Submission from the of Scotland's 2020 Climate Group Waste and Resources sub-group

On behalf of Scotland's 2020 Climate Group Waste and Resources sub-group, I wish to express our wholehearted support of the Scottish Government on the launch of the Zero Waste Regulations.

We recognise the launch of the regulations as a significant step on the journey to a low carbon economy, and have published the following position statements on our website in support –

FOOD WASTE

Reducing food waste at source and better management of the residual can make a major positive contribution towards delivery of Scotland's sustainability objectives and should be a key feature of Scotland's climate change delivery plan agenda. In particular, opportunities available from separate food waste collection and treatment offer the following:

• Engaging the public and businesses in the separate collection of food waste encourages everyone to recognise the current high levels of waste and reduce this at source through changes in purchasing patterns and preparation methods. This behaviour change will helpsave resources and reduce strain on agriculture, indirectly benefiting climate change.

• Separate collection of segregated food waste, enables it to be treated through Anaerobic Digestion processes, producing biogas that can then be used to produce heat or electricity, displacing fossil fuels and contributing towards Scotland's renewable energy targets.

• The Anaerobic Digestion process produces an organic fertiliser and nutrient source which, in turn can displace carbon intensive chemical fertilisers, contributing towards sustainable soil strategies and sustainable food production.

• In addition, separate food waste collection allied with appropriate treatment prevents it ending up in landfill where it would otherwise produce methane emissions which, if uncontrolled, are highly detrimental to climate change.

All of these benefits make a contribution towards making more productive use of these resources within Scotland, reducing the consumption of fossil fuels for energy generation and manufacture of inorganic fertilisers, and capturing valuable organic materials for return to the soil in a closed loop for food production and manufacture.

There are opportunities for many stakeholders within the food supply chain, resource recovery industry and financial sector from the implementation of food waste reduction and resource recovery policies.

These include reducing current disposal costs, meeting carbon reduction commitments, generating renewable energy, developing new businesses, creation of new jobs, investment in new infrastructure and managing food production in a more sustainable manner.

Given this significant contribution, the 2020 Climate Group wishes to make a statement on the importance of all parties engaging in making this happen through:

• Government pushing forward with a clear legislative framework that requires the separate collection of segregated food waste from business and householder alike.

• The Banking and Energy sector, recognising the valuable role that anaerobic digestion has to play and engaging in investment in this area.

• The retail and farming sector recognising the importance of managing food waste sustainably, as part of the food supply chain and in their public engagement role, and by working with Government, business and the public recognise that digestates produced through Anaerobic Digestion provide considerable potential as sustainable fertilisers for food crops and encourage their use.

Construction and demolition activities account for over a third of all the waste generated in Scotland. Much of this waste is made up of unused materials arising from over-ordering, or materials damaged by weather or through poor handling. Packaging used in the construction materials supply chain is also a significant source of building site waste.

The building and packaging materials that end up as waste often have high levels of embedded carbon: particularly cement, plastics and metals. Minimising materials waste at source and maximising the recycling opportunity offers the opportunity to cut the carbon impact of Scotland's construction industry by hundreds of thousands of tonnes of CO2 per year.

Site Waste Management Planning (SWMP) is a proven methodology for driving down wastage of construction materials. It encourages resource efficient design and maximises resource recovery and recycling through optimising on-site segregation. Good segregation is essential to prevent recoverable materials becoming contaminated to a level where recycling becomes financially impracticable.

The financial, carbon and wider environmental benefits of SWMP are well recognised by larger UK and multi-national construction companies however, uptake is lower in Scotland particularly amongst the SME building trade which, makes up the bulk of Scotland's construction companies. Increasing uptake of SWMP offers a positive route for these businesses towards sustainable economic growth in the low carbon economy.

Construction and demolition projects are delivered on behalf of both public and private sector clients. This buying power provides these organisations with the opportunity to leverage their influence to cut the construction sector's carbon emissions through including contractual obligations requiring builders to apply SWMP throughout their work. As effective SWMP reduces waste disposal costs, this benefit can be achieved without the need for a 'green premium' on the contract cost.

The 2020 Group recognises that the Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland are promoting the benefits of SWMP to construction companies and their clients alike and encourages them to continue to focus on this area until uptake is widespread amongst SME builders as well as amongst the largest construction companies.

The 2020 Group wishes to encourage Scotland's business community to include the requirement to apply SWMP into all their construction, refurbishment and demolition contracts in order that their buying power brings about this desirable change through market forces. Finally, the 2020 Group recommends that Scotland's business leaders consider signing up to the 'Half Waste to Landfill' commitment in order to register and promote their willingness to use their buying power to influence positive change in waste and carbon reduction throughout their supply chain.

FOOD WASTE MACERATORS

Food waste from commercial and domestic sources is a particularly challenging aspect of the introduction of a waste to resource management culture that will be central to a Zero Waste Scotland. The rise in the levels of waste food particularly from domestic sources is an excellent example of how increased waste production maybe linked to product presentation and consumer choice and habits. This is particularly concerning when food waste is disposed of to landfill where its organic nature will contribute to a range of problematic issues not least of which would be the production and emission of methane which, if uncontrolled, is a potent climate change gas. Reducing food waste at source and improving management of the residual will rely upon a range of key actions:

• Reducing levels of food waste production through improved purchasing patterns and greater awareness of efficient preparation methods;

• Introducing separate collection of food waste that promotes its potential to be treated through high quality recovery and recycling processes;

• Ensuring that as much as possible segregated food waste is treated through Anaerobic Digestion to produce:

  - biogas that can then be used to produce heat or electricity displacing fossil fuels and contributing towards Scotland's renewable energy targets; and

  - an organic fertiliser and nutrient source which in turn can displace carbon intensive chemical fertilisers, contributing towards sustainable soil strategies and sustainable food production.

The Scottish Government's proactive approach to this matter through the Zero Waste Plan proposal to make separate food waste collections from certain sources mandatory is welcomed. However, it is becoming apparent that the use of food waste maceration units could seriously undermine the plans to deal with this waste sustainably. As well as providing a means by which individuals or businesses could seek to circumvent their responsibility to both reduce and deal with their food waste arisings, increased use of food waste maceration units would also place an additional and unplanned loading on the sewerage system. Discussions with Scottish Water on this subject have confirmed their concerns in this regard. Indeed, in certain city areas, increased organic loading on the sewerage system that can be traced back to the use of maceration units is already presenting problems in terms of the ability of the sewerage system to function efficiently.

As such, the 2020 Climate Change Waste and Resources Sub-group would advocate that the use of food waste maceration units be banned in all but essential situations where issues such as infection control prohibit the separate collection of this material for treatment through high quality and sustainable waste treatment and recycling processes.

SITE WASTE MANAGEMENT

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