

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Waste – Our Resource, Our Opportunity

The generation and management of waste is an everyday challenge which the people, businesses, industry and institutions of the Connacht Ulster Region must recognise and address. In our daily lives we produce non-hazardous, hazardous and sometimes toxic wastes. These wastes have the potential to impact negatively on our communities, our health, our environment and future generations if not managed appropriately. Effective management systems are needed to ensure we continue to live in healthy communities and protection is afforded to our environment. In the region we have a collective responsibility to improve our behaviours in response to this on-going problem. This is necessary if we are to re-think the waste challenge and ignite the opportunities which waste as a resource offers.

What is the Waste Plan?

To manage our wastes in a safe and compliant manner, a clear strategy, policies and actions are required. The Waste Management Plan for the Connacht Ulster Region is the framework for the prevention and management of wastes in a safe and sustainable manner. The scope of the waste plan is broad and ultimately it needs to provide policy direction setting out what we want to achieve and a roadmap of actions to get us there. The waste management plan is a statutory document prepared by the local authorities of the region. This waste plan covers the period from 2015 to 2021 and is required to be revised or replaced every six years.

The preparation period for the plan extended over 18 months and afforded the local authorities an opportunity to take stock and evaluate the ways in which wastes have been managed in the region. This process allowed the authorities to identify measures which are succeeding and those which are not delivering the desired result. The outcome has led to the formulation of new policies and measures to improve the way wastes are prevented and managed in the region, while also introducing new steps to help realise the full potential of our waste as a resource.

The implementation of the Connacht Ulster Region waste plan must ensure that European and national mandatory targets are achieved and, in doing so, that the health of communities in the region, its people and the environment are not compromised. To ensure that this outcome is achieved two reports have been prepared assessing the potential impact of the plan on the environment of the region, including its important European designated natural sites. These reports, namely the strategic environmental assessment and appropriate assessment, were completed alongside the formulation of the plan and have directly influenced its final policies and actions. Environmental protection criteria resulted from the assessments and will give prominence to the environment during the implementation of the plan, particularly when developing existing and future waste infrastructure.

Profiling the Connacht Ulster Region

The Connacht Ulster Region is a new region in terms of managing wastes, and merges a number of smaller historical waste regions. It is one of three regional groups of authorities assembled in the State for the purpose of managing wastes. This is the first waste plan to cover the geographical area of the Connacht Ulster Region.

The new region stretches from Galway in the west, to Donegal in the north and to Monaghan in the north east and in total consists of 9 local authorities.



The region has appointed Mayo County Council, as the regional lead, to act on behalf of the other authorities with responsibility for the successful implementation of the plan.

The region covers 37% of the land mass of the country with a population of 837,350 thousand people. The settlement patterns show the region is predominantly rural with 66% of people living in these areas and communities.

Waste Region	Local Authorities
Connacht Ulster Region	Mayo County Council; Galway County Council; Galway City Council; Roscommon County Council; Sligo County Council; Leitrim County Council; Donegal County Council; Cavan County Council; Monaghan County Council.

Progress in the Region

Since the introduction of waste legislation in Ireland almost 20 years ago the management of wastes in the region has progressed considerably. In 2012 the region generated over 1.1 million tonnes (Mt) of wastes (excluding agricultural wastes). The major streams managed in the region are household wastes, commercial wastes, construction wastes and industrial wastes. Some headline statistics which help to describe the current system are as follows:

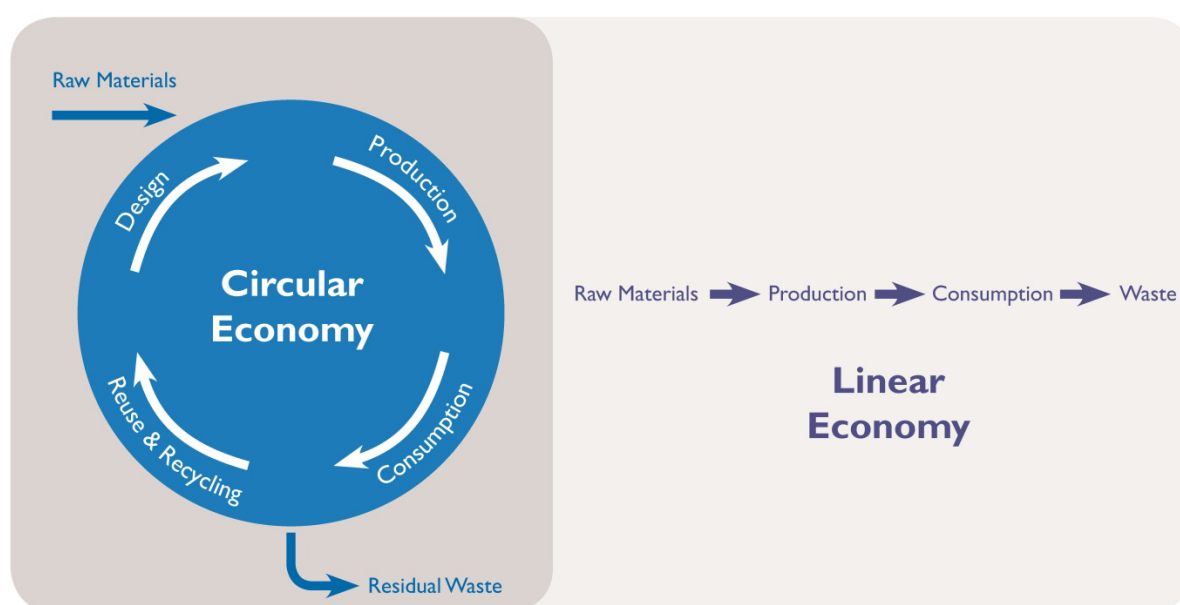
- 58% of households in the region were on a collection service in 2012 with 53% of managed household sent for recovery (includes wastes sent for recycling and energy recovery);
- 24% of household waste generated, which is over 67,800 tonnes in the region, was unmanaged i.e. not collected and possibly subject to backyard burning or illegal dumping and illegal dumping;
- 22% of householders in the region on a collection service are provided with three bins for the collection of recyclables, organics and residuals wastes. The majority of householders and businesses remain on a two bin service with the roll-out of the organic bin to be progressed by July 2016;

- 34 civic amenity facilities and 437 bring bank locations are in place in the region for the collection of wastes;
- The recovery of municipal waste, which is household and commercial waste combined, in the region is estimated to be 59%, in line with the national rate.

The economic recession impacted on the generation of wastes in the region, specifically wastes from the building sector, with annual records showing a steady decline in quantities for major waste streams. Since the beginning of 2014 the economy has shown signs of sustained recovery, and this is expected to continue, which will likely lead to growth in waste generation over the period of the plan. The continued management of wastes in a safe and sustainable manner will be a real challenge into the future.

An Evolving Waste Strategy with Progressive Targets

The strategic vision of the regional waste plan is to rethink our approach to managing waste, by viewing our waste streams as valuable material resources. Making better use of our resources and reducing the leakage of materials, as wastes, from our economies will deliver benefits economically and environmentally to the region.



The move to a circular economy, replacing out-dated industrial take make consume and dispose models, is essential if we are to make better use of our resources and become more resource efficient. The waste sector has the potential to play a leading role in the development of the circular economy in the region, and the policies and actions of the waste plan are focused on delivering this outcome.

The strategic approach of the plan places a stronger emphasis on preventing wastes and material reuse activities. The plan will also focus on enhancing the collection of quality materials from discarded waste to build on the positive progress made in recycling. The plan will strive to improve the recovery and generation of energy by maximising the resource value of the materials and energy embodied in residual wastes. Finally, the plan will seek to further reduce the role of landfilling in favour of higher value recovery options.

Three strategic targets have been set in the plan providing a clear focus and a transparent measure of success for the region. The targets cover the areas of prevention, recycling and landfilling, and their delivery will require the local authorities and industry to work together. The plan has also looked forward to 2030, demonstrating a long term commitment to the strategic vision, with further goals set down including reaching a recycling rate of over 60%.

Plan Target

1% Reduction Per Annum in the Quantity of Household Waste Generated per capita over the period of the Plan

Plan Target

Achieve a Recycling Rate of 50% of Managed Municipal Waste by 2020

Plan Target

Reduce to 0% the direct disposal of unprocessed * residual Municipal waste to landfill (from 2016 onwards) in favour of higher value pre-treatment processes and indigenous recovery practices

* Unprocessed residual waste means residual municipal waste collected at kerbside or deposited at landfills/ CA sites/ transfer stations that has not undergone appropriate treatment through physical, biological, chemical or thermal processes, including sorting.

The realisation of the strategic vision and targets requires investment in the waste sector by public authorities and industry. It has been estimated that public authority expenditure of over €60 million will be required each year of the plan period, at a minimum, and any shortfall will impact on the delivery of plan policies. In addition, up to €300 million of potential investment by the private sector in new waste treatment infrastructure has been identified for the region. Improving our waste infrastructure is a clear policy ambition of the waste plan. The policy aim is for the region and the State to become more self-sufficient, in terms of treating the wastes we generate and are currently exporting.

How Are We Going to Achieve These Goals?

The waste plan contains a comprehensive list of policies to achieve the overarching strategy and targets of the plan. Some of the key measures for local authorities and industry contained in the plan can be summarised as follows:

- Commit to a minimum expenditure on waste prevention activities each year;
- Encourage more reuse and repair activities in the region particularly at civic amenity facilities;
- Ensure sufficient staff and financial resources are in place to implement prevention, resource efficiency and enforcement programmes;
- Deliver communication, awareness and on the ground activities which lead to a lasting change in the behaviours of citizens and businesses towards their wastes;
- Increase the level of source-segregated kerbside collections in the region with a strong focus on ensuring that a three bin system becomes commonplace at household and commercial levels;
- Implement and regulate the new national pay-by-weight charging system which is due to come into force;

- Enforce the regulations related to household and commercial waste to tackle the problem of unmanaged waste and other issues;
- Plan and develop higher quality waste treatment infrastructure including new reprocessing, biological treatment, thermal recovery and pre-treatment facilities;
- Grow the biological treatment sector, in particular composting and anaerobic digestion, by supporting the development of new facilities;
- Support the development of thermal recovery in the region which meets the needs of the region and the State in reducing the export of residual wastes for treatment abroad;
- Ensure existing and future waste facilities do not impact on environmentally sensitive sites through proper assessments and siting; and
- Grow the waste management sector into a prosperous and sustainable industry which creates and maintains healthy employment.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the authorities in waste management changed significantly in the region during the previous plan period. Historically the authorities were involved in the delivery of waste collection and treatment infrastructure. This is no longer the case, and at presently in the region only two authorities remain in waste collection and one local authority landfill remains open. The provision of collection and treatment services over the plan period will primarily rest with the private sector.

The future role of local authorities in waste management will be focused on education, prevention, and resource efficiency activities as well as regulating householders, businesses and waste operators and enforcing waste legislation. Waste infrastructure provided by local authorities will mainly include bring banks and civic amenities. Authorities will explore potential partnership arrangements with the private sector to develop waste, energy and amenity infrastructure as new activities at closed landfills in the region.

The primary responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the waste plan in the Connacht-Ulster Region will rest with the new regional waste office, which has been established by the lead authorities. The office is responsible for delivering many of the policy actions set out in the waste plan, working with the local authorities in the region and other stakeholders.

The local authorities in the region will support the regional waste office as well as taking a lead role in the implementation of specific tasks such as tackling unmanaged household waste, remediation of historic landfills, local campaigns on waste prevention and specific waste enforcement activities in their functional areas.

To tackle enforcement in an effective and consistent manner, a new lead authority for waste enforcement will be appointed in the region. A review of waste enforcement governance in Ireland is under-way and is expected to be concluded shortly coinciding with the appointment of the new enforcement office for the Connacht Ulster Region.

The role of the waste industry, alongside the authorities, is fundamental to the delivery of the plan. Industry will be responsible for the delivery of collection and treatment infrastructure required in the region. A collaborative relationship between waste operators and the authorities is required to ensure that progress on the plan is maintained.

Communicating and Reporting

The waste plan contains a comprehensive list of policy actions which are scheduled to be implemented by the local authorities over the plan period. The regional waste office will monitor progress and publish an annual report on the implementation of the plan. In tracking the provision of the plan, the authorities will engage with the public, waste operators and other stakeholders and seek views on the effectiveness of its delivery.

The annual report will be made available to download from the regional waste website (<http://www.curwmo.ie/>). The website will be an important communication tool for the authorities during the plan period, updating stakeholders on related news and events as well as hosting an accessible database of reports and information.

Direct communication with the public and businesses on waste issues will be done by the regional waste office, environmental and waste staff of local authorities and in particular by the environmental awareness officers. The network of Local Enterprise Offices (<https://www.localenterprise.ie/>) will act as points of contact for companies involved in starting or growing waste and resource business activities.

A Plan for Your Region

The waste plan is an important and powerful planning document providing for the prevention, collection and treatment of wastes in the region. In terms of planning it sits alongside county and city development plans, guiding the development of regional and national waste treatment infrastructure. However, the scope of the regional plan is more than just the identification of infrastructure for the waste sector; it provides a roadmap for better coordination, prevention, resource efficiency and regulatory activities.

Finally, the waste plan is your plan. The policies and actions have been informed and shaped by the citizens and businesses of the region as well as by local authorities, stakeholders from the waste industry, the NGO sector, State Agencies and Government departments. Consultations before and after the publication of the draft waste plan have made an important contribution to the final document. The success of the plan over the period will benefit from continuing the positive interaction and cooperation which has been in evidence during the preparation of the plan. All stakeholders have a role to play.