



House of Commons  
Committee of Public Accounts

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# Government's programme of waste reforms

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**Fifth Report of Session 2023–24**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 23 November 2023*

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## Summary

Government's 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy aims to establish a circular economy, where products are reused, repaired, and recycled. However, five years on from the publication of the Strategy, there has been very limited progress. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (the Department) has been slow to develop its high-level ambitions into more detailed plans for delivery. Implementation of the strategy's main programme, the collection and packaging reforms (the programme), is currently delayed by at least two years. The Department expects the programme to make a substantial contribution towards meeting its overall resources and waste ambitions, although the programme will not be enough on its own. The delays mean the Government is not building the momentum it needs to achieve its ambitions for reducing the environmental and economic costs of the waste that households and businesses create. Recycling rates have not improved since 2011, and remain below the 2020 target to recycle 50% of waste from households.

The Department recognises that it did not set up the collection and packaging reforms programme well from the start. As part of responding to recommendations from the Infrastructure Projects Authority, it has increased its project management capability and capacity, and has recently carried out a wider reset of the programme. However, the Department's continued lack of clarity on both the programme and the long term waste infrastructure capacity that is needed has made it hard for businesses and local authorities to prepare for the changes they need to make, and this is actively hampering essential investment. This means there is a real risk of insufficient facilities to deal with the increased volumes of recycling arising from the reforms, meaning packaging will be incinerated, sent to landfill, or exported for other countries to deal with.

The Department has other work under way and planned, beyond the collection and packaging reforms, which it expects will contribute to achieving its resources and waste ambitions. However, the Department has not set out how the waste system as a whole needs to change. This means stakeholders in the waste sector, including those responsible for investing in new recycling infrastructure lack the certainty and clarity to invest.

The Department recognises that a critical part of minimising the damage to the environment from waste involves increasing waste prevention and reuse. Its target is to double resource efficiency by 2050, but it is not clear what the Department's plans are for meeting the target.

## Introduction

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Government's 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy aims to establish a circular economy, where products are used again or for longer through reuse, repair, and recycling. It contained five strategic ambitions including doubling resource productivity and eliminating avoidable waste by 2050. In 2019, the need to decarbonise the waste sector became more significant due to the UK's commitment to 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

As part of its work to deliver the strategy, the Department initiated three interrelated projects known as the collection and packaging reforms programme. The programme is intended to bring about major changes to how waste is paid for and collected. It includes:

- The extended producer responsibility for packaging scheme, which will require companies that produce packaging or sell packaged products in the UK to cover the full costs of collecting and sorting household packaging waste for recycling. The Department estimates these companies will pay around £1 billion (2020 present values, 2019 prices) a year. It plans to introduce variable fees, depending on the recyclability of the material used.
- The consistent collections project which will require local authorities, businesses and organisations such as schools and hospitals in England to collect food waste and dry recyclable materials (paper and card, metal, plastic and glass) separately where possible. Local authorities will also need to provide a separate garden waste collection for households. Since we took evidence in September 2023 the government has rebranded the project as 'simpler recycling'.
- The deposit return scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which will place a redeemable deposit on all single-use plastic and metal drinks containers up to three litres in volume.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) conducted two reviews in June and September 2022 on the deliverability of the programme. The first review gave the programme a 'red' rating, and concluded that successful delivery of the programme to time appeared to be unachievable. The second review noted the Department's progress in implementing recommendations but maintained a 'red' rating, as it did not have confidence the extended producer responsibility scheme (the first of the collection and packaging reform projects) could be delivered by its expected deadline in October 2024.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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1. **There have been significant delays to the collection and packaging reforms, partly because the Department did not set the programme up well from the start.** The Department's original expectation was to launch the collection and packaging reforms programme in 2023. In July 2023, the Department decided to delay the introduction of the extended responsibility scheme, the first part of the programme, to October 2025. It plans to introduce the deposit return scheme in 2025, but it has not yet set out the timings or its requirements for the implementation of simpler recycling. Weaknesses in the Department's set up of the programme contributed to these delays, including running the programme as three separate projects and poor programme management capability and capacity. This is reflected in IPA's June and September 2022 reports and the Department has since looked to implement comprehensively all the IPA's recommendations. The Department says that factors outside of its control have also contributed to the delays, for example, COVID-19 limiting its engagement with stakeholders and local authorities.

### Recommendation 1

- a) *The Department should write to the Committee after the Infrastructure and Projects Authority's next review of the Programme (due autumn 2023 when we took evidence), setting out how it will address any outstanding concerns that IPA raises.*
  - b) *The Department should ensure that the lessons it has learnt from these reforms are applied to improve the way it manages other projects and programmes. It should, as part of its Treasury minute response, summarise any common themes arising from Infrastructure and Projects Authority reviews across the Department's portfolio, and how these are being addressed.*
2. **Businesses and local authorities still do not have the clarity they need from the Department to prepare for the changes that will be required, which risks increasing costs and delaying implementation.** The collection and packaging reforms are reliant on businesses and consumers changing their behaviour by producing less, and recycling more. The lack of clarity on the requirements of the simpler recycling scheme, uncertainty around fees obligated companies will pay under the extended producer responsibility scheme and the impact of the payments to local authorities on their funding leaves businesses and local authorities unable to prepare. For example, this could result in all local authorities procuring new lorries and bins at around the same time, placing pressure on supply chains. It has been over two years since the Department closed its consultation on simpler recycling, and it has not yet finalised or published its requirements. The Department expects simpler recycling to increase recycling rates from 42% to 52–60% by 2035 which, without significant contributions from other projects, would leave it well short of its 2035 target to recycle 65% of municipal waste. Municipal waste is household waste and similar waste from other sources, for example from businesses. Continued uncertainty is actively hampering councils from investing and improving their services, delaying procurement, and undermining local authorities' efforts to increase recycling rates.

## Recommendation 2

- a) *The Department should, as part of its Treasury minute response, set a firm date for when it will set out the fees obligated companies (namely, those that produce packaging or sell packaged goods) will pay under the extended producer responsibility for packaging scheme, when it will clarify the impact of these payments for local authority funding, and when it will publish the government response to its consultation on simpler recycling. This consultation response should include a clear timetable for the launch of simpler recycling.*
  - b) *The Department should, as part of its Treasury minute response, explain how it expects to achieve government's 2035 target to recycle 65% of waste from households given simpler recycling will only increase municipal recycling rates to 52–60%.*
3. **The Department is basing the design of the deposit return scheme on small trials and international experience, but a lack of like-for-like comparators may make it difficult to get the UK's scheme right.** The National Audit Office recommended the Department considers piloting the scheme due to uncertainties around the scale of the benefits to ensure it is value for money. The impact assessment for the deposit return scheme showed that more than 90% of the benefits of the scheme are based on an estimate of the value to society of reducing litter, and this is inherently difficult to determine. The Department does not plan to conduct a pilot of the deposit return scheme due to the practical challenges of setting it up. It plans to use the information it has on small trials combined with looking at the experiences of other countries who have implemented similar schemes. However, the Department accepts the international comparators are not directly comparable to the UK, for example some countries do not have kerbside collections which recycle some of the same waste.

**Recommendation 3: *Alongside its Treasury Minute response, the Department should write to the committee with an update on how it is drawing on international experience to inform the design and roll-out of the deposit return scheme. This should include commentary on what lessons there are from countries that have introduced deposit return schemes on top of kerbside collections.***

4. **While the Department recognises the importance of waste prevention and reuse, it is not clear what its plans are for meeting its target of doubling resource efficiency by 2050.** The government considers that most of the damage to the environment from waste could be avoided at the design and production stages by considering the materials used in production and the ease with which products can be reused or repaired. It has an ambition to double resource efficiency by 2050. Stakeholder's concern is that government has not given waste prevention and re-use sufficient priority. The Department has selected seven sectors to improve reuse and recycling, including textiles, waste electric equipment and batteries. It has set out a vision and approach, but what is lacking is a clear plan to understand when decisions need to be made by to ensure it is feasible to achieve the ambition of doubling resource efficiency by 2050.



**Recommendation 4:** *Within the next 12 months the Department should write to the Committee to explain:*

- *What measures it expects to introduce next (within the next five years) to encourage waste prevention and reuse; and what contribution it expects these measures to make to meeting its target of doubling resource efficiency by 2050.*
- *Which measures it expects could make the biggest contribution overall to its target of doubling resource efficiency by 2050, and how long it expects it will need to prepare for and implement these changes.*

5. **The Department has not yet set out the waste infrastructure capacity it expects will be needed in England to meet its ambitions, which makes it more difficult for the private sector to make informed investment decisions.** It is clear that stakeholders responsible for investing in the necessary new recycling infrastructure need more certainty, clarity and granularity about the Department's long-term policies on resource and waste management. Without this there is a risk of insufficient facilities to deal with the increased volumes of recycling arising from the reforms, and the packaging will be disposed of by incineration or sending to landfill, or exported for other countries to deal with. The Department plans to publish an infrastructure plan imminently, to set out a vision of where waste will be coming from, providing more confidence to invest in waste infrastructure.

**Recommendation 5:**

- a) *We expect the Department to have published its planned waste infrastructure plan before its Treasury minute response, but if this does not happen it should explain why not, and update the Committee on when it expects this will be published.*
  - b) *The Department should consult with key stakeholders after publication about whether this gives them sufficient clarity to make informed investment decisions, and write to the Committee to explain how it will address any outstanding gaps this highlights.*
6. **The government does not yet have good enough data to manage the waste system effectively, which it needs to understand how waste is recycled and to ensure waste exports are legal.** To track progress and refine its plans the Department needs good information on outcomes such as waste production, landfilling and recycling. There are serious gaps and limitations in the Department's data, for example commercial and industrial waste represents around one-fifth of total waste generated but the Department does not publish data on how much of it is recycled as it does not yet have a robust methodology for determining this. It is confident the waste-tracking project, expected to be completed by April 2025 at a cost of £9.5 million, will provide significantly more data to understand how waste is recycled and to ensure waste exports are legal and meets its waste export requirements. The Department says that it has an evaluation programme in place to develop new measures and the data behind them, and is carrying out research to fill gaps in its data.

**Recommendation 6:** *The Department should set out in its Treasury Minute what it sees as the priority data gaps and set ambitious timescales for filling the data gaps.*

# 1 Collection and packaging reforms

1. On the basis of a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, we took evidence from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (the Department) about government's programme of waste reforms.<sup>1</sup>

2. The Department has lead responsibility for resources and waste policy within government. Responsibilities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste are split: the Department is responsible for emissions from most waste management activities, including landfill and composting, while the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) is responsible for emissions from energy-from-waste plants and from industry. Local authorities are responsible for arranging collection and treatment of household waste. The Department spent more than £130 million on resources and waste work between April 2019 and March 2023, including on grants to other organisations.<sup>2</sup>

3. Government's 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy aims to establish a circular economy, where products are used again or for longer through reuse, repair and recycling. It contained five strategic ambitions including doubling resource productivity and eliminating avoidable waste by 2050. In 2019, the need to decarbonise the waste sector became more significant due to the UK's commitment to 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

4. As part of its work to deliver the strategy, the Department initiated three interrelated projects known as the collection and packaging reforms programme (the programme). The programme is intended to bring about major changes to how waste is paid for and collected. It includes:

- The extended producer responsibility for packaging scheme, which will require companies that produce packaging or sell packaged products in the UK to cover the full costs of collecting and sorting household packaging waste for recycling. The Department estimates these companies will pay around £1 billion (2020 present values, 2019 prices) a year. It plans to introduce variable fees, depending on the recyclability of the material used.
- The consistent collections project, which will require local authorities, businesses and organisations such as schools and hospitals in England to collect food waste and dry recyclable materials (paper and card, metal, plastic and glass) separately where possible. Local authorities will also need to provide a separate garden waste collection for households. Since we took evidence in September 2023 the government has rebranded the project as 'simpler recycling'.
- The deposit return scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which will place a redeemable deposit on all single-use plastic and metal drinks containers up to three litres in volume.<sup>4</sup>

1 C&AG's Report, [The government's resources and waste reforms for England](#), Session 2022–23, HC 1513, 30 June 2023

2 C&AG's Report, para 4

3 C&AG's Report, para 2

4 C&AG's Report, para 2.2

5. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) is government's centre of expertise for infrastructure and major projects. The IPA is responsible for overseeing programmes under the Government Major Project Portfolio (GMPP), including undertaking assurance reviews.<sup>5</sup> It conducted two reviews in June and September 2022 on the deliverability of the programme. The first review gave the programme a 'red' rating, and concluded that successful delivery of the programme to time appeared to be unachievable. The second review noted the Department's progress in implementing recommendations but maintained a 'red' rating, as it did not have confidence the extended producer responsibility scheme (the first of the collection and packaging reform projects) could be delivered by its expected deadline in October 2024.<sup>6</sup>

## Delays to the collection and packaging reforms programme

6. The collection and packaging reforms programme will be delayed by at least two years. The Department's original expectation was to deliver the programme in 2023.<sup>7</sup> In July 2023, it decided to delay the introduction of the extended producer responsibility scheme, the first part of the programme, to October 2025.<sup>8</sup> It also plans to introduce the deposit return scheme in 2025, but it has not yet set out the timings or its requirements for the implementation of simpler recycling.<sup>9</sup>

7. The Department told us that factors outside of its control have contributed to the delays, for example, COVID-19 limiting its engagement with stakeholders and local authorities and political change impacting its ability to obtain cross-Government agreement.<sup>10</sup> However, the Department also accepts the programme was impacted by poor initial set up including: running the programme as three separate projects and poor programme management capability and capacity.<sup>11</sup> The Department recognises that it could have had better engagement with stakeholders.<sup>12</sup> These weaknesses in the set-up to the programme are reflected in the Infrastructure and Projects Authority's June and September 2022 reports.<sup>13</sup> The Department told us it has since looked to implement comprehensively all the IPA's recommendations. It told us it has since worked to:

- run the reforms as an integrated programme.
- improve its programme management office set up, resourcing and governance, bringing in a programme delivery specialist senior responsible owner and project management specialists.
- improve stakeholder engagement by really hearing and responding to the concerns of stakeholders.<sup>14</sup>

5 Infrastructure and Projects Authority, [Mandate](#), January 2021

6 C&AG's Report, paras 17 and 2.8

7 C&AG's Report, paras 15, 1.7, 2.6 and figure 7

8 Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, [Update on packaging reforms to help drive down inflation – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), July 2023

9 Qq 11, 13; C&AG's Report, paras 15 and 2.6

10 Qq 9, 22

11 Qq 22, 24, 27, 28

12 Q 24

13 Qq 22, 24; C&AG's Report, para 2.8, 2.14

14 Qq 22, 24, 27

8. The Department told us that its recent work on the reforms has amounted to a wider reset of the programme's approach, and the programme is now fully resourced.<sup>15</sup> It believes it has now addressed the weaknesses in its approach to the programme, and that the IPA's review due this autumn should be more positive.<sup>16</sup>

9. The Department recognised the need to improve project capability across the whole organisation, and it has established a new director general role for project delivery. It told us it is looking at its capability, capacity and resource models across its portfolio of major projects and programmes. It told us that it has brought in over 100 programme management specialists in the past 12 months and a delivery partner to bring in specialists at short notice.<sup>17</sup>

### Providing clarity to stakeholders

10. The collection and packaging reforms programme is reliant on businesses and consumers changing their behaviour by producing less, and recycling more.<sup>18</sup> The National Audit Office found the Department has much more to do to improve businesses' confidence in the programme, and that a lack of clarity has made it hard for businesses and local authorities to prepare for the changes they will need to make.<sup>19</sup> The Department told us its engagement with local authorities and businesses has involved: obtaining their views on the design of the programme; continued communication with them on how the programme is developing; and working with them to co-design the implementation of the programme.<sup>20</sup>

11. It has been over two years since the Department closed its consultation on consistent collections (now known as simpler recycling), and it has not yet finalised or published its requirements. Simpler recycling is crucial for England meeting its municipal target recycling rate of 65% by 2035.<sup>21</sup> The Department expects simpler recycling to increase recycling rates from 42% to 52–60% by 2035 which, without significant contributions from other projects, would leave it well short of its 2035 target to recycle 65% of municipal waste.<sup>22</sup> Municipal waste is household waste and similar waste from other sources, for example from businesses. We received written evidence from Green Alliance, which told us the 2035 recycling target is increasingly likely to be missed due to the delay to the introduction of the programme.<sup>23</sup> The Department's intention is to publish its requirements for simpler recycling as soon as possible.<sup>24</sup>

12. The Department suggests the delay in implementation of extended producer responsibility scheme is in part to allow councils more time to prepare and adjust services. However, we remain concerned that councils cannot use the additional time to prepare until they receive a timeline for implementation and confirmation of funding.<sup>25</sup> For

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15 Qq 9 & 22

16 Qq 27, 29

17 Q 23

18 C&AG's Report, para 2.20

19 C&AG's Report, paras 20, 22 and figure 8

20 Q 9

21 C&AG's Report, paras 1.3 and 2.6

22 [Correspondence from Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, 21 September 2023](#); C&AG's Report, para 1.3

23 [GRWR0032](#)

24 Q 13

25 Qq 10, 11

example, if this lack of clarity on the funding implications is only resolved near the start date for the new EPR scheme, this could mean that many local authorities start the process of procuring new lorries and bins around the same time. This could put pressure on supply chains and mean it takes longer than Defra expects for all local authorities to collect waste as required. In written evidence, the Districts Councils' Network and Local Government Association highlighted how continued uncertainty around the requirements of the programme is actively hampering councils from investing and improving their services, delaying procurement, and undermining local authorities' efforts to increase recycling rates.<sup>26</sup>

13. One of the Department's objectives for implementing the extended producer responsibility scheme is to incentivise producers and retailers to use fewer, and more easily recyclable, materials in their packaging.<sup>27</sup> We received written evidence from Marks and Spencer, a business required to pay fees under the extended responsibility scheme, which stressed the Department needs to provide clarity on the fees it will pay to drive behaviour change to reduce the use of packaging and where packaging is used, it is recycled.<sup>28</sup>

### Deposit return scheme

14. The deposit return scheme for single-use plastic and metal drinks containers will be funded by the companies producing the containers. The Department estimated the deposit return scheme to have at an average annual cost of £621 million (2020 present values, 2019 prices), reduced to £330 million (2020 present values, 2019 prices) after accounting for estimated unredeemed deposits.<sup>29</sup>

15. The National Audit Office recommended that the Department considers piloting the scheme due to uncertainties around the scale of the benefits to ensure it is value for money. The impact assessment for the deposit return scheme showed that more than 90% of the benefits of the scheme are based on an estimate of the value to society of reducing litter, and this is inherently difficult to determine. The Department was planning to use Scotland's deposit return scheme as an opportunity to learn lessons, but the launch of this has now been delayed until at least October 2025, which is when the Department plans to launch its scheme.<sup>30</sup>

16. We asked if the Department plans to conduct a pilot of the deposit return scheme. It does not plan to conduct a pilot due to the practical challenges of setting it up. The Department told us it believes it has sufficient information from small trials and looking at the experiences of other countries who have implemented similar schemes.<sup>31</sup> It told us that there are around 50 established and operational deposit return schemes internationally, and a number that are in development.<sup>32</sup> The Department plans to learn from each of the examples and apply this to development of its deposit return scheme.<sup>33</sup> However, it accepts

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26 [GRWR0035](#); [GRWR0020](#)

27 C&AG's Report, Figure 8

28 [GRWR0041](#)

29 C&AG's Report, para 2.4

30 Q 32; C&AG's Report para 21

31 Qq 32–33

32 Qq 33–34

33 Q 32

the international comparators are not directly comparable to the UK, for example because some countries do not have an established and mature kerbside collection which recycles the same containers as its deposit return scheme.<sup>34</sup>

## 2 Government's wider work on resources and waste

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### Waste prevention

17. The government considers that most of the damage to the environment from waste could be avoided at the design and production stages by considering the materials used in production and the ease with which products can be reused or repaired. It has an ambition to double resource efficiency (the use that is drawn from raw materials before they are discarded) by 2050. The Department considered setting a long-term statutory target for resource efficiency in 2022. It decided not to because it did not yet have a reliable way of measuring such a target. The Department also recognised it had more to do to build its understanding of the impacts and risks of potential policy interventions to ensure that a target in this area would be achievable.<sup>35</sup>

18. Stakeholders, including Green Alliance which provided us with written evidence, are concerned that government has not given waste prevention and re-use sufficient priority.<sup>36</sup> The Department told us that it aims to push waste up the 'waste hierarchy' over time. The waste hierarchy ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. Its priority is preventing waste in the first place, when waste is created it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery for example incineration with energy recovery, and last of all disposal for example through landfill.<sup>37</sup>

19. The Department published a waste prevention programme for England in July 2023.<sup>38</sup> It selected seven sectors to improve reuse and recycling, including textiles, waste electric equipment and batteries. The Department told us it plans to put out a consultation shortly on waste electricals and batteries to consult on improvements to the current schemes. For the seven sectors, the Department told us it has set out a vision and approach, but does not have long-term detailed timeline on when change will be implemented.<sup>39</sup> The Environmental Services Association, a trade body representing up to 85% of the resource and waste management industry told us in written evidence that the government must implement far more concrete measures on waste prevention if we are to eliminate avoidable waste of all kinds by 2050.<sup>40</sup>

### Waste infrastructure capacity

20. The North London Waste Authority, Mura Technology Limited and Suez, which invests in or builds the necessary new recycling infrastructure, provided us with written evidence explaining that they need more certainty, clarity and granularity about the Department's long-term policies on resource and waste management if they are to meet deadlines, targets and make investment decisions.<sup>41</sup> Without this there is a risk of

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35 C&AG's Report, para 13, 1.9, 1.20–1.21

36 [GRWR0032](#); C&AG's Report, para 13

37 Q 57; Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, [Guidance on applying the Waste Hierarchy](#), June 2011

38 Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, [The waste prevention programme for England: Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste](#), July 2023

39 Qq 39–41

40 [GRWR0007](#)

41 [GRWR0006](#); [GRWR0012](#); [GRWR0015](#); C&AG's Report, para 20



insufficient recycling facilities to deal with the increased volumes of recycling arising from the reforms. If new infrastructure is not developed there is a risk that the packaging will be disposed of by incineration or landfill, or exported for other countries to deal with.<sup>42</sup> This also increases the risk of illegal export of waste overseas, which we examined as part of our session on *Government actions to combat waste crime*.<sup>43</sup>

21. The Department claims it has a comprehensive vision and plan, but accepts more detail is needed for businesses and waste management authorities.<sup>44</sup> The Department acknowledged that businesses and local government need more information on how extended producer responsibility and simpler recycling will work, as well as on its infrastructure pathway, which will set out the amount and type of waste facilities likely to be needed in England to 2035, if they are to build relevant infrastructure that is needed.<sup>45</sup> The Department plans to publish its infrastructure pathway imminently. The Department told us that based on its modelling, it expects that existing energy-from-waste plants will continue to be needed in the long term as part of managing the shift away from sending waste to landfill.<sup>46</sup>

## Data on waste

22. To track progress and refine its plans the Department needs good information on outcomes such as waste production, landfilling and recycling. There are serious gaps and limitations in the Department's data, for example commercial and industrial waste represents around one-fifth of total waste generated but the Department does not publish data on how much of it is recycled as it does not yet have a robust methodology for determining this.<sup>47</sup> In Defra's November 2022 resources and waste strategy progress monitoring report, nine out of 23 indicators were almost three years out of date at publication, with no data for a further three indicators which are under development.<sup>48</sup>

23. The Department believes its waste tracking project will provide significantly more data to understand how waste is recycled and to ensure waste exports are legal and meets its waste export requirements. At present, data on waste transfers are recorded by waste operators in disparate systems and in diverse and unconnected ways, sometimes on paper and without sharing beyond the two parties to a specific waste transaction. Large amounts of data are either not collected or not collated centrally anywhere.<sup>49</sup> The Department told us the waste tracking project will track waste from start to finish digitally, making it harder for waste crime to occur.<sup>50</sup>

24. In October 2022, our report on government actions to combat waste crime found the Department was making slow progress on its digital waste tracking system, and was not even at the pilot stage after four years of effort, despite its implementation being core

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42 C&AG's Report, Figure 8

43 Committee of Public Accounts, [Government actions to combat waste crime](#), Eighteenth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 33, 19 October 2022

44 Qq 9, 12

45 Q11; C&AG's Report 1.24

46 Q 61

47 C&AG's Report, para 11, 1.25

48 C&AG's Report, para 1.25

49 C&AG's Report para 1.26

50 Q69

to combatting waste crime.<sup>51</sup> The Department told us it is confident the project will be completed by April 2025 within the budget of £9.5 million. It said it would launch the beta version to the public in 2024.<sup>52</sup>

25. The Department told us that it produces information monitoring progress on the resources and waste strategy annually<sup>53</sup> It told us that it has an evaluation programme in place to develop new measures and the supporting data as well as research to fill in gaps in its data.<sup>54</sup>

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51 Committee of Public Accounts, [Government actions to combat waste crime](#), Eighteenth Report of Session 2022–23, HC 33, 19 October 2022

52 Qq 67–68

53 Q 71; [Correspondence from Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, 21 September 2023](#)

54 Q 71

# Formal minutes

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**Thursday 23 November 2023**

## **Members present**

Dame Meg Hillier, in the Chair

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown

Ashley Dalton

Mr Jonathan Djanogly

Ben Lake

## **Government's programme of waste reforms**

Draft Report (*Government's programme of waste reforms*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 25 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Introduction agreed to.

Conclusions and recommendations agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

Adjourned till Monday 27 November at 2.30 p.m.

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Monday 11 September 2023

**Tamara Finkelstein CB**, Permanent Secretary, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; **Sarah Homer**, Director General, Portfolio Delivery, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; **Emma Bourne OBE**, Director, Resources and Waste, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [Q1-73](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

GRWR numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 ADEPT Waste Group ([GRWR0040](#))
- 2 Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment (ACE) UK ([GRWR0016](#))
- 3 Arla Foods UK ([GRWR0022](#))
- 4 Association of Convenience Stores ([GRWR0017](#))
- 5 Bio-Based and Biodegradable Industries Association ([GRWR0009](#))
- 6 Bradshaw, Dr Carrie ([GRWR0024](#))
- 7 British Beer and Pub Association ([GRWR0021](#))
- 8 British Metals Recycling Association ([GRWR0001](#))
- 9 British Plastics Federation (BPF) ([GRWR0036](#))
- 10 British Retail Consortium ([GRWR0011](#))
- 11 British Soft Drinks Association (BSDA) ([GRWR0030](#))
- 12 Budweiser Brewing Group UK & Ireland ([GRWR0008](#))
- 13 Chemical Industries Association ([GRWR0002](#))
- 14 Coca Cola Europacific Partners ([GRWR0027](#))
- 15 District Councils' Network ([GRWR0035](#))
- 16 Environmental Services Association ([GRWR0007](#))
- 17 FareShare ([GRWR0028](#))
- 18 Food and Drink Federation ([GRWR0029](#))
- 19 Green Alliance ([GRWR0032](#))
- 20 HEINEKEN UK ([GRWR0026](#))
- 21 Irving, Dr Henry (Leeds Beckett University) ([GRWR0003](#))
- 22 Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) ([GRWR0039](#))
- 23 Local Government Association ([GRWR0020](#))
- 24 Marks & Spencer ([GRWR0041](#))
- 25 Mineral Products Association ([GRWR0013](#))
- 26 Mura Technology Limited ([GRWR0006](#))
- 27 National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO) ([GRWR0038](#))
- 28 North London Waste Authority ([GRWR0015](#))
- 29 Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership ([GRWR0037](#))
- 30 Sonoco ([GRWR0014](#))
- 31 Staffordshire Waste Partnership; East Staffordshire Borough Council; Cannock Chase District Council; Staffordshire County Council; Stoke on Trent City Council;

Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council; Staffordshire Moorlands District Council; Stafford Borough Council; Lichfield District Council; and Tamworth Borough Council ([GRWR0025](#))

- 32 SUEZ Recycling and Recovery UK ([GRWR0012](#))
- 33 The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology ([GRWR0023](#))
- 34 The Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM) ([GRWR0018](#))
- 35 The Wine and Spirit Trade Association ([GRWR0042](#))
- 36 Too Good To Go ([GRWR0043](#))
- 37 UKHospitality ([GRWR0005](#))
- 38 Wildlife and Countryside Link ([GRWR0019](#))
- 39 innocent drinks ([GRWR0033](#))

# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2023–24

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The New Hospital Programme	HC 77
2nd	The condition of school buildings	HC 78
3rd	Revising health assessments for disability benefits	HC 79

## Session 2022–23

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1st	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Annual Report and Accounts 2020–21	HC 59
2nd	Lessons from implementing IR35 reforms	HC 60
3rd	The future of the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors	HC 118
4th	Use of evaluation and modelling in government	HC 254
5th	Local economic growth	HC 252
6th	Department of Health and Social Care 2020–21 Annual Report and Accounts	HC 253
7th	Armoured Vehicles: the Ajax programme	HC 259
8th	Financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England	HC 257
9th	Child Maintenance	HC 255
10th	Restoration and Renewal of Parliament	HC 49
11th	The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme in England	HC 258
12th	Management of PPE contracts	HC 260
13th	Secure training centres and secure schools	HC 30
14th	Investigation into the British Steel Pension Scheme	HC 251
15th	The Police Uplift Programme	HC 261
16th	Managing cross-border travel during the COVID-19 pandemic	HC 29
17th	Government's contracts with Radox Laboratories Ltd	HC 28
18th	Government actions to combat waste crime	HC 33
19th	Regulating after EU Exit	HC 32
20th	Whole of Government Accounts 2019–20	HC 31
21st	Transforming electronic monitoring services	HC 34

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
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23rd	Measuring and reporting public sector greenhouse gas emissions	HC 39
24th	Redevelopment of Defra's animal health infrastructure	HC 42
25th	Regulation of energy suppliers	HC 41
26th	The Department for Work and Pensions' Accounts 2021–22 – Fraud and error in the benefits system	HC 44
27th	Evaluating innovation projects in children's social care	HC 38
28th	Improving the Accounting Officer Assessment process	HC 43
29th	The Affordable Homes Programme since 2015	HC 684
30th	Developing workforce skills for a strong economy	HC 685
31st	Managing central government property	HC 48
32nd	Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity	HC 46
33rd	HMRC performance in 2021–22	HC 686
34th	The Creation of the UK Infrastructure Bank	HC 45
35th	Introducing Integrated Care Systems	HC 47
36th	The Defence digital strategy	HC 727
37th	Support for vulnerable adolescents	HC 730
38th	Managing NHS backlogs and waiting times in England	HC 729
39th	Excess Votes 2021–22	HC 1132
40th	COVID employment support schemes	HC 810
41st	Driving licence backlogs at the DVLA	HC 735
42nd	The Restart Scheme for long-term unemployed people	HC 733
43rd	Progress combatting fraud	HC 40
44th	The Digital Services Tax	HC 732
45th	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy Annual Report and Accounts 2021–22	HC 1254
46th	BBC Digital	HC 736
47th	Investigation into the UK Passport Office	HC 738
48th	MoD Equipment Plan 2022–2032	HC 731
49th	Managing tax compliance following the pandemic	HC 739
50th	Government Shared Services	HC 734
51st	Tackling Defra's ageing digital services	HC 737
52nd	Restoration & Renewal of the Palace of Westminster – 2023 Recall	HC 1021
53rd	The performance of UK Security Vetting	HC 994
54th	Alcohol treatment services	HC 1001
55th	Education recovery in schools in England	HC 998



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57th	AEA Technology Pension Case	HC 1005
58th	Energy bills support	HC 1074
59th	Decarbonising the power sector	HC 1003
60th	Timeliness of local auditor reporting	HC 995
61st	Progress on the courts and tribunals reform programme	HC 1002
62nd	Department of Health and Social Care 2021–22 Annual Report and Accounts	HC 997
63rd	HS2 Euston	HC 1004
64th	The Emergency Services Network	HC 1006
65th	Progress in improving NHS mental health services	HC 1000
66th	PPE Medpro: awarding of contracts during the pandemic	HC 1590
67th	Child Trust Funds	HC 1231
68th	Local authority administered COVID support schemes in England	HC 1234
69th	Tackling fraud and corruption against government	HC 1230
70th	Digital transformation in government: addressing the barriers to efficiency	HC 1229
71st	Resetting government programmes	HC 1231
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73rd	Access to urgent and emergency care	HC 1336
74th	Bulb Energy	HC 1232
75th	Active travel in England	HC 1335
76th	The Asylum Transformation Programme	HC 1334
77th	Supported housing	HC 1330
78th	Resettlement support for prison leavers	HC 1329
79th	Support for innovation to deliver net zero	HC 1331
80th	Progress with Making Tax Digital	HC 1333
1st Special Report	Sixth Annual Report of the Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts	HC 50
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2nd	BBC strategic financial management	HC 187

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5th	COVID-19: Government Support for Charities	HC 250
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8th	COVID 19: Culture Recovery Fund	HC 340
9th	Fraud and Error	HC 253
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11th	Local auditor reporting on local government in England	HC 171
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14th	Windrush Compensation Scheme	HC 174
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16th	Principles of effective regulation	HC 176
17th	High Speed 2: Progress at Summer 2021	HC 329
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20th	Optimising the defence estate	HC 179
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22nd	Improving the performance of major defence equipment contracts	HC 185
23rd	Test and Trace update	HC 182
24th	Crossrail: A progress update	HC 184
25th	The Department for Work and Pensions' Accounts 2020–21 – Fraud and error in the benefits system	HC 633
26th	Lessons from Greensill Capital: accreditation to business support schemes	HC 169
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30th	Challenges in implementing digital change	HC 637
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37th	HMRC Performance in 2020–21	HC 641
38th	COVID-19 cost tracker update	HC 640
39th	DWP Employment Support: Kickstart Scheme	HC 655
40th	Excess votes 2020–21: Serious Fraud Office	HC 1099
41st	Achieving Net Zero: Follow up	HC 642
42nd	Financial sustainability of schools in England	HC 650
43rd	Reducing the backlog in criminal courts	HC 643
44th	NHS backlogs and waiting times in England	HC 747
45th	Progress with trade negotiations	HC 993
46th	Government preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons for government on risk	HC 952
47th	Academies Sector Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20	HC 994
48th	HMRC's management of tax debt	HC 953
49th	Regulation of private renting	HC 996
50th	Bounce Back Loans Scheme: Follow-up	HC 951
51st	Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system	HC 997
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4th	EU Exit: Get ready for Brexit Campaign	HC 131
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27th	Covid-19: Supply of ventilators	HC 685
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30th	The production and distribution of cash	HC 654
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32nd	Specialist Skills in the civil service	HC 686
33rd	Covid-19: Bounce Back Loan Scheme	HC 687
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35th	Improving Broadband	HC 688
36th	HMRC performance 2019–20	HC 690
37th	Whole of Government Accounts 2018–19	HC 655
38th	Managing colleges' financial sustainability	HC 692
39th	Lessons from major projects and programmes	HC 694
40th	Achieving government's long-term environmental goals	HC 927
41st	COVID 19: the free school meals voucher scheme	HC 689
42nd	COVID-19: Government procurement and supply of Personal Protective Equipment	HC 928
43rd	COVID-19: Planning for a vaccine Part 1	HC 930
44th	Excess Votes 2019–20	HC 1205
45th	Managing flood risk	HC 931

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
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47th	COVID-19: Test, track and trace (part 1)	HC 932
48th	Digital Services at the Border	HC 936
49th	COVID-19: housing people sleeping rough	HC 934
50th	Defence Equipment Plan 2020–2030	HC 693
51st	Managing the expiry of PFI contracts	HC 1114
52nd	Key challenges facing the Ministry of Justice	HC 1190
53rd	Covid 19: supporting the vulnerable during lockdown	HC 938
54th	Improving single living accommodation for service personnel	HC 940
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