

CPRE Gloucestershire Branch

Statement for Gloucestershire WCS EiP

Reference: Issue 2/CPRE

Question 1. Data on forecasts of MSW arisings .

In their response in June 2011 to submissions concerning the forecasts of MSW arisings Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) maintained that they had reviewed their forecasts and considered them to be still valid. They did not provide any explanation of the assumptions underlying the forecast. Instead they quoted the Swedish Waste Management programme as predicting that waste will grow at 2.2% p.a. As they did not quote a date or page for this information it has been difficult to track it down. There is such a programme published in 2005 but this contains no forecasts and in any event it is now out of date. Without any context on the situation in Sweden or the assumptions behind the forecast it is impossible to assess its relevance to the UK let alone Gloucestershire.

Since June 2011 Defra has published the statistics for MSW for 2010/2011 (Defra statistical release 3rd November 2011). These show a continuation of the trend of decline in total, per capita and per household MSW nationally, regionally and for Gloucestershire. GCC have claimed that this decline is due to changes in the collection regimes; they have not attempted to quantify this effect. The crucial element in their forecast is that MSW will grow at a rate of 1.6% pa from 2013 to 2020. This is three times the forecast rate of growth in the population and just under double the forecast for households. This means that waste per capita and waste per household are expected to grow over the period; this can only be true if per capita income grows. We know that the figure of 1.6% was derived for the JMWMS based on trends up to 2006 including an expectation of continued economic growth at around 3% pa.

The squeeze on average incomes due to unemployment, pay restraint and inflation is well documented. Forecasts of GDP by the OECD (OECD Economic Outlook 28th November) and UK Treasury (December 2011 Forecast for the UK Economy A Comparison of Independent Forecasts page 3) both predict stagnant growth in 2012 and weak recovery in 2013. Both assume that there will be satisfactory solutions to the Euro debt problem and other key international financial problems. Many commentators believe that even with a satisfactory resolution economic growth will be feeble for many years to come. Against this background it is optimistic to assume a real growth in income per capita in Gloucestershire at least up to 2020.

GCC point to a reduction in average household size which has the effect of increasing per capita waste. This may be true but the magnitude of the effect it is not quantified. In any event there are underlying trends to minimise waste and there is a larger population factor namely the growth of the proportion of the population over 65. The effect of this is not quantified but is likely to be a reduction in waste per capita.

Research done for the Mayor of London (Eunomia October 2010, Economic Modelling for the Mayor's Municipal Waste Strategy paragraph 3.2) have concluded that:

- The number of households in London will increase by 17% by 2031.
- Household waste arisings per household will decrease over time as a result of waste prevention effects considered to arise through communication campaigns and additional service provisions.
- The combination of increased housing and decreased waste per household means that absolute growth in household waste will be zero to 2031.

While the circumstances of London are very different to those of Gloucestershire it is generally accepted that improving waste management habits is more difficult in urban environments than in rural ones. The above suggests that there may be some grounds for feeling that GCC forecasts do not adequately take into account the potential for effective strategies for waste prevention.

Because of the above we suggest that the data on MSW is based on totally out of date assumptions which have been overtaken by established trends and a deteriorating economic outlook.

The Guide to PPS10 paragraph 4.10 and 4.11 and 4.18 recommend that uncertainty in forecasting is explicitly recognised and that a scenario based approach should be used to explore uncertainty. There is no evidence that this has been done for the environment which the UK and Gloucestershire have been facing since 2009.

In our view the most reliable course of action would be for GCC to employ independent consultants to review the trends to date and produce forecasts of MSW arisings for a variety of scenarios. That might however be thought to delay unacceptably the finalisation of the Waste Core Strategy. If it is necessary to take a view on the most likely range of MSW arising to 2020 then it should be between zero growth and growth in line with population growth. Our calculations suggest this would give a range for MSW arisings in 2020/2021 of between circa 293,000 tons and circa 305,000 tons. There would be consequent changes on the forecasts for MSW residual waste.

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