



Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Waste management](#), HC 241

Wednesday 9 July 2014

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 9 July 2014

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [WRAP](#)

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Members present: Miss Anne McIntosh (Chair); Richard Drax; Jim Fitzpatrick; Mrs Mary Glendon; Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck; Sheryll Murray; Neil Parish; Ms Margaret Ritchie; Mr Mark Spencer; Roger Williams

Questions 296-365

Witness: **Dr Liz Goodwin**, Chief Executive Officer, Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), gave evidence.

Q296 Chair: Good afternoon and welcome. I would very much like to welcome you, Dr Goodwin, to the Committee. Thank you very much for agreeing to contribute to our inquiry into waste management. Just for the record, would you like to give us your title?

Dr Goodwin: Yes. I am Liz Goodwin; I am the Chief Executive of WRAP.

Q297 Chair: Thank you. You might just like to say a little word about the role of WRAP in connection with the waste management plan.

Dr Goodwin: Thank you, Madam Chair. WRAP was set up back at the end of 2000 and initially our remit was to help the UK improve recycling. The agenda has really moved on since then because recycling has become a mainstream activity, although there are still a fair number of challenges, but we are now looking far more holistically at resource efficiency in the circular economy. Our principal role is to help deliver the Government's priorities. We act as a delivery organisation for Defra to deliver its policy priorities; we work as a catalyst, using our evidence, bringing people together to actually work on problems and come up with solutions; and we use our insights into behaviour change, both for businesses and consumers.

Q298 Chair: Thank you. Is it the aim of the policy to reach zero waste?

Dr Goodwin: I do not know that that is the aim of the policy. I understand you were talking to the Minister yesterday. The policy priorities that Defra has set are to make sure we achieve the European targets, but also to help the UK move towards a sustainable society, recognising that we are only acting where Government needs to act.

Q299 Chair: Do you consider waste to be a resource?

Dr Goodwin: Yes, absolutely

Q300 Chair: Do you think sometimes we are missing a trick through the policy—not necessarily WRAP, but through the Department—in recognising waste as a resource in economic terms?

Dr Goodwin: As a country we are missing a big trick. If you talk to the officials in Defra, they understand that as well. But we are missing a huge trick in the value of the materials that we are currently sending to landfill and disposing of; it is dreadful. There is a massive economic story here that so far we have not been able to communicate effectively and I blame ourselves as much as anybody else for that. There is an economic story in terms of the materials that could be used, and used more effectively. There are some great businesses, jobs, and contribution to the economy as well. So, yes, I think there is a story here that we have not quite got right.

Q301 Chair: Who would you be seeking to communicate that message to?

Dr Goodwin: I suppose top in my sights would be the Treasury because that is important. It then becomes a mainstream part of the way the UK economy works.

Q302 Chair: Because if you look at some of the other issues, particularly in terms of infrastructure that the Government have highlighted as drivers of economic growth, they look at electronics, aerospace, defence, taking raw material and converting it. Are you surprised that Defra has not pushed this as a resource and as an engine for economic growth, as a sector, to the Treasury?

Dr Goodwin: Yes, if that is what they have not done. They do meet with Treasury officials, so I am sure those conversations go on, but clearly, as I said before, we collectively have not managed to make that story.

Q303 Chair: We have heard some criticism in the evidence we have taken that the Government is not providing a co-ordinated and consistent message in relation to waste management policy. Would you recognise that criticism?

Dr Goodwin: There is a need for much more leadership by a lot of parties, including Government and ourselves. There are some very big challenges out there and I am sure we are going to come on later to some of the things where things are stagnating. That does need more leadership and more concerted effort, so there is definitely a need for more to be done. WRAP's role is really to help Defra implement its policy priorities and, clearly, it has set these out to us as we go through the process of defining our programmes each year. I am very happy that we are trying to show as much leadership at WRAP as we can to make sure those policy priorities are implemented effectively.

Q304 Chair: Are you surprised that Defra has announced that it is going to be “stepping back” from waste policy work?

Dr Goodwin: The letter that it wrote in November was quite clear that, where there were market failures, it should step back and leave it to the market. I would agree with that statement. We have limited resources and we need to prioritise where we put them, so I understand where it is coming from.

Q305 Chair: Were you consulted before the decision was taken?

Dr Goodwin: We were not consulted. Clearly, we have ongoing discussions with Defra about its priorities and what it wants us to do about budgets, and what we might be able to deliver for the money that is available. We had those discussions in the run up to the letter.

Q306 Chair: Thank you. If there was a potential market failure, what do you think the role of Defra should be?

Dr Goodwin: It depends on what the market failure is and what the possible solution might be. Sometimes there will be a legislative requirement. Sometimes the market failure might be a matter of standards and that is the sort of thing that WRAP gets involved in. Sometimes it might be that there is incorrect pricing, so some externalities that need to be taken account of. Sometimes it might be that you are thinking about this loop and the person who needs to take action is not the same as the person who benefits, and so there is a need to actually bring people together. That is something that WRAP does.

Q307 Chair: But if these companies are taking commercial decisions on the basis of capacity and if some of the volume is being sent overseas—so there is going to be an overcapacity and not enough produce going into the companies—if the price collapses, is that not something that should be a concern to Defra?

Dr Goodwin: Yes.

Q308 Chair: So this statement that Defra “will be stepping back in areas where businesses are better placed to act and there is no clear market failure”—if businesses are saying that there are potential factors that could lead to an underperformance or a potential market failure, surely Defra still has a role to play.

Dr Goodwin: Definitely. I would agree with that. Defra has a role to play in understanding the waste flows and the materials flows in the economy, and thinking about what makes sense to be exported, what should be reprocessed in the UK and how we help ensure that infrastructure is present in the UK.

Q309 Chair: My own authority, Yorwaste, is sending stuff away because, it is saying, there is no market. The companies are saying to us there is a market and they want to process it here. I do not see where Defra is in the whole of this market.

Dr Goodwin: I agree with your point. There may be some things around timing. I can sometimes see that it might make sense for something to be exported for a period while the market is being developed in the UK. Sometimes the infrastructure needs to have a market before the investment can happen, and so you need to develop things in parallel. You end up with a chicken and egg situation: which do you get first? Export can provide a sink while you are doing that development. I can see there might be a timing issue, but I agree with your fundamental point.

Q310 Chair: It just strikes me that the commercial companies that were asking to do this work are not going to be able to perform to their maximum potential because they have not got the produce to process because it is being exported.

Dr Goodwin: Yes

Q311 Chair: What would you advise the Government to do?

Dr Goodwin: Try to understand why it is being exported and how we make the market work effectively because that sounds like a classic market failure.

Q312 Chair: But from what we have heard, it would appear that the Government are walking away.

Dr Goodwin: I am certainly not walking away. In terms of the plastic sector as an example; we have spent a lot of time working with people from around the whole loop—

the collection authorities, the reprocessors, the end markets and the retailers—to try to make sure that we have all the right people in the room and we can actually work on some of those issues.

Q313 Chair: Without giving any names away, have you been consulted on this by some of the players at this time? Have you been asked for advice?

Dr Goodwin: By industry?

Q314 Chair: Yes.

Dr Goodwin: Only to the extent that we have ongoing discussions with them.

Q315 Ms Ritchie: I want to concentrate on Defra funding and, I suppose, the reduction for you. The funding that WRAP receives from Defra will be significantly reduced next year in 2015. How will this affect your priorities, and your operation in the waste sector?

Dr Goodwin: We agreed a funding reduction with Defra for this year and next year, and, in fact, we have taken the majority of it this year, so we have already taken the biggest hit. Our budget this year is about 30% less than it was last year and it will be another 10% to 13% less, it will be 40% down over the two years. We have taken the biggest hit already. What we have done is we had some fairly concentrated discussions with Defra about where we could draw back from. There are some consequences of things we have stopped doing in terms of business support. We are still focusing on food waste as being very important and we are focusing on recycling, and trying to ensure we achieve the recycling rates. Those two are very important to Defra as priorities. But there will be consequences of things we do not do.

Q316 Ms Ritchie: In terms of the consequences and in terms of your priorities and activities, could you define for us first of all what activities have been reduced? What are your priorities and how have those priorities been impacted by the reduction in funding?

Dr Goodwin: To give you some examples of what we have reduced, we have stopped all our activity on construction. We no longer have a construction programme, so we do not do very much work with the construction sector. I still have two members of staff who have expertise and we are using them to do construction-related things, but not particularly with the construction sector, so that is one area. I mentioned the support for businesses—we have stopped the NISP programme and we have stopped some of the support we give to individual businesses; we have reduced our spend in a number of areas on public sector procurement; we have reduced the spend in some of the materials reprocessing activities.

The things that we have kept going are, clearly, food waste reduction—we have reduced the budget there, but we are keeping a focus on it—and recycling, to make sure that we try to address the concern about recycling rates.

Q317 Ms Ritchie: You mentioned that there was some reduction in reprocessing and some reduction in food waste even though it was one of your priorities and you wanted to have a focus on it. Has there been any actual cut in that activity and, if so, what is it?

Dr Goodwin: There has been a reduction in the budget, so there has been a cut in the activity. We focused on the things that we think will make the most difference. We have also brought some things back in-house rather than contracting them out, but we have done that to the extent we can. I would be very concerned about bringing more work back

in-house, because it reduces our flexibility for the future, but certainly we are doing more in-house rather than using external contractors.

Q318 Ms Ritchie: How much influence does Defra have in your decision-making process?

Dr Goodwin: Essentially, what happens is that Defra gives us an ask. This is their policy ask. We go away and we work out how to deliver that and what the best way of doing that is. It is an ongoing discussion over several months to hone down the ask and get it to a size that is realisable with the budget, so there is a to and fro process and it takes a bit of iteration to get there.

Q319 Ms Ritchie: You have responsibility for the devolved regions and they provide funding. Has there been any reduction from the devolved regions?

Dr Goodwin: No.

Q320 Ms Ritchie: Will you continue to operate those activities for them.

Dr Goodwin: Yes.

Q321 Ms Ritchie: Does WRAP receive funding from any other non-Governmental source?

Dr Goodwin: Not of any significance. We get some funding from the European Union for some work that we do, which is, I realise, public sector. We have had a couple of pieces we have done for the United Nations and again that is quasi-public sector. There are one or two people who have done something for a private sector organisation where we have been paid, but it is a day's work or £1,000 or something; it is a very small amount.

Q322 Ms Ritchie: So it is minuscule in terms of the overall budget.

Dr Goodwin: Yes.

Q323 Chair: If you give the leadership in advice that the Government requires to go out, and if you have had cuts to do that, who will do the work that you are currently doing and have done in the past?

Dr Goodwin: We are trying to carry on filling the shoes. We are trying to carry on doing it.

Q324 Jim Fitzpatrick: You said in response to Ms Ritchie that you agreed the funding with Defra. That is possibly a euphemism: they are telling you your funding is being cut and you have to accept what they give you, ultimately; there may be some negotiation at the margins. How does that affect your independence of movement, following on from the Chair's question, when they say, "Here is a policy. This is what we want you to deliver. We are reducing your money."? How does that impact on your ability to deliver the policy they want you to when they are telling you that you are not going to have the same amount of funding as you had in previous years?

Dr Goodwin: It is difficult. My starting point when we were talking about budget cuts was that I recognised that the economy was in a bad way and we had a huge financial deficit, and I wanted to make sure that WRAP played its part in helping to address that. I can see, if I were standing there thinking, "Well, should I put money into WRAP or should I put money into hospitals?" how am I going to answer that question? I wanted to make sure that we played our role in it, so I was fairly hard-nosed in our approach and I did put

forward a number of scenarios to Defra as to what options there would be. That was not just the money. It was, “Okay, so if you gave us X, we could probably do this sort of programme. If you gave us Y, we could do this sort”. That then led to the discussion about where we ended up with a 40% budget cut. It is painful. I had to lose some staff. We have had to change the way in which we do things. Morale in the organisation is not great, but it was an important thing to do and it has secured our future for the time being.

In parallel to that, I recognise that public sector finances are going to continue to be tough and so we are actively exploring diversifying our funding base. We are looking for other sources of funding, focusing on the EU, other international sources, picking up on the international reputation we have got for things like food waste. One of the enablers that we are going to be doing is we are going to be seeking charitable status, so we will be looking to change our status to becoming a charity because we believe that will be an enabler to accessing charitable trusts.

Q325 Jim Fitzpatrick: Given that you are independent but you are tasked to deliver Government policy and you say to Government, “With the reduced amount of money we can do this, that and the other”, who determines what priorities you then pursue? Defra?

Dr Goodwin: At the end of the day it is Defra because we are delivering the programme for Defra. That is one of the reasons why I want to diversify the funding base because it allows us to take a more holistic view and cover gaps where Defra has not got a policy priority.

Q326 Chair: Do you advise Defra on the ability of those involved in delivering the waste policy on draft EU proposals?

Dr Goodwin: No. We might have conversations with them about it, but I do not know that we advise. We might seek their views and we would tell them our views as well.

Q327 Sheryll Murray: On recycling, under the existing policies, do you think England will reach the waste recycling target of 50% by 2020?

Dr Goodwin: The short answer is there is a significant risk that we will not and that we need a concerted effort if we are going to do anything about that. If you look back over the last 10 years, we have made some astonishing progress in the UK in terms of increasing recycling rates and the report that came out of the European Environment Agency last year said we were the fastest growing across Europe in terms of our recycling rates, which is fantastic. However, certainly in the last three years or so, the growth has slowed down to the extent where it looks as though it has plateaued at the moment. Something needs to be done to address that, otherwise we will not meet the recycling rates.

Q328 Sheryll Murray: What action do you think we should take to meet any anticipated shortfall and who should take it?

Dr Goodwin: As I said just now, I think it is a bit of a concerted effort. We need to understand why the reduction has happened. We have not done any detailed analysis, but the analysis we have done suggests that there are a number of reasons why progress has slowed down.

Q329 Sheryll Murray: Could I just ask you to expand? I am sorry to interrupt, but you said “a concerted effort”. Could you expand on that? Who needs to be involved in that concerted effort?

Dr Goodwin: Defra, local authorities, ourselves, waste management companies, the reprocessors, the general public. It is going to require all of us to do something.

Q330 Sheryll Murray: What action do you think needs to be taken to perhaps meet that shortfall, if there is any?

Dr Goodwin: Can I just go through why I think it has slowed down? I think that would help the discussion. The reasons it has gone down are: the reductions in local authority budgets, the removal of the statutory recycling targets—therefore, local authorities have not had to spend money on recycling and have been able to focus on some of their other priorities—and there has also been a general drop off in spend on communications nationally and locally, so householders are not getting the same level of information about their recycling services and so it has gone off the radar a bit. Those are the main reasons.

Q331 Sheryll Murray: Are you basically saying that the actions that should be taken are things like increasing local authority budgets and reintroducing recycling targets?

Dr Goodwin: Those are policy decisions, which—

Q332 Sheryll Murray: Absolutely, but that is the reason I asked you what action you thought should be taken and you answered with what you thought had resulted in the shortfall or the slowing down. Are you saying that you need to reverse that? Two you listed were local authority budgets and recycling. Do you have other ideas on how we could perhaps increase recycling to meet the target?

Dr Goodwin: We are having a lot of discussions at the moment with Defra about how we might kick start the progress again.

Q333 Sheryll Murray: Could you share those ideas with us?

Dr Goodwin: Yes. We need to do more communications with householders and we are talking to Defra about that. Our most recent evidence suggests that only about 24% of householders are doing the right thing by way of recycling, so everybody else, 75% of us, are doing something wrong. We are either putting things in the recycling that cannot be recycled locally or we are not putting all the materials that could be recycled in the recycling bins, or some combination of those things. Therefore, getting much clearer messages to householders is very important. We need local authorities to make sure they provide good services and there are still some local authorities that are not providing comprehensive services, so there will be some investment required to go alongside the communication. You need the two things together, though, to make it happen and that is why I say it is a concerted effort. Waste management companies have a role to play in making sure the infrastructure is there; the local authorities, in terms of raising it up their agenda as being important is a fundamental; and then there are the householders.

Q334 Sheryll Murray: Finally, I am sure that you have included some of these already in your answers, but if you could perhaps reiterate to us: what are the main barriers to increasing the recycling rate in England?

Dr Goodwin: There are four main reasons why people do not recycle. One is situational—it is complicated; they have too many bins; there is a barrier to having the infrastructure that they need to have. One is attitudinal, which is what their attitude to

recycling is. One is behavioural—some people in the household might recycle more than others. I have forgotten what the last one is, if you will just excuse me for a minute. The other one is knowledge, about not knowing what to put where. So the main reasons why people do not recycle are situational, behavioural, knowledge and attitudinal.

I do think also there is a factor that people are very confused about what they can recycle and so, therefore, the fact that we have up to 400 different schemes around the country is contributing as well. For example, I employ a lot of staff in WRAP; quite a lot of them live in a different area from where they work, so we spend quite a lot of time making sure that we communicate effectively about what they can recycle at work compared to what they can recycle at home because they have to adapt to two systems. That is confusing and I think it is unnecessary. We ought to be able to consolidate down on to five or six models of recycling schemes. There probably is not a one-size-fits-all silver bullet. What is suitable in an inner city is going to be different from what is suitable in a rural area, but we could probably get to five or six models and, over time, local authorities could make that transition.

Q335 Chair: Can I just ask, if we are not on course to meet the 50% by 2020, how likely are we to reach 70% by 2030?

Dr Goodwin: It will be very difficult. There are one or two local authorities that are getting towards 70% or around that mark, but it would be incredibly difficult.

Q336 Chair: If there are so many schemes at the moment, is that just because the Government are allowing the local authorities to decide which scheme to use?

Dr Goodwin: Yes, it is the localism agenda and I can understand the importance of local decision-making.

Q337 Jim Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Chair. I think you have just paved the way for me to steam into the next set of questions on households. The 24% is obviously very disappointing, but it is good to hear an accurate assessment of where we are. Communication certainly has featured through other evidence sessions that we have listened to from different organisations. Keep Britain Tidy looks for clear, consistent and continuous messaging. SITA raised the question of contamination. Your explanation a minute ago, Dr Goodwin, about the variety of different local authority schemes making it confusing for people—where they work, where they live, where they visit—obviously adds to all that. How then do consumers respond to WRAP initiatives, Recycle Week and the things that you have put forward like the World Cup initiative, etc? How do you measure the success of those and how have they run in the past?

Dr Goodwin: When we do things like Recycle Week, we tend to do it at a very local level. It will generally be in partnership with the local authorities, so it will be tailored messages for that local place. We would include some sort of evaluation as part of the initiative. Generally, the communication is tailored to what is suitable locally. A number of years ago, we had the national Recycle Now campaign, which was about giving people clear messages about the importance of recycling, the exciting thoughts about the transformation that could happen to your recycling: you would put your can in the recycling and, wow, it could turn up in an aeroplane part of something. That was a general raising of awareness, but that needs to be backed up by what you can do locally and that is why you need to have both elements of communication.

Q338 Jim Fitzpatrick: Keep Britain Tidy told us, to reinforce the point you have just made, that people really do not understand what happens to their recycling, which leads to people contaminating that which they submit. The Minister told us yesterday that people do it because of the feel good factor; because they think they are contributing to protecting the environment. How do we make recycling easier for households to understand? How do we get them to grasp it more easily and contribute more?

Dr Goodwin: It is helpful for people to know what happens to their recycling.

Q339 Jim Fitzpatrick: Whose responsibility is it to deliver that message? The local authority, Government or WRAP?

Dr Goodwin: It is probably a mixture, because it will be the local authority that knows exactly what happens to the recycling that is collected in their area. There is a responsibility for local communication about what happens to the material. Generally, if you tell people what happens they think “Oh, blimey. That’s worth it” because it is going back into something; it is not just being exported overseas or ending up in a landfill because it is too contaminated. That generally helps. However, we also need to move the discussion on to the fact that we are using up finite resources and so let us try to keep these resources in use and in circulation through recycling as long as we can. Starting to get the consumer and the householder to think about the fact that this is scarce resources, so just chucking it in bin is, essentially, a waste of that.

Q340 Jim Fitzpatrick: You said a moment ago that growth has slowed down or plateaued, so whose responsibility is it to regain momentum and get people recycling more? Is it the local authority? Is it WRAP? Is it Defra? I suspect it is a combination of all, but who primarily should be trying to deliver that momentum?

Dr Goodwin: It is a combination and it will not happen without all those players. It needs the local authorities to be able to communicate effectively with their householders because they are the primary channel at the householder level, but they are not going to be able to do it on their own. They need clear signals from Government about the importance of this and they need clear support from us to help make that happen. One of the things about Recycle Now is that it was the first time for over a number of years that there was consistent iconography and consistent messaging, and I know local authorities really appreciated that because it meant they were not all spending money developing their own messages; they were able to use the central stuff. They need that support, but it is a three-way partnership.

Q341 Jim Fitzpatrick: If Government has reduced or eliminated the requirement for local authorities to meet targets and local authorities’ budgets are reducing the amount of money available to reinforce their messaging, how do you get householders to then fill that vacuum? Are incentives a way forward?

Dr Goodwin: Incentives could help, but I am not sure there is very much appetite for that either. There is already an incentive in the sense that local authorities should recover the value of the materials that they sell from the recycling and that should offset against council tax, but that is not visible to householders. That is why I think there is a risk that we will not achieve the recycling rates.

Q342 Jim Fitzpatrick: Finally from me, if I may, why are there so many different schemes for different local authorities? Is that just down to political will in different areas to make recycling a higher political priority? Is it because you have better contact, as an

organisation, with different local authorities? Is it because Government gave different local authorities more money? Why do we have such a variety of schemes that leads to the confusion and the lack of ability to have a central core message about how recycling ought to be followed?

Dr Goodwin: I have not spoken to all local authorities, but I suspect there is an element of all of that. I suspect there is an element of, “Well, they’ve got brown bins so we’ll have green bins”. People want to be distinctive and want to be different and inventive, “We are not going to use somebody else’s scheme; we want to have our own scheme”.

Q343 Jim Fitzpatrick: Do local authorities contact you directly and say, “Give us advice” or do you go to local authorities and say, “We are the independent body that is tasked to deliver; we can offer you advice”? How does that relationship work?

Dr Goodwin: It is a combination. In the past, it was far more local authorities coming to us, but certainly as we have plateaued we have been trying to identify the local authorities that we think have the biggest ability to make a contribution to the recycling rates: the local authorities that are in the lower quartile in terms of delivery of recycling rates; those with contracts coming up fairly soon, like in the next couple of years; and those with a decent population size. Those have the biggest potential to contribute to growth in recycling rates. We have had exactly the same feedback from them and we have gone out directly to talk to them. It has been quite difficult to get some of them to talk to us. They are not interested; it is not high up their priority list; they have got other priorities. There is an issue here. That is just an example.

Q344 Richard Drax: Good afternoon. If I can move to residual waste treatment. In what circumstances should energy-from-waste treatment plants be used, bearing in mind the requirements of the waste hierarchy, which, I am sure you are aware, are prevention, reuse and recycling?

Dr Goodwin: Yes. Energy from waste should only really be used when it is not economically or environmentally sensible to recycle or reuse. That is quite an easy statement to say, but that line changes over time. It has changed certainly since I have been doing this job and there are things now that you can recycle that, five years ago, you could not recycle economically and environmentally. It does move from time to time, but essentially energy from waste is a good solution for things that cannot be recycled, because either they are difficult to recycle or they are too contaminated.

Q345 Richard Drax: So it is technology-dependent really.

Dr Goodwin: Yes, and technology moves on.

Q346 Richard Drax: There is some evidence that with more of these waste plants in the planning phase, it may reduce the desire to recycle. Is that a concern as far as you are concerned?

Dr Goodwin: There is a risk of that and it comes back to this overall strategy for the UK. We need to look at what the waste flows are going to be in the future. Especially if we are successful at waste minimisation, we ought to be seeing waste levels going down, so therefore there will be less need for the capacity to treat things by energy from waste. Clearly, though, yes, if you have got a facility there that needs feeding in order to keep it viable and you are getting some energy out of it, there is some benefit. It is better than landfill, in people’s minds, so they may feel that that is a good solution.

Q347 Richard Drax: Just thinking it through, I suppose there could be a counter argument, could there not, that if the technology gets better for the waste treatment plants and the pollution, if that is the right word, is negated substantially, there should be more of these plants and therefore the waste is being properly used to generate heat for the economy.

Dr Goodwin: No, because the environmental benefits of reuse and recycling are so much higher than energy from waste. It even makes sense to export plastic to China rather than stick it in a hole in ground in the UK. The benefits of recycling are significant.

Q348 Richard Drax: I have got some statistics here that I hate, but I will read them to you anyway. Germany recycles 62% of its municipal waste; 37% of the remaining residual waste goes to thermal energy recovery plants. Netherlands recycles 60% of its municipal waste; 39% goes to the thermal energy recovery plants. In England, 43% of municipal waste is recycled and 18% goes to the thermal energy recovery plants, so our figures are substantially lower than Germany and the Netherlands. Would you care to comment on that?

Dr Goodwin: Part of it comes from our history that we have a geology that was suitable for quarrying and, therefore, for landfills, so we ended up with a dependence on landfill. When I first started in my career about 20 years ago, landfill in the UK was the norm. In the Netherlands it just was not possible and Germany went for a technology solution. It is the way we have evolved and I think there is recognition that we need to move away from landfill.

Q349 Richard Drax: Technologically, they were ahead of us substantially, through necessity, certainly in the Netherlands.

Dr Goodwin: Yes.

Q350 Richard Drax: Are we catching up?

Dr Goodwin: Yes.

Q351 Chair: I understand that the Scandinavians went down the energy from waste path because they did not want to become dependent on oil in 1973 with the oil crisis. Would it not be more environmentally beneficial to look to produce heat and light from the energy-from-waste processes than, possibly, fracking, which is unknown and untested and which has been banned in France? In the mix of things, if you are looking to energy, it is a waste resource; it is going to provide heating and lighting in certain cases.

Dr Goodwin: I do not know enough about the comparison with fracking, but certainly if you can find ways of using the heat and the energy from energy from waste through local heat solutions and having a plant near a town where the town benefits from the free heat, that may also help with the planning issue because the residents will get some benefit.

Q352 Mrs Glendon: I do apologise for arriving late. Can I ask how can the problem of obtaining regular access to food waste for AD plants be addressed?

Dr Goodwin: It is a very interesting question. There has been good growth in AD infrastructure, but the collections have not kept pace. There are now about 45% of households that have access to a food waste collection. Around half of those are food waste only and half of them are mixed with garden waste. However, despite the fact that 45% of people have access to a food waste collection, we are only collecting about 10% of food waste, so there is still 4 million tons of food waste going to landfill and we are

processing about 400,000 tons. The recovery rate or the recycling rate for the food waste that is collected is very low and that suggests that there are very low participation rates.

When you go and ask householders why they are not participating in the food waste collections that are provided, the biggest response we get is because they do not create any food waste or they do not create enough food waste. Clearly that is not true, because there is an awful lot of food waste being produced, but that is an issue we have got to overcome. I do not have any great solutions for how you overcome that, but it does need again some careful communication, possibly by local authorities, possibly by retailers, to think about, “If you have got some of this left over, put it in your food waste collection”.

Q353 Mrs Glindon: Thank you. How can the problem of AD feedstock be balanced with the overriding need to reduce food waste?

Dr Goodwin: There is always going to be some food waste that is unavoidable—skins and peelings and things like that—especially if somebody does not have home composting, because that would take up some of the peelings. There will always be some food waste that cannot be avoided, so there will always need to be some capacity for treatment. At the moment, we are miles away from that, because there is still an awful lot of food waste that could be avoided. I do not have a problem at the moment that one is butting up against the other, because there is so much to do on food waste reduction still.

Q354 Mrs Glindon: Do you think England should have separate food waste collections? Do you think that is a good idea?

Dr Goodwin: I personally think separate food waste collections are a very good idea. It gets the food out of landfill and it can be then be used to generate heat and energy, and produce a digestate that can be used, so I personally think food waste collections are a good thing.

Q355 Mrs Glindon: Is there a sufficient market for the output of AD digestate and biogas?

Dr Goodwin: Yes, those are developing at the moment. My understanding is that the bottleneck, if you like, in the AD supply chain is the collections—getting the material and getting the consistent quality to go into the process. There are markets for the end product, so yes.

Q356 Mr Spencer: Going back to collection of food waste, would you advocate that across the whole country? I can see how that might stack up in central London or central Birmingham, but for the more rural areas how does the carbon footprint stack up in terms of driving down someone’s long drive to collect a small bag of waste food?

Dr Goodwin: I do not know where the cut-off is. Quite a lot of more rural places tend do a lot more home composting anyway so there will be a cut-off, but I am not sure where that is. At the moment, we are still at such a small level.

Q357 Mr Spencer: I suppose if the solution in more rural areas is doing it on-farm, how successful has WRAP’s On-Farm AD Fund been in promoting the use of on-farm AD?

Dr Goodwin: It is certainly going to be a helpful contribution to that whole agenda. On-farm AD is still quite early, so it is too soon to say whether or not it is has been successful. There are two stages to the fund. The first is a grant that helps people to develop a business case. The second stage, depending on the quality of that business case,

is to provide a loan and at the moment we are at the grant stage rather than giving out loans, so we are still looking at some of those business cases.

Q358 Mr Spencer: Will that programme collapse if Defra cuts your funding and you are no longer able to promote it?

Dr Goodwin: No, it is in the programme this year and next year.

Q359 Mr Spencer: So that funding is all secure.

Dr Goodwin: It is one of the priorities.

Q360 Mr Spencer: So there will be no effect of that funding reduction on the on-farm AD programme.

Dr Goodwin: No.

Q361 Neil Parish: Following the Waste Targets Review, the European Commission has announced plans to ban the landfilling of all recoverable municipal waste by 2030; I think there is probably just a 5% that may be allowed. Is this an achievable task in England?

Dr Goodwin: We have done a number of pieces of work over the years looking at the feasibility and economic case and the environmental case for landfill bans. The results are quite mixed and, I suspect, if you had half a dozen economists in a room you would probably get six different answers. The reports are probably fairly contentious in whether or not the conclusions are valid, so it is not clear cut. There is a stronger case for some material streams than others, but we need to see the detail.

Q362 Neil Parish: Is the ban itself feasible? If there are waste products out there that are just more expensive, both economically and environmentally, to recycle or dispose of in any other way, we want to reduce landfill, but is it realistic to just ban it?

Dr Goodwin: There are a lot of issues with landfill bans about how you police it and regulate it, especially if you include household wastes, because it is far less under control, so there is an issue of how you police it. There is also an issue of how you implement it and how you make sure there are other arrangements, so there are ways of handling all the material that you suddenly stopped going to landfill. You need to have the alternative in place, so you need a bit of a lead-in time.

Q363 Neil Parish: I suppose that is why the European Commission are saying 2030, and from 2014 16 years seems an awfully long time. In the history of Europe you will find that very often those years go by and we are still not ready. Do you think we would be ready for a ban by 2030?

Dr Goodwin: Only if we started thinking about it now, yes.

Q364 Chair: Can I just ask one more thing on AD? At the moment, garden, trees, bushes and some agricultural waste is going to compost. Is there any research that could be done to see if that could go to on-farm AD?

Dr Goodwin: AD is a far more expensive and complicated process than open windrow composting, so in fact it is better in many respects to keep some of that green waste separate and treat it using a cheaper process like open windrow composting, and then use AD for the more difficult food waste. A side angle to that is if you collect the two things together, you tend to find that capture rates for food waste are much lower. If you collect food waste separately you can get up to three times as much food waste collected as if you collect it with other wastes.

Q365 Chair: If there was one recommendation you would wish to make to the inquiry, what would that be?

Dr Goodwin: Around AD?

Chair: Waste management generally.

Dr Goodwin: We have got to deal with this recycling rate issue for 2020. That is really important. The most significant waste stream we still have to get to grips with is food waste and so reducing food waste is still the biggest thing that we can do in terms of the environmental benefit and the economic benefit. We also have to lift our eyes a bit up the waste hierarchy and think more about the circular economy and, dare I say it, start to talk about the fact that we are consuming too much.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. You have been very generous with your time and we are very grateful to you for being before us. Thank you very much.