

TAO Forum Steering Committee

Location: teleconference

Date: Friday 10 May 2019

Present: Alec McNeil (Marlborough District Council); David Stephenson (Tasman District Council); Jennifer Elliot (Wellington Region); Parul Sood (Auckland Council); Ross Trotter (Christchurch City Council); Sophie Mander (Queenstown Lakes District Council);

Facilitator: Jenny Marshall (WasteMINZ)

Apologies: Donna Peterson (Invercargill City Council); Natasha Hickmott (Palmerston North City Council); Charlotte Catmur (Hamilton City Council);

1. Meeting open, apologies and agenda
2. Update from the Ministry of the Environment - Roderick Boys on behalf of Nigel Donovan

New staff at MfE - Hono Tātaki - Resource Efficiency And Innovation:

- There is now a team in charge of compliance and monitoring. Scott Priestley is the new manager. Scott is a regulatory expert from Australia.
- Nigel Donovan has replaced Nigel Clarke at the Ministry of the Environment
- Roderick Boys - Senior Investment Analyst/Senior Analyst
- Theodore Banakas – Analyst also in compliance

If you need to contact MfE the best email to use is the Waste TA inbox waste.TA@mfe.govt.nz This is now being regularly checked and queries will be assigned to the correct Ministry staff member to follow up. If anyone has any questions relating to landfill operations or levy you are welcome to phone Nigel directly 0220833594 (Nigel Clarkes old number)

Waste levy:

- Compliance visits to Class1 Disposal Facility Operators (DFOs) to continue.
- Compliance visits to TA's for spending of quarterly payments as per WMMP's
- External Audits of TA & DFO's will continue where there is a concern over reporting performance or spend of levy money.
- Annual Waste disposal levy spend reports.
- All councils would have received another payment on 23 April.
- Monthly updates from OWLs to the MfE ongoing. No issues noted for Q1 reporting.

Waste Minimisation Fund:

- The next round opens 1st of May
- 4 key strategic outcomes for the 2019 funding round is online. <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/more/funding/waste-minimisation-fund/about-waste-minimisation-fund>

Waste Levy Expansion:

- WasteMINZ Technical disposal to land guidelines Revision 2 continues.
- Revision 2 focuses on classification work for Class 3 (Managed fill) and Class 4 (Controlled fill) definitions and waste acceptance criteria.
- Work is underway developing proposals to expand the waste disposal levy, as recommended by the 2017 review of the levy. This is subject to Cabinet approval. It is anticipated that consultation on this will occur around August-September 2019. Preparatory work underway at the moment includes landfill classification work, cost benefit analysis of alternative levy rates, and consideration of data needs.

National Resource Recovery:

- On Friday 10 May Eugenie Sage announced the National Resource Recovery program of work. This can be viewed here. It includes both the list of projects to be undertaken and also reports commissioned by the Ministry for the Environment. <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/waste/waste-and-government#improving>
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Product Stewardship

There is currently only one staff member at the Ministry working on product stewardship at this stage as the key focus is on the levy work and the National resource recovery

The Ministry has commissioned a circular economy sectorial analysis (Marianna Tyler is lead). The report will be shared and will look at a range of sectors including waste and resources, food and beverage, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, energy/water/transport and tourism i.e. much broader in scope than waste.

The Ministry is doing some work on waste to energy and this is still in progress but there is no timeline on this.

The Steering Committee noted that it would be good to have some timelines for when Ministry projects will be started or completed so that they can factor that into their work plans.

Amendment to Basel Convention

On Saturday morning, an amendment to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal was announced. From 1 January 2021, exporting countries will have to obtain consent for shipments of unrecyclable plastic waste. Currently exporters (typically from developed nations) can send lower-quality plastic waste to private entities in developing countries without getting approval from their governments.

The primary change for New Zealand's domestic plastic waste management would be that all imports or exports of contaminated plastic waste would require a permit. The EPA would manage the permitting system for plastic waste.

Sorted, uncontaminated, non-hazardous, plastic waste suitable for recycling would continue to be imported or exported without a permit. Mixed bales of plastics 3-7's are unlikely to meet this criteria.

Read the summary from the Guardian [here](#)

Read the official press release [here](#)

3. Review of progress to date on waste minimisation funding application – Rethinking Rubbish and Recycling.

Plastic Free July

- 24 councils have indicated interest in being involved in this campaign and are being sent regular updates
- A working group has been set up with representatives from councils, community sector and businesses

Main risks

- Getting the paperwork signed off by Ministry of the Environment in time so that we can spend the money
- No full-time communications resource allocated so campaign activities are being undertaken by volunteers- however the plus side is that there is more buy-in from those involved

Bin audits

- A supplier (Sunshine Yates) has been appointed to conduct the bin audits. The TAO Forum Steering Committee was asked to suggest companies who should be approached to undertake the project. Four companies were asked if they wished to bid for the work. Two companies indicated they did but only one company was able to complete the bid.

Decision: is the TAO Forum steering committee satisfied with the price quoted for undertaking the work? Yes. However, it needs to be conveyed to the supplier that this is the full and final price.

Note: a technical working group has been set up to work with the supplier on the finer details of how the audits will be conducted

- **Locations for the bin audits:** The locations for the bin audits need to reflect the types of recycling collection infrastructure available in New Zealand. The supplier has suggested four locations which may be suitable for the auditing of the bins

“It is recommended that Auckland, Hamilton, Dunedin, and Lower Hutt be included in the audit. Combined, these four territorial areas represent 43% of New Zealand’s population, and represent households that use:

- *refuse and recycling wheelie bins (Auckland),*
- *rates paid refuse bags, commingled recycling crates and paper in bags (Hamilton),*
- *user-pays refuse bags and alternate collections of glass in crates and commingled recycling in wheelie bins (Dunedin),*

- *user-pays refuse bags and commingled recycling crates (Lower Hutt)."*

The supplier has also included in the reporting the suggestion to record and report on the results by location. Reporting by location was not originally included in the RFP.

Several councils have contacted Jenny asking if they could be considered as an audit location. Some of those councils are not on the list of the four suggested locations.

The Ministry has also requested that the locations be a mix of rural and urban.

Decision: Agreement that the first priority in establishing which councils are audited is ensuring that the locations chosen represent the waste and recycling collection systems used by the majority of NZ's population and representative in terms of demographics. Yes

Feedback from the steering committee:

- Of the three councils chosen 3 use bags and only one-use bins can we get a better representation of councils who use wheelie bins for rubbish in the audit as sometimes capacity and pricing determines behaviour.
- None of the councils represent high tourist areas
- Does it cover a variety of different contractors?

These concerns will go to the working group for further discussion.

Decision: That the supplier not include reporting by region. If a chosen location wants reporting by region, they would need to pay for this themselves. Yes

If there are councils who are not chosen locations but would still like the research done and it can be done in a timeframe to be included in the national research, this would be of benefit as it would increase the sample size. Those councils would need to pay for the research.

In order to be equitable, it is suggested that if a chosen location would like a report by region that they would pay an amount which would include the cost of the supplier writing the report and an additional fee. This additional fee would be used to subsidise the cost of the audits for councils who are not chosen locations but are willing to pay and have their results included.

Decision: That if councils who are chosen locations want their own local report, they will pay for the cost of the report + an additional fee which will be used to subsidise those councils who aren't chosen locations and want the research done. Yes, as there is a significant benefit and financial saving in being a chosen location.

Decision: Should all councils who are participating in the collaborative fund be contacted to see if they wish to pay to have the research done? Yes, this opportunity should be offered to all councils to see who might be interested. However, the committee notes that Sunshine has the capacity to audit two additional locations if paid for by the council and include those results within the MfE timeframe. For a council where both rubbish and recycling are set out in the same week the cost of an audit is c\$23,000.

Currently the technical working group is made up of

- Stephanie Hill MfE
- Jenny Marshall WasteMINZ
- Sunshine Yates – contacted to undertake the work
- Marcus Braithwaite Auckland Council
- David Stephenson Tasman Council

To choose audit locations – David Stephenson will step aside and be replaced by Sophie Mander – Queenstown Lakes District Council for those meetings due to a conflict of interest. However, David will continue to be involved in the working group on how to undertake the audits data analysis etc.

Main risks

- Getting the paperwork signed off by Ministry of the Environment so we can begin the project
- Ensuring that there is a fair and transparent process in choosing the audit locations

Update on Recyclers working group – the six main recyclers have met and agreed on rules for the presentation of recycling. These will now be discussed at the Steering Committee and then presented at the TAO Forum in September.

4. Standardising recycling rules

- A working group of New Zealand’s six largest recyclers has been meeting to identify opportunities for national standardisation.
- The working group consists of EcoCentral; Envirowaste; OJ Fibre; Reclaim; Smart Environmental; Waste Management; Visy.
- The recyclers have met and agreed on all four opportunities to standardise presentation rules. These are listed below. The aim of the rules is to minimise the contamination of recyclables.

Process:

1. Discuss these presentation rules at the TAO Forum steering committee to see if there are any issues or concerns.
2. Convene a one-off meeting for smaller recyclers who aren’t part of the larger working group to get their input
3. Present the rules at the TAO Forum at conference.
4. Rules where agreement can be reached are adopted nationally and implemented

Rule 1 Washed, Rinsed or just “free of food”? Recyclers recommended rinse clean. The Steering Committee agreed with this recommendation

Rinse clean (see images below). The WG agreed that items need to be as clean as possible rather than just “free of food” but they don’t necessarily need to be “squeaky clean”

Issues caused by unclean recycling

- Recyclers agree that food contamination is contributing greatly to recyclables going to landfill (one recycler estimate was 20-30% of recyclables were food contaminated).
- Bottles with contents still in them is a big contamination issue. And when items are seen on the line with contents they are removed and sent to landfill
- Reduces the risk of rats and other vermin.

- Unpleasant for workers.
- Can damage machinery.

Potential messaging: “Rinse recycling clean”

How clean should my recycling be?

Yoghurt #3 Rinsed roughly	Yoghurt #4 Rinsed thoroughly
	
Baked beans #3 Rinsed roughly	Baked beans #4 Rinsed thoroughly
	

At least 3 (rinsed roughly) but preferably 4 (rinsed well).

Rule 2 No small plastics such as bread tags and straws in the recycling. The Steering Committee agreed with this recommendation

Issues caused by small items

- Small plastics are too difficult to pick out of a manual sort line
- Mechanical sort lines take paper, then glass out of the sort line first and small items end up with the glass due to the 55mm size of the holes in the trammel
- Very small items such as bread tags and straws have no commercial value and are difficult to bale for export
- Recyclers agreed that anything smaller than a single yoghurt container from a 6 pack or dip container is unlikely to actually be recycled.

Rule 3 Lids on, off or not accepted at all? Recyclers are recommending no lids.

- The Steering Committee was comfortable around not recycling small lids but were uncomfortable with larger lids not being recycled as such as tin lids and ice cream containers lids.
- Councils who currently accept lids for recycling are urged to talk to their recyclers to find out whether or not those lids are actually being recycled at the moment. The bin audits being undertaken as part of Rethinking Rubbish and Recycling will also show us what households are currently doing.
- 15 councils currently accept lids if left on; 14 accept lids but only if loose; 14 accept lids and don't mind if they are left on or not and 24 don't accept lids at all. So, this is clearly an area where standardization is needed.

Issues

- Lids get stuck in equipment, blow away in the wind or end up in the fines on the floor
- Some lids are made up of multiple materials which are impossible or uneconomic to separate
- Lids which are left screwed on may or may not get recycled anyway
- If lids are left off there is a better chance that the householder will empty out the contents reducing contamination.
- Approx. 700-1000 bottles with liquid in them get dumped per week

- Metal lids from jars may end up being recycled as scrap in some facilities but in others will be perceived as paper by the sorting machine
- Smaller lids slip through the trammel and end up contaminating glass
- Even larger lids such as ice cream containers can be problematic to recycle. Being two dimensional on a mechanised sort line they can end up being mistaken for paper and contaminate the paper recycling

Potential messaging: Lids off and put in rubbish bins

Rule 4 Squashed or not? Recyclers recommended not squashed.

Most of the steering committee uses wheelie bins and not crates for recycling so for them it was not an issue. Views of councils who do use crates for recycling need to be consulted, as items may blow away from crates if not squashed. Some councils have moved away from the wash and squash message.

Issues

- Automated MRFS need to see a 3D shape or they are perceived as 2d objects (i.e. paper) by optical sorters
- Squashed items that end up in the paper line are not salvaged
- Also, there is a limit to how much compaction items can have, and over-compaction is an issue. Therefore, it is better for residents to not overly squash their recycling.
- Councils may ask for residents to squash items to maximise recycling collected and reduce trucks needed for collections. But this could be a false saving if over-compacted items are ending up in landfill.

Potential messaging: No need to squash your recycling

5. Update on Love Food Hate Waste

51 councils are continuing to fund the Love Food Hate Waste campaign. A plan for the year has been agreed upon plus reporting measures. These will be circulated to the participating councils.

6. General business

- Sandy Beathcroft from Hutt City Council discovered an Eco Store container which says on the container to recycle, but there is no plastics identification code e.g. #2. Is there any move towards asking container manufacturers to code their containers? The committee agreed that this would be a good idea and they would discuss this in more detail the next time
- a. The Kiwi Bottle Drive is making a presentation to the Select Committee for the Environment calling for a container deposit scheme to be implemented. The TAO Forum Steering Committee was asked to write a letter of support. The Committee agreed to do so. Sarah Pritchett will draft up the letter and then send to the Committee for sign off.