

Key note speechWales Public Sector Waste and Sustainability Conference and Awards – February 2010

Mae'n dda iawn gennyf fod yma heddiw i draddodi prif araith Cynhadledd a Gwobrwyon Cynaliadwyedd a Gwastraff cyntaf Sector Cyhoeddus Cymru. Mae'n neilltuol dda gennyf weld nifer o gyrff a fu â rhan yn hon, blwyddyn gyntaf y gwobrwyon hyn: ac y mae'n codi calon dyn i weld fod cynifer o gyrff sector cyhoeddus wedi ymrwymo i lwyr ddileu gwastraff trwy'r ymgyrch lleihau gwastraff gyffredinol.

I am delighted to be here today to give the key note address at this first Wales Public Sector Waste and Sustainability Conference and Awards. I am particularly delighted to see the number of organisations who have participated in this first year of these awards. It is also very pleasing to see that so many public sector organisations have embraced a commitment towards zero waste through the waste minimisation campaign as a whole.

The campaign and these awards offer a valuable opportunity for the public sector to raise its profile within the local community and across Wales with regards to the resource efficiency achievements that have been made to date.

We know that resource use, and its impact on the planet, can be neatly evaluated and summed up through the calculation of an Ecological Footprint. We now have the ecological footprint for Wales as one of our main indicators in the Sustainable Development Scheme. I am proud to be able to say that we are one of the very few countries in the world to have this as a key indicator. The ecological footprint is a measure of consumption patterns, and reflects the impact that consumption of products and services in Wales has on the planet.

In line with the rest of Europe, the Wales ecological footprint is far too large; using the equivalent of around three planet's worth of resources. This is simply not sustainable.

The ecological footprint of the public sector in Wales is approximately 1.7 million global hectares and corresponds to 11% of Wales' total Ecological Footprint.

Due to the nature of front line delivery, it is hardly surprising that over 70% of the public sector ecological footprint is made up of the combined impact of the education and health sectors.

We are actively looking to help these sectors move forward in reducing their footprint. Between January and March of this year a further 12 organisations primarily health and education establishments are receiving intensive one to one resource efficiency improvement support to reduce their impact. From April onwards we are looking to commit further resources to helping the public sector as a whole make even more progress.

Today is about celebrating and understanding what can be achieved through the presentation of awards for environmental excellence within our sector.

To put this into context. One Wales, One Planet outlines our vision for living in Wales sustainably, using only our fair share of the earth's resources. The public sector certainly has a major role to play here. Our new draft Waste Strategy, Towards Zero Waste, highlights the public sector as an area of particular emphasis due to the large workforce as well as its influence over the supply chain, as highlighted by the ecological footprint study for the public sector.

We have consulted on a new waste strategy for Wales and the final new Strategy will be launched this Spring. Towards Zero Waste is a long term ambitious plan and, by 2050, we aspire that as a minimum we will be living within our environmental limits (one planet living) and aiming to phase out residual waste through actions on sustainable consumption and production. By 2025, we intend to have made a substantial reduction in waste produced, and also reduced landfill to as close to zero as possible, maximised recycling to at least 70% across all waste streams and minimised residual waste.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention to you the effects of recently proposed legislative changes with regards to the definition of municipal waste – since this change affects waste produced by the public sector. Commercial waste, which includes wastes produced by the public sector, is going to be classified as municipal waste in the UK. Therefore, it will be subject to Article 5 of the EU Landfill Directive, and its reduction targets for biodegradable municipal waste disposed of in landfill. This means that public sector bodies will have to make efforts to reduce the landfilling of the biodegradable waste, through preventing this waste at source, and separating out what can't be prevented so that it can be recycled or sent to anaerobic digestion plants. The latter is our preferred way to manage source separated food waste, in order to generate valuable renewable energy and fertiliser. We intend to publish a consultation document on this new legislative requirement in the Spring.

Proposed landfill bans on certain materials should also be mentioned. These bans will assist with the encouragement of all sectors in Wales in the improvement of their own environmental performance. We know that the disposal of waste to landfill has become more critical for Wales and the United Kingdom as a whole as existing landfill sites are reaching their full capacity. Wales and the UK have relied far more on landfill than many other EU states and still has one of the largest rates of landfill. If we continue to generate waste on today's levels, our landfill sites will be filled to capacity within just 8 years. Landfill restrictions and bans are widespread in Europe and in Wales we are looking to follow suit. Towards Zero Waste has identified key materials which would help the environment most if they were diverted away from landfill. These materials are food and drink, paper and card, wood, metals and plastic and these are the current ones that are under consideration

There is also of course a strong fiscal driver to tackle waste. Since the budget in 2007, Landfill Tax is increasing more quickly and to a higher level than previously planned. The current charge of £40 per tonne will increase by £8 per tonne per year for active waste to at least £72 per tonne by 1st April 2013. Reducing waste, and reducing landfill through more recycling and anaerobic digestion will ultimately save money for the public sector.

All these legislative changes require action on waste by the public sector in order to achieve legal compliance and manage costs.

As well as all these drivers for firm action on waste, we want the Wales Public Sector to lead by example. We will be working with the public sector to achieve the Waste Strategy targets through a "sector plan". We need your involvement in the implementation of the sector plan for the public sector as well as supporting the outcomes of other sector plans such as those covering municipal wastes collected by local authorities, construction and demolition waste and retail wastes.

The role of the public sector with regards to its influence on Welsh procurement cannot be emphasised enough. For example, with regards to construction and demolition wastes, stakeholders involved in this plan are currently considering how to deal with the issue of future "legacy wastes". These are wastes that are considered to likely to cause a problem for future generations because they are difficult to recycle and/or dispose of. It is proposed that materials will become red and green listed. Green listed materials will be those that demonstrate environmental credentials in their end of life for future generations to be able to deal with in a sustainable manner. We would hope also to start phasing out the use of materials that subsequently become classified as red that is those which will, or potentially will, create an end of life problem for future generations. We will propose that this list should form a key part of procurement of construction programmes within the public sector and to be transferable and/or applicable to all aspects of procurement. This will also become essential as landfill bans for certain materials are considered and subsequently imposed.

Within Towards Zero Waste, we propose to build on the current public sector waste minimisation campaign to ensure that forward thinking organisations and services are involved and to ensure that resource efficiency is continually being achieved. I would like to

ask each and everyone of you, to raise the resource efficiency profile up the agenda to your managers and chief executives within your organisation, your partner organisations, and the whole of the public sector, and make full use of the fantastic support that is available.

Our Green Jobs Strategy, a key commitment under “One Wales”, will be an important mechanism to ensure that our businesses are adequately “future proofed” to meet the challenges under sustainable consumption and production. The public sector has a lead role in this strategy which will assist in its own goal of resource efficiency and waste minimisation through its supply chain.

The public sector in Wales:

- employs 23% of the Welsh work force
- undertakes expenditure at 58% of Wales’ GDP
- and produces over 190,000 tonnes of its own waste
- of which 41% is landfilled and 45% is recycled
- and accounts for 11% of the total Wales ecological footprint

The public sector must be seen to be leading by example. These figures highlight the importance of the public sector in Wales and the potential role it can play in helping Wales towards a more sustainable future. The above shows the power it could have to influence the resource efficiency agenda through its supply chain and how it has a significant role to play in assisting with developing local markets for recycle and compost.

In 18 months time I expect to see a significant further improvement in performance of the public sector as we move towards zero waste production, sustainable procurement and reduction of the ecological footprint. The public sector waste minimisation campaign has been running for eight years and in that time has assisted over 300 public sector organisations to understand, measure, benchmark and reduce the amount of waste they produce. Organisations have benefited from provision of grant support, one to one advice and support, workshops, conferences and web based communication activities including a healthy following on twitter I understand! The campaign works with Eco Schools Wales and Every Can Counts. It provides many guidance documents and tools such as the carbon calculator tool, eco indicator tool and awareness raising posters, all of which can be accessed easily via the dedicated web site.

In the last 2 years, from March 2008 to December 2009, £304,000 in equipment grants have been awarded, over 180 individuals have attended workshops and conferences and over 40 organisations, including 2 local service boards, have received a range of one-to-one support through the campaign. Grants have assisted with the purchasing of recycling bins, composters, compactors and balers to facilitate recycling, dish washers to facilitate reuse of crockery, specially adapted trolleys to facilitate the segregation of clinical waste from non clinical waste and duplex printers to reduce paper usage.

In 2007, waste production and management data was collected in a survey from 206 core organisations in the public sector. The survey estimated that an extra 60,000 tonnes of target waste streams: paper, card, metal, food waste, plastic and wood could be diverted away from landfill if they were effectively segregated which could lead to a total saving of £4.5 million per year. Going forward, we need to address ways of reducing the production of these wastes in the first instance and then a reduction of these wastes to landfill. The total of 190,000 tonnes of wastes produced in 2007 by the public sector in Wales will fill two thirds of this stadium. Which means in the past year and half, we have completely filled this arena. With our collaborative effort to commit to reducing waste production, we will never have to admit filling it again!

Key features of the Assembly Government's in-house environmental performance in respect of waste during 2008-09 are summarised as follows. Changes quoted are against performance in 2007-08.

- 20% reduction in paper consumption.
- 83% of paper from recycled sources.
- All publications produced on recycled paper.
- 5.4% decrease in waste arisings from the estate.
- 59% of all waste sent for recycling.
- Green Dragon Level 5 system extended to 8 offices.

To sum up, we need your firm commitment to meet the policies and targets set in new waste strategy, Towards Zero Waste. Resource efficiency will be a key driver in Wales to ensure its success and, in addition, to ensure the future proofing of our industries and services. Resources will become scarcer and more costly and we need to ensure that we are prepared for this eventuality.

Behaviour change is an important aspect of achieving our goals. Government and the public sector provides information to the consumer. It has an awareness raising and influencing role over its workforce and the wider population. More and more people want to feel they are doing the right thing and staff involvement in these initiatives, the feeling that they are working for a sustainable organisation that is committed to zero waste production, boosts staff morale and ultimately assists in attainment of our goals.

This sector is a major instrument for change and we need to ensure that all departments in all public sector bodies adopt sustainable waste management practices, and more importantly embed sustainable procurement practices across each organisation

The actions you have taken, and are taking, within your organisations are an important contribution to promoting and delivering more sustainable public services and contributing to a sustainable Wales.

The organisations recognised here today offer examples to others to gain a practical understanding of how resource efficiency good practice can be implemented.

I call on the public sector to:

- Commit to the goals and outcomes of Towards Zero Waste, and participate in the development, and ensure the success, of the sector plans
- Commit to exceeding waste reduction targets of at least 13% of 2007/8 baseline by 2013 in order to reduce the ecological footprint of the Wales public sector
- Commit to recycling at least 57% of waste by 2015, and 70% by 2025 – many of you should be able to achieve this a lot sooner, and I encourage you to do so
- Commit to continued participation in Assembly Government funded waste reduction support programmes, and other associated campaigns, such as Buy Recycled, and achievement of a Sustainable Procurement Assessment Framework minimum level 3
- Commit to raising resource efficiency and sustainable procurement practice up the corporate agenda
- Commit to leading by example and showing clear evidence of the outcome of your commitments by December 2010, working with the public sector waste minimisation campaign.

I would like to finish by saying congratulations to you all for the achievements that have been made and particular congratulations to those organisations being short-listed for awards today and especially the award category winners. I look forward to seeing the Welsh public sector continue to be a major player and driver in the achievement of our goals of One Planet One Wales and in helping us develop Wales' economy sustainably.

My apologies that I will not be able to attend the awards' presentation but I would like to wish you all an interesting and informative day and best of luck to this year's entrants.

Thank you

Hoffwn ddarfod trwy eich llongyfarch chi oll am yr hyn a gyflawnwyd: yn neilltuol i'r cyrff hynny sydd ar restr fer gwobrwyon heddiw, ac yn arbennig enillwyr y gwahanol ddsbarthiadau. Edrychaf ymlaen at weld sector cyhoeddus Cymru'n parhau i ymdrechu at gyflawni ein hamcanion Cymru Un Blaned, i ysbrydoli eraill, ac i'n helpu ni i ddatblygu economi Cymru mewn modd cynaliadwy.

Ymddiheuraf am fethu â bod yma pan gyflwynir y gwobrwyon, ond hoffwn ddymuno i chi ddiwrnod diddorol, llawn gwybodaeth newydd, a phob lwc i ymgeiswyr eleni.

Diolch