

TAO Forum

Date: 4 September 2018

Time: 10am -12.00pm

Location: teleconference

Present: Alec McNeil (Marlborough District Council); Charlotte Catmur (Hamilton City Council); David Stephenson (Tasman District Council); Donna Peterson (Invercargill City Council); Emma Richardson (Wellington Region); Natasha Hickmott (Palmerston North City Council); Roderick Boys (Wellington City Council); Ross Trotter (Christchurch City Council); Sophie Mander (Queenstown Lakes District Council); Parul Sood (Auckland Council);

Facilitator: Sarah Pritchett (WasteMINZ)

Apologies: Jenny Marshall (WasteMINZ)

No.	Agenda item	Action point	Person responsible	Deadline	Status
1.	Welcome Introduction Apologies	Jenny Marshall is ill, so Sarah Pritchett is taking the minutes			
2.	Minutes	No actions to follow up.			
3.	Proposed Submission on Plastic Bag Ban – feedback from the committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A submission on the MFE’s plastic bag phase out is being written by the Behaviour Change Steering Committee, based on feedback from the WasteMINZ survey that went out to all members (a summary of which was sent to members of this group as pre-reading).			

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland’s submission is nearly finalised, as is Wellington’s. Christchurch’s is being presented to councillors Wednesday 5th September. • After debating and discarding H&S issues (within TAs) regarding the need for plastic bags for some items, as only carrier bags (with handles) are part of the proposed phase out, there is a general consensus from TAs that all retailers should be covered by the ban. • Rod reported back that his presentation of Wellington’s submission to councillors went well and they wanted stronger language, encouraging the government to consider mandatory requirements for all packaging, including: improved labelling requirements; standardisation of materials used, collected and recycled; and the requirement for a proportion of recycled content (ideally New Zealand sourced) to be used in all manufactured and imported packaging. WCC will also submit that the proposed phase out extend to ALL oxo-degradable bags of any thickness and for any use. • There was some discussion about how it will work in the communities where the cost of buying reusable bags may be a barrier. One suggestion was for a free allocation of 10 bags to start, but Councils are unsure where the cost for this lies and how it would be managed. Wellington is also asking for NZ specific labelling of options for end of life disposal to be printed on bags. <u>Rod will send a link to Wellington’s submission.</u> • Countdown has some good initiatives already with a bag for life costing \$1 which can be returned when it is no longer fully intact to be recycled and replaced with another bag. Natasha’s local Countdown has already phased out plastic bags and was giving away a reusable bag with every \$75 spent on groceries. 	Rod	ASAP	
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4.	Nigel Clarke update from MfE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nigel Clarke provided an update on the national resource recovery project and noted there have been a few issues with recycling lately and mixed reports on how bad it actually is. • A taskforce on the Chinese National Sword policy was established in June to provide information to Minister Sage about which areas may need central government intervention. • An initial meeting has been held with external working groups made up of representatives of local government and industry, with another two being held on 06 and 07 Sep. • Reports were commissioned from Eunomia and MRA Consulting to provide a situational analysis (Eunomia) and intervention options (MRA). Both of these reports will be presented on 06 and 07 Sep and will form the basis of a briefing to the Minister to articulate the current situation in NZ and the potential options MfE may adopt to address the situation. • Nigel believes potential projects that may come out of this process include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recycling standards • harmonisation of packaging • an overview of the different council contracts that are currently in place and which models are preferable • identifying opportunities for onshore-processing • a cost benefit analysis of improving collection systems and/or processing. • More will be known about the contents of the briefing after Friday when feedback is provided by the working groups. The estimated timeframe for the briefing to the Minister is within 2-3 weeks. 	•		
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nigel acknowledged that there will be no quick fixes as all issues e.g. processing and recycling standards would involve a fair length of time to establish. While MfE is very aware that councils are facing financial constraints and that in Australia for example the government has offered financial assistance Nigel noted that these funds have come out of existing levies and was on an application basis so therefore this is not a panacea. • Emma raised a concern regarding the quick turnaround for options to be considered and put before the Minister as not all TAs will have had a chance to be heard via the working group. Nigel noted that MfE had three staff contacting every council in the country over the last few weeks and in addition Nigel had visited 28 councils recently with a focus on particularly affected ones and reassured the TA Forum that these views have been taken into account. In addition, the LG working group has a representative for each region and these people are expected to consult the other councils within their regions. • Nigel confirmed that recent announcements about e waste and tyre product stewardship are part of MfE's priority work programme which includes extending the landfill levy, improving the collection of waste data and investigating priority product stewardship programmes and regulations beyond those. • At this stage the levy work will address the landfill classification system, for e.g., the classification of cleanfill is a misnomer. There are currently 5 classes of landfills, so the work will look at which of these should have the levy applied to them. Minister Parker has retained responsibility for this work programme. • In terms of recycling harmonisation Australia has been running a parallel process and a report has recently been produced on this process. 			
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		<p>However, the MRA Consulting report will shed more light on what direction this work could take.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nigel thinks the reports will be eventually available to the public. 			
4.	Planning TAO Forum at conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister has indicated she would like to have two hours' time with the TAO forum, so the Forum will run for 6 hours. • Nigel Clarke did not yet know what Minister Sage would want to speak to the TAO on at the conference. • With regard to the information from Nigel Clarke (above) the general feeling is that MfE should be focusing on processing rather than standards or contracts, so it would be good to prepare some information on what work has been done and what data has been collected to present it to the Minister at the TAO Forum. • Paul Evans will follow up with Minister Sage. • That leaves the committee with a 2-hour session and a 1 ¾ hour session to plan. • Key topics which could be discussed are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the waste data framework – what progress have councils made, what challenges are they facing? • Addressing the China situation – what aspects of this would we want to discuss? • Standardising collections as per agenda item below • Models of CDS • LFHW – we will have evaluated the success of the campaign and will be able to report on the results 			

		<p>Other potential topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LFHW – discuss how this has gone and how to keep funding it if the Rethinking Rubbish and Recycling proposal is not accepted (as this includes a maintenance fund for LFHW) • Discuss whether the current collaborative fund is adequate or needs to have more put towards it? • Alec could potentially present something on CDS which goes beyond a sales pitch and has some good data behind it. • Improving our carbon costing processes during options assessments for Council services and infrastructure. If we are to move towards a low carbon/emissions economy we need to better measure our existing/potential carbon outputs. Perhaps the Associate Minister could update us on progress on developing the Zero Carbon Bill? If councils start adopting the tools to measure carbon/energy of today’s activities and services, measuring the outputs of potential future services, then councils will be in a better place to adapt to low carbon choices. This could also include a discussion on carbon offsetting options and footprint impacts e.g. composting and glass recycling. Most councils probably do not have a good understanding of how to include carbon costs in accounting. 			
5	<p>Mixed Plastics 3-7</p> <p>Is anyone getting pushback from their waste contractors no longer wanting to collect them?</p>	<p>Parul: Auckland – the contractor hasn’t mentioned it explicitly, but pricing has impacted on profitability.</p> <p>David: Tasman – the contractor is Smart Environmental, but they have a cost sharing arrangement 50/50 which means they share the pain along with the gains. There has been no pushback but an ongoing dialogue regarding pricing</p>			

		<p>issues. Fibre is more of an issue for revenue, whereas with plastic the issue is storage and flammability.</p> <p>Charlotte: Waikato – Hamilton doesn't collect mixed plastics</p> <p>Emma: Wellington – two staff have recently come back from Malaysia and are optimistic about the Malaysian market as an alternative to China, especially for 3-7s.</p> <p>Ross: Christchurch – plastics are optically sorted so are left with the coloured plastics (including PET). There is a concern with the volume of fibre and loss of revenue.</p> <p>Donna: Southland – there has been a significant pushback from the contractor who is changing from a Social Enterprise model to a hard-commercial model and has asked for a 50% fee increase in order to develop further processing to get a cleaner product. Also struggling with the drop-in fibre prices.</p> <p>Sophie: Queenstown – still has 12 months left of contract with Smart Environmental so they are basically just making it work for now so will be interesting to see what new negotiations will bring.</p> <p><u>Parul asked if any councils have had companies approaching them regarding using mixed plastic in concrete or is anyone investigating other alternatives?</u></p> <p>Natasha: Palmerston North – Higgins have approached them regarding taking plastics to mix with asphalt and concrete.</p> <p>David: Tasman – someone has approached them regarding a pyrolysis proposal and David will encourage them to apply to the WMF. Thinks the resources poured into Flight plastics may be volume driven rather than because of a lack of overseas market and maybe it would have been better for MfE to focus on</p>			
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		<p>increasing pre-processing capacity for Flight and Compsec to increase quality of recyclables.</p> <p>Ross: Christchurch - have had some approaches but no business plans as such and nothing that is really viable. Fulton Hogan have been trailing using HDPE in asphalt trial, but mixed plastic is more difficult because of the different chemicals. Would rather find a use for mixed plastics than a plastic that has a market such as HDPE. Is slightly concerned that MfE are focusing on low hanging fruit, ie. PET has never really been difficult to find a market for but lots of money has been poured into Flight Plastics.</p> <p>Natasha: Palmerston North – don't have optical sorters and not all PET looks like PET, so the speed of the conveyer belt makes it difficult for sorters to pick out all PET. As a result, they only send PET bottles to Flight (not trays).</p>			
6	<p>Addressing Contamination – prereading sent Thursday 30 Aug</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to ensure that the public can easily find out what is and isn't accepted for recycling in their region. • Are there any opportunities to harmonise what can 	<p>Harmonisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The discussion centred around the fact that harmonising the recycling would be difficult due to different recycling contractors and their requirements. Some more research may be needed to find out why some things can and can't be collected and how recycling contractors' decisions are made regarding these. • Some contracts are for 10 years so the best way forward may be to follow the WRAP recommendation of having a template contract that has certain criteria that all TAs have agreed on for consistency and when the contract comes up for renewal this template contract is used to renegotiate terms. Maybe there could be a list of priorities as to what councils can move towards as contracts are renewed. • With regard to the glass in, glass out issue MfE is very interested in this. From an industry perspective there is a big cost involved in separating 			

	<p>and can't be accepted for recycling to enable national messaging and behaviour change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any items which aren't economically viable for recycling which councils should no longer be accepting? 	<p>glass at collection. For Palmerston North a CDS would potentially enable glass to be kept out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National messaging: A national app that can be used throughout the country but with council specific information would be useful. For example, if you are in Palmerston North you choose that as your area and then it gives you information specific to that area. This could be complemented with a website and both could be promoted by councils and MfE. Some kind of national platform was included in the in the Rethinking Rubbish and Recycling application to the WMF. Councils who have apps are happy with them – Christchurch's has 45,000 users - but it is Christchurch specific so other councils in the Canterbury region cannot use it. <p><u>Uneconomical items and specific issues:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southland: Southland has 4 different TAs from small to quite large. They have just completed a benchmarking exercise with Tonkin and Taylor on the return price. Currently they are paying a lot without much return for recycling, and the contractor wants 50% more on top of what they are getting with 1 year left on the contract. Councillors are starting to ask why bother recycling if the cost is not worth it however Donna points out ratepayers are still paying for it, so the councillors have accepted it must keep going. The recycler is saying he needs to further process to get a better price and meet transport costs. In Southland it is getting really expensive and they don't necessarily have the volume to make it work. Donna has been discussing this issue with Cath from Dunedin who is on the MfE working group, so she is raising these issues on Southland's behalf. • Fragility of current system: When recycling is going well the system should work as it does with farmers and milk prices. When prices are high farmers put money aside for when prices aren't so high. Councils should 			
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		<p>have a similar mindset. The current system is alarmingly fragile, so it is better for councils and contractors to share the risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic materials: Fibre is an issue everywhere, but plastics is a big issue at the household level and there is a lot of emotion around it so therefore it needs to keep being collected. The Callaghan Institute have noted that in terms of google searches plastic pollution is right at the top for NZ and Australia. <p>Potential solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint processing facilities: David suggested it might be more feasible to have a joint processing facility in the South Island and Ross indicated that Christchurch is happy to have these conversations. • Christchurch has a report on the impact on ratepayers of the increased CCC money going to subsidise EcoCentral. • This is about to be presented to councillors and then out for public consultation. With the increased cost of recycling and issues of volume and scale more direction is needed from the Council so councillors are being asked what investigative work needs to be done ahead of the WMMP next year. • Product stewardship. Alec noted that mandatory product stewardship would provide cost assistance and help with local recovery options. 			
7.	Finalising the strategic plan-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was confirmed that the standardisation referred to in the strategic plan refers to consistency across symbols, colours, signage, messaging, data and reporting (but not procurement and contracts). 			
8.	Finalising the work plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was general agreement that it would be valuable to collect information to provide transparency around the supply chain and to ensure the markets are fair and equitable. Specific information needed 			

	<p>One suggested action is “Investigate and report on the supply chain of TA recyclables” Do we have time to do this? How would we do this?</p>	<p>includes where the materials are going to and who is processing them. Any barriers to collecting this information such as confidentiality issues will need to be identified. <u>Such information could perhaps form part of new contract specifications?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would also be good to know if materials are coming into NZ that can't be recycled, what kind of information other councils have access to and why has it traditionally been so difficult to access this information. 			
9.	<p>Update on CDS Working Group</p> <p>How can councils support this work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alec reported back that a lot of the conversation within the CDS group has centred on lobbying. Marty Hoffman from Zero Waste Network and Holly from the Kiwi Bottle Drive are particularly active in this area and are building public awareness. The Kiwi Bottle Drive petition has nearly reached its target. • The CDS group has agreed in principle to the viability of CDS and are now addressing issues around messaging to the general public and unpacking why people are still resistant to it and how to address these issues. It has gone beyond a cost benefit analysis and is seen as part of the wider conversation about Product Stewardship. While the language of a CDS has a focus on deposit the overall operating cost is actually built into the system as is the redistribution of these costs. • An infographic is being finalised and Alec will bring it back to this group when it is ready. • With the momentum behind a plastic free NZ the timing is good for CDS especially if it is understood that it is not just a bottle scheme but can include all containers. It is essential to shift the cost back to the production and consumption side and away from the ratepayer. The key is to get the appropriate level of information out to the public so that momentum builds. 			

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a recent presentation to Wellington City Council Holly mentioned an overview of CDS around the world, which is really useful. The Wellington mayor Justin Lester has been approached by Holly to be the CDS champion and he may be interested. • There is no need to reinvent the wheel as many systems are out there already - Scotland has announced it will implement one. 			
10.	<p>Consultation on ETS http://www.mfe.govt.nz/consultation/ets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from the Disposal to Land Sector Group was <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is not a lot relating to the waste sector in here. If you go to Section 6 – questions to guide your feedback - there are some interesting ones in there though such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 to 11 – re fixed price option • 19 to 21 – re publishing of information • 31 – amend UEFs for errors • Not sure any of these warrant a sector response, though individual participants in the ETS may want to consider how the changes may affect them. • It looks like this is more about the trading process as opposed to how NZUs are calculated and applied. I think we would have put in a submission if it related to the latter. • ETS is emerging as a significant cost to landfill. For some TAs it is part of their job and for others it is a contractual obligation for landfill managers. See section 4 for suggestion on discussion of this at TAO forum. 			