



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

Monthly Environment Board Catch-Up

27th September 2022, 13:00-14:00

Notes

		ACTION OWNERS
1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>SR welcomed 2 members for the first time: Teresa Kirkham and Doug Wilkinson.</p>	
2.	<p>Current service issues, pressures and risks</p> <p>SR noted, like all others, WSCC are facing considerable inflationary pressures. The biggest current issue is recruitment and retention right across the authority,. The council are managing the financial situation for 23/24 but will have bigger issues beyond that ; looking to accelerate energy generations bidding into PSDS decarbonisation fund for 23 corporate buildings. Still lack of clarity from government on waste agenda and LNRS etc. Members of the ADEPT leadership team will meet with David Hill (Director General, Environment Rural and Marine, Defra) this Thursday, 29th September, and will share notes of that meeting in confidence. This is the first meeting since the new government and new Secretary of State, and we hope to get a feel for relative priorities of government. We know very little about Ranil Jayawardena (MP for Northeast Hampshire and previously UK Minister for International Trade) but as a district Councillor before becoming an MP he was not a fan of alternate weekly waste collections. Net zero 2050 policy appears to have been retained as government policy but not likely to be one of the highest priorities.</p> <p>David Dale informed that, although David Hill is not available to attend, he has organised for a senior colleague (Sally Randall, Director of Environmental Quality) from Defra to join the next ADEPT Environment Board quarterly meeting on 19th October to discuss what the priorities are likely to be.</p>	

Carolyn McKenzie reported the key thing from SCC is the PSDS funding for decarbonisation and the difficulty of trying to get the money spent by March 2023. Big issues with supply chain and procurement. More evidence of the need to simplify funding, make it more flexible and move away from year-on-year funding.

Peter Wiggins reinforced Carolyn's point as Gloucestershire will find it difficult to put in a bid for PSDS due to issues with installations of heat pumps. They have seen a four-fold increase in the cost of heat pumps and PV panels, and suppliers are sometimes unable to bid for work.

Steve Palfrey, Suffolk, added to Carolyn's point saying that they have been trying to get the message through that short term rounds of bidding funding is not the way. We also need to feed into BEIS and Defra that, with the cost-of-living crisis, now is the time to be spending on energy efficiency. This would be long term more cost-effective way rather than subsidising energy bills.

Carolyn noted that BEIS work on the basis that the more people tell them, the more of an issue it is to be addressed.

ACTION: Carolyn McKenzie to frame questions to send round to Board members to answer in relation to funding issues they are experiencing. Carolyn to compile an answer that reflects the broad views of ADEPT members.

CM

Sam Kennedy agreed with all being said and informed that Essex are writing a lobbying letter to BEIS to ask for an extension on funding bidding re the PSDS. Essex are only putting forward small-scale short-term schemes due to the short timescale for delivery. It's poor value for money for the public sector.

ACTION: Sam to share with Carolyn the letter from Essex to BEIS re. funding bidding extension request.

SK

Liz Small gave a view from Yorkshire that they have shared prosperity fund and have the same issue that they don't have final agreement to an investment plan. Yorkshire have this year's funding to spend by end-March and, alongside that, have rural prosperity funding too. Funding is great, but short time to spend it is not. There's a cost overrun and managing pressure. They have a number of levelling up bids going in and also potential growth projects. The council could be exposed if these growth projects come off with an overspend.

Landfill Settlements in Waste space:

A question arose whether councils were being impacted by Landfill Tax settlements. SR mentioned WSCC services are contracted out and so this is something that the contractor bears.

Steve Palfrey confirmed that most county council services are contracted out. Although, some have brought operations back in-house. This is more of an issue in collection and only a few examples can help on HWRC side. Hertfordshire would be a good council to talk to.

David Dale informed that the Waste Group share info on local experience on cost pressures effecting waste budgets. Lucinda sent data collected to date through to Hannah Bartram. Defra for Waste and BEIS for energy perhaps would be interested in working with ADEPT on this.

ACTION: Steve Palfrey/Hannah Bartram to discuss data on cost pressures effecting waste budgets. Steve to send round to ADEPT Environment Board, Waste Group and Defra.

SP/HB

On pay cost pressures, Doug Wilkinson, Enfield, haven't heard anything yet but noted that across London, including the Borough of Newham waste collection teams have been out on strike. Their union is pitching around the same ask. Doug is nervous that they haven't heard from the unions locally. It would be useful for all councils to keep in touch on this. Carolyn noted that 5 refuse collection authorities in Surrey have been out on strike. WSCC have also had a couple of RCAs on strike.

Working Groups

Waste – Steve Palfrey

The group last met on 15th Sept as a hybrid meeting. Key discussion items were:

- POPs – presentation and Q&A with Matthew Womersley (Environment Agency) regarding new guidance on handling and disposal of POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants) in soft furnishing – must be kept separate from other waste and sent to EfW for disposal. LAs have been asked to confirm compliance by 01/01/2023.

The Environment Agency seems to be listening and have recently gone public. Steve clarified that the substance in question is a few different chemicals that have the group name of POPs (e.g. brominated fire retardants).

- ADEPT Resources and Waste Policy Position Statement – key points discussed as part of updating in time for ADEPT autumn conference.

Key issues:

- Inflation – waste contract/service inflation is very high and most LAs are expecting big budget gaps for 2023/24
- Paralysis through uncertainty - still waiting for DEFRA to publish responses to consultations on Consistency and Deposit Return Scheme (consultations closed in Jun and Jul 2021!!). Will then require secondary legislation, guidance etc. squeezing time for implementation and adding cost and/or delay. Had a meeting with Chris Preston, Deputy Director, the civil Servants don't know what the political direction is at this stage. Charging for DIY waste – clear that there's some influential voices saying it's a good idea, but we are putting the opposite argument. Gov to publish response in Autumn (within next 3-4 months).
- Concern that key policies such as EPR scheme for packaging waste will be delayed further / watered down in light of cost-of-living crisis and change in political direction.
- POPs – EA intent is right, i.e. destroy POPs through incineration. Big concerns for LAs and contractors regarding timeframe and separation requirements. Many LAs don't currently send bulky waste to EfW and plant operators won't want more of this material (high CV and potential to cause blockages). Most HWRCs won't have space for an additional container for soft furnishings so LAs will have to limit acceptance to larger sites and/or displace a recycling stream. Cost and impracticality of separation for bulky collections, transfer stations etc. LA Waste Networks and ESA (Waste Cos) calling for more pragmatic approach.
- DIY Waste – DEFRA published proposals in April 2022 to prevent LAs from charging for acceptance of DIY waste at HWRCs. Decision/outcome expected to be announced in Autumn 2022. If implemented this could add c.£100m to LA costs, and consultation stated New Burdens doctrine would be waived!

Energy & Clean Growth – Carolyn McKenzie

Last meeting had been postponed. Key issues currently:

- Funding streams, how to implement PSDS3 and supply chain issues.
- Changes with sustainable warmth funding and move from programmes before that.
- A lot of discussion around data and how we are counting our carbon in terms of targets. Patrick took away to look at.
- A little bit of angst around energy hubs, variable support depending on location in country. Unease of not getting what we need.

Flood and Water Management – Max Tant/Alys Bishop

- Mapping challenges associated with potential government changes to create a SUDS approval and adoption body (SAB) within local authorities, more from gov expected in the Autumn.
- The above is set against a background of recruitment issues and

turnover of staff within flood specialist roles in local authority, increasing pressure on the wider Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) role and delivery.

- The above two risks to flood capacity within local authorities would do well to be considered and mitigated at a more national level.
- There have been recent changes to national planning policy guidance (NPPG) to strengthen flood policies for new development, we are exploring the reach of these.
- There is an emerging Environment Agency produced guidance document on watercourse management and regulation which we are working to influence, to ensure it does not contradict the delivery of the LLFA role in watercourse consents and enforcements on non-EA rivers.

Natural Capital & Heritage – Liz Small

Next working group rearranged to 13th October. Draft agenda to discuss LNRS and BNG with a couple of speakers lined up. Waiting for tech guidance and new burdens funding.

Current potential topics to be discussed:

- Hedgerow Regulations - Lauren Bradley, Agricultural Regulatory Reform Co-ordination, Defra. Defra checking in on how enforcement was carried out.
- Environment Act Biodiversity Duty - National Biodiversity Division, Defra.
- NE's All England Strategic Mapping Tool and how this links with LNRS.
- GI Standards from NE –how we engage within this priority.
- Nature Recovery Network from NE/Defra.
- Traffic on nutrient neutrality.
- Discussion on ELMs and how it will be changed or implemented.

Have had shared discussion on technical consultation on the biodiversity metric. Won't be an ADEPT response. Some LAs have responded. David Sutherland advised that the proposed metric has a key issue to do with the location of BNG and offsetting, it should be on-site or as close as possible, developers should not be able to offset in different locations with lower land values.

ACTION: Liz to share message with Board members.

LM

David Dale informed the Board that Defra asked ADEPT to hold a series of 6 regional webinars on LNRS. These are closed sessions only for the responsible authority, but info can be shared with the Board later. Yorkshire and Humberside is the first one on Monday 3rd October.

	<p>Apologies received. No update given.</p> <p><u>Natural England</u> – Adam Wallace Apologies received. No update given.</p> <p><u>Other Issues, Risks and Questions</u> - Councils Nothing raised.</p> <p><u>ADEPT</u> – David Dale Hannah Bartram sent apologies.</p> <p>ACTION: Carolyn McKenzie to frame letter to Defra and BEIS. To reflect on timing and content after meeting with David Hill this Thursday. Carolyn/Steve to discuss further off-line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft agenda for next ADEPT Environment Board quarterly meeting: The following 3 main agenda items (as well as the usual updates from working groups, members and partners): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defra Ministerial team and policy priorities under the new PM Defra – Sally Randall, Director of Environmental Quality ○ County Deals – climate and environment asks – speaker to be identified ○ Local Net Zero Forum update and outputs - Hannah Bartram/David Dale (on behalf of Nigel Riglar, ADEPT rep). <p>David Dale asked the Board for any comments/further suggestions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADEPT Autumn Conference, 17th & 18th Nov, Leeds - Reminder to register here. Draft programme here. • Green Finance Developing training, with CIPFA. 24th November, day course, in person, in London. Chargeable. Hoping to get Green Finance Institute, DLUHC and Treasury. 	CM
3.	<p>Any other urgent business</p> <p><u>EV Fleet</u></p> <p>ACTION: Call out to all councils if you are doing any work in terms of electrifying your own fleet and providing ChargePoints at staff members' homes, Steve Read would be interested to hear from you.</p>	ALL
4.	<p>Dates of future meetings/calls</p> <p>ADEPT Environment Board Meeting – Q4:</p>	

	Wed 19 th October, 10:00-12:30	
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