about waste treatments by reading the other fact sheets in this series.

So why do we need more facilities?

We have relied on sending our waste to landfill for many years. We now need to find other options for our waste and fast! In order to meet our targets to stop sending waste to landfill we need to start using other facilities right away. It is estimated that 600 waste treatment facilities will need to be operational by 2010 so that Wales can meet its obligations under the EU Landfill Directive (1999/31/EC). At the moment only around 250 facilities are in place. Considering that new facilities will need to be designed, planned and built, the clock is definitely ticking!



What can I do?

You are producing the waste that your local authority has to deal with and treat. To help your local authority and the environment there are a number of ways you can make a difference. Firstly by thinking about the rubbish that you produce at the moment – how can you **reduce** it? Can you **recycle** or **compost** more of your waste? Secondly, take an interest in what your local authority is considering. They will be making some tough decisions soon and how your waste will be treated over the next 20 to 30 years. Take part in the consultation process, find out more about what they are considering and tell your neighbours! We all produce rubbish and we need to start taking responsibility for how we dispose of it. To find out more about what your local authority are considering get in touch with them or read their proposed waste strategy. Your opinion counts!



For additional information visit:
www.wasteawarenesswales.org.uk

