

PE1437/A

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Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
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Edinburgh
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Your ref: PE1437
26 November 2012

Public Petition PE1437: Schools Recycling Facilities and Learning

Dear Alison,

Thank you for your letter of 1 November on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee seeking a written response from the Scottish Government on the petition PE1437:

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure the provision of recycling facilities within school playgrounds is mandatory. In addition to call for a national survey of in school practice and teaching on reduce, reuse and recycle to ensure current best practice becomes the standard practice.

And seeking specific feedback on the following points:

- What measures are being put in place to ensure that schools comply with the duties placed on them by the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012
- With reference to the point made by the petitioner are there limits to the amount of recycled material that can be collected from schools, and if so why?
- What are your views on what the petition seeks?

I have provided a response to these points below, showing a considerable level of action on the areas raised by this petition. I have also attached, as an Annex, a note of the specific action concerning schools contained in the Zero Waste Plan along with an update on two Zero Waste Scotland studies to address it.

Provision of resourcing and support to schools and local authorities to deliver infrastructure

The information provided must be understood within the context of school estates management. One of the guiding principles of the joint Scottish Government/CoSLA School Estate Strategy is that sustainability should be a core aspect of planning, design,



development and management. The importance of waste and water efficiency should be a key element in any sustainability planning.

That said, the statutory responsibility for the provision of education rests with local education authorities. This includes responsibility for their schools estate. It would, therefore be for individual authorities to determine whether they wished to provide recycling facilities within school playgrounds, as long as they meet their responsibilities under the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 summarised below. Neither the Scottish Government nor the Scottish Ministers have a remit to intervene in either local authority education policy or the day to day running of individual schools.

Local authorities receive funding to allow them to carry out their statutory duty to provide education through the local government settlement. How they allocate available spend is for individual authorities to decide.

Specifically concerning littering and recycling, in 2012, Zero Waste Scotland has made available over £1.2 million of funding to projects aimed at preventing littering and increasing recycling away from home. This has included funding a number of projects which aim to tackle these issues within schools, colleges and their immediate locale. These projects will be evaluated and case studies shared with local authorities, facilities managers and education providers to encourage best practice.

Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 as applicable to schools

The Scottish Government has taken decisive action through bringing forward the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 to deliver a step change in both the quantity and quality of recycling in Scotland. These regulations require producers of waste, which includes schools, to present food waste and dry recyclables (metals, plastic, paper, card and glass) separately for collection from the end of 2013. The requirement to present food waste does not apply in rural areas.

Effective communication will be vital to ensure successful implementation of these regulations across Scotland. We have therefore tasked Zero Waste Scotland to work with local authorities, SEPA, business and the waste management industry to ensure all those who will be affected by the regulations are aware of their implications and provided with support as necessary to ensure effective compliance. Importantly this support will focus on helping facilities providers - including schools and colleges - to reduce waste and use resources more efficiently in the first place, with potential to reduce waste management costs and promote behavioural change.

To support this, Zero Waste Scotland has recently initiated a project (Review of Resource Management in Scottish Schools) which will review current recycling and waste management practices within primary and secondary education in Scotland. This project will provide a baseline of current recycling provision in schools, examine what steps schools are taking to comply with the requirements of the Waste (Scotland) Regulations and make recommendations for further support or other interventions to be undertaken by Zero Waste Scotland or partners. Further details on this work are included in the following annex.

Like all organisations, schools have a degree of flexibility as to how they meet their responsibilities under the regulations and the Scottish Government has no current plans to legislate to specifically require recycling facilities in playgrounds.

Limits to the amount of material generated in schools that can be recycled

ZWS research has highlighted that educational establishments in Scotland produce an estimated 85,000 tonnes of mixed (i.e. landfilled) waste per annum, of which 22,000 tonnes is food waste. Of this mixed waste, 32.6% is materials which are widely recycled and 53.3% is materials which are potentially recyclable.

To ensure that as much of this material as possible is recycled will require extension of current recycling service provision – for example of food waste collections – as well as information and behavioural change interventions to ensure that where facilities are available they are used widely and correctly.

Waste prevention and recycling awareness in the curriculum

Developing children and young people as responsible global citizens through sustainable development education is a key context for learning within Curriculum for Excellence. Sustainable development has been embedded within the curriculum framework, ensuring that they form key learning experiences of all children and young people from age 3 to 18. Schools are encouraged to adopt a whole-school approach to waste prevention and recycling through the curriculum, through the way their buildings and grounds are run and through the leadership, culture and ethos of the school.

The Scottish Government has provided grant funding support for Eco-Schools Scotland, through Keep Scotland Beautiful, over a number of years and has committed funding for 2012-15 to help build on the success of the programme in Scotland. Scotland is a world leader in the Eco-Schools programme, with 98% of schools registered. On 19 September 2012, the Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages awarded the 1,500th Green Flag, the highest award in the programme. Litter and waste minimisation are important topics within the Eco-Schools programme, emphasising the need to reduce, reuse and recycle waste.

Eco-Schools Scotland look to capture and promote good practice and Education Scotland also have a role in sharing practice focused on learning and teaching. Zero Waste Scotland, in collaboration with Eco-Schools Scotland, Education Scotland and partners have access to a range of information and resources which can help promote and share best practice.

Zero Waste Scotland has recently initiated a study (Review of Zero Waste in the Scottish Educational Curriculum) to examine how zero waste objectives are currently addressed within the Scottish curriculum and in teaching and learning practice. This project will make recommendations on what else can be done by Zero Waste Scotland and other partners to improve the teaching of zero waste objectives in the curriculum. Details of the review are included in the following Annex. In view of this ongoing work, the Scottish Government has no current plans for an additional survey as suggested in the petition.

Conclusion

I hope this letter is helpful in detailing the Scottish Government's actions in the areas raised.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Stapleton
Zero Waste Delivery Team – Environmental Quality Division

Annex

Update on Action 22 of the Zero Waste Plan

Action 22 of the Zero Waste Plan states:

Zero Waste Scotland, with partners, will assess existing support and resources on waste management for education providers and develop appropriate support and resources to integrate zero waste objectives into teaching and learning from early years to tertiary education in the context of Curriculum for Excellence and sustainable development education.

Zero Waste Scotland has recently initiated two projects which will contribute towards this action:

- Review of zero waste in the Scottish educational curriculum; and
- Review of resource management in Scottish schools.

Together, these projects will enable Zero Waste Scotland to understand current support and resources available on resource management for education providers and inform future interventions which are required. More detail on each project is given below. Both are due for completion in March.

Review of zero waste in the Scottish educational curriculum

This project will result in a report which:

- Examines how zero waste objectives are addressed within the Curriculum for Excellence, in the wider context of sustainable development education;
- Assesses how these messages are being delivered and taught in primary and secondary schools in Scotland, and which curriculum areas they are present in;
- Assesses the resources available to educators to deliver zero waste messages;
- Maps which other organisations are already active in this area and what they offer;
- Makes recommendations on how to introduce zero waste messages into the curriculum at a variety of ages and levels, and identifies what resources are needed to deliver these messages.

Review of resource management in Scottish schools.

This project will review current recycling and waste management practices within primary and secondary education in Scotland. Specifically it will produce a report which:

- Establishes baselines for current dry recycling provision and food waste recycling provision in schools;
- Identifies who is responsible for waste management with schools, including where this is outsourced via facilities management or catering partners;
- Establishes a baseline of awareness of the requirements of the Waste (Scotland) Regulations as they apply to schools, and assesses what additional provisions schools/others are planning in order to meet the requirements of the Regulations;
- Identifies engagement activities undertaken within schools on recycling or food waste prevention;
- Breaks down all the above by Scottish local authority;
- Identifies examples of good practice, both in provision of recycling infrastructure and in successful engagement with the school population, specifically focusing on food waste segregation; and
- Identifies what further support or other interventions could be undertaken by Zero Waste Scotland and/or partners.