

Submission from the May Gurney

Introduction

May Gurney is a support services company. It is committed to helping its clients in the public and regulated sectors deliver sustainable improvements to front-line services across the UK. It ensures that the road, utility, rail and waterways networks and public buildings are well-maintained and that household refuse is collected, managed and recycled.

Through developing deep, long-term collaborative relationships with our clients and local communities May Gurney is able to design and deliver services that meet their needs. The Company acquired Turiff, one of Scotland's largest utility infrastructure maintenance companies in January 2011, who now have over 600 employees based in operational centres in Falkirk, Aberdeen and Dundee.

May Gurney delivers environmental services for 20 local authorities, covering more than 2.2 million households across the UK. Our focus is on working with our clients to develop better ways of collection in order to extract the maximum value from recycled materials and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

Our services include street cleaning, managing HWRCs (household waste and recycling centres) and collecting refuse through MaGOS™ (May Gurney Optimised Solution), our next generation kerbside sort solution. MaGOS™ concentrates on resource recovery as opposed to waste collection, providing significant carbon savings over all other collection methods.

We focus on long-term partnerships and operating a sustainable business. We see it as our corporate responsibility to deliver social and environmental sustainability in everything we do.

Our Response

May Gurney welcomes the opportunity to provide its response to the Committee on the forthcoming Zero Waste (Scotland) Regulations. A necessary change in our approach to the use of resources is needed if we are to protect the environment and to reach the targets set by the Scottish Government.

May Gurney supports the Scottish Government's aim of achieving a Zero Waste Scotland and welcomes the forthcoming Zero Waste (Scotland) Regulations. However, we believe that more needs to be done to support increased recycling and waste prevention to deliver the Zero Waste vision.

Recycling

While good progress has been made in recent years to increase the household levels of recycling, it is going to be difficult to continue this level of increase over forthcoming years. Indeed, it may be that in some local authority areas recycling levels have reached a plateau. To achieve a Zero Waste Scotland, more action needs to be taken to reach the 70% recycling target.

We believe that if this target is to be attained, then an outcome focused approach not a service focused approach is required. This may have significant ramifications for

the total residual waste treatment solutions required; for example in Somerset our kerbside sort solution has concentrated on resource recovery as opposed to waste collection, providing significant carbon savings over all other collection methods and reducing the need and timing for residual waste treatment solutions.

Food Collection

May Gurney support the proposed approach of encouraging separate food waste collection. The separate weekly food collection service that we provide for Somerset County Council has resulted in a drop in the total amount of waste produced. In the Somerset "Sort It Plus" areas, we are seeing a current residual waste tonnage of only 130 Kg per person per year, the lowest in the UK and ahead of the UK Government's own target of 225 Kg per capita by 2020.

The weekly collection of separate food waste seems to have initiated behavioural change that is more pronounced than the current downturn in waste production that has occurred across UK as a whole due to the recession, and this is further enhanced by the fortnightly collection of residual waste.

Adding food waste to the waste streams collected in Somerset we have reduced the proportion of waste sent to landfill by 25% - which equates to more than 16,000 tonnes - and has resulted in a £1m saving in landfill taxes.

Therefore, we would strongly suggest that food collection is kept separate from garden waste. In Somerset, food waste is collected at the same time as other recyclables to keep collection costs down and requires expensive treatment due to its animal by-products content. Garden waste, by contrast, is collected completely separately from food, and is treated in a low cost windrow process. In addition, from our experience, by charging for green waste collection from the doorstep, significant tonnages do not enter the collection system with people more likely to home compost.

Quality of material collected

May Gurney strongly supports the emphasis on the quantity and quality of material collected. The Regulations will greatly increase the opportunity for closed loop recycling by ensuring the quality of material collected meets closed loop recycling standards.

Material which is of sufficiently high quality to be recycled into closed loop applications will create far greater environmental benefits and deliver greater value than material of lower quality.

We believe that this can be best achieved by kerbside sort. The kerbside-sort recycling and waste collection service allows a greater proportion of the waste to be recycled as the material collected is cleaner, undamaged and of a higher quality so attracts a higher value from recycling processing companies. Whilst May Gurney would consider recommending streaming of some recyclables with a central sorting at a later stage, the full co-mingling of dry recyclables for separation at a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) is an expensive and potentially damaging approach to material quality.

Source Segregation and Separate Collection

We would suggest that the kerbside sort collection is the most effective way forward from an environmental and financial viewpoint. The inherent ability of kerbside sort schemes to keep waste segregated and in good condition means that local authorities can get far more money for recyclable materials, which can significantly offset the cost of providing the service.

May Gurney assumed responsibility for waste collection and recycling for Bristol City Council in November last year. Recycling rates in the city reached their highest ever level of 53% in December 2011, with the amount of waste being sent to landfill down to just over 19%. We introduced Tetra Pak and plastics collections in a phased procedure and by the end of June all Bristol's 189,000 households will be able to participate.

However kerbside sort collections are not just about increasing revenues; they can also help to reduce the carbon footprint of the recycling service.

Many authorities find they have limited options for co-mingled recycling collections for reprocessing in the UK because the receiving MRFs cannot deliver the quality of material output, and in many cases many co-mingled collections get sent abroad for reprocessing. Segregated recycling from kerbside collections is more attractive to local re-processors and will more frequently find a market within the UK.

Thermal treatment and landfill bans

This approach being proposed in the Regulations is consistent with policy direction previously stated by the Scottish Government.

However, whilst we understand the rationale of delay, we are disappointed that Government has proposed postponing the date for the introduction of the landfill ban for any biodegradable material to 2020 and believe it is a missed opportunity to further drive change.

Availability of recycling information to the public

May Gurney strongly supports this proposal. To make schemes successful, we focus heavily on communications work.

We embark on a communication campaign up to 12 weeks before rolling out a new service. The campaign includes: leafleting and running local information events. It is important that the public continue to be kept informed of progress in a manner that is clear and easily understood.