

Safer waste cleaner world
Moving waste between countries:
determining the controls on waste imports



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The Environment Agency, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) are responsible for protecting and improving the environment in the United Kingdom.

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Determining the controls on waste imports

This guide provides information to help you determine the controls that will apply to importing waste to the UK. It covers moving waste to the UK from other EU member states as well as imports from countries outside the EU.

This guide sets out the approach of the UK competent authorities. You should also make checks with the relevant regulators in each country through which the waste will travel and the country of origin.

If you are unfamiliar with the types of controls that can apply, please refer to ‘An introduction to moving waste between countries’ at: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wasteshipments first.

Summary

Prohibited imports

- Imports for disposal are, apart from some very restricted exceptions, prohibited. Refer also to ‘The UK Plan for Shipments of Waste 2007’ at: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wasteshipments.

Imports potentially permitted under notification controls

- Hazardous waste for recovery from any country. Refer also to ‘Moving notified waste between countries – a guide’ at: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wasteshipments
- Some types of non-hazardous waste to be recovered.
- Any type of waste to be disposed of (where exceptionally permitted).

Imports potentially permitted under green list controls

- Some imports of certain types of non-hazardous waste to be recovered are subject to green list controls, such as imports of clean waste paper for recycling.

The following provides further guidance on the controls to help you to:

- understand the difference between recovery and disposal;
- identify your waste correctly;
- understand the controls on imports.

1. Recovery or disposal

It is important to understand the difference between recovery and disposal, as this will determine the appropriate control if the waste movement is permitted.

You must make this assessment on the basis of the first operation carried out on the waste. If, for example the waste is incinerated and the ash is then used in construction, you must assess whether the incineration is recovery or disposal rather than any activity the ash is used for.

Imports for disposal are, apart from some very restricted exceptions, prohibited.

You can find further guidance on moving waste to and from England or Wales at: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/dr_guidance_v_1_1150011.pdf

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2. The type of waste being imported

European legislation setting out the rules on moving waste to and from the UK includes a number of different annexes containing lists of wastes. This guide will mainly refer to annexes III, IIIA, IIIB, IV and IVA.

In broad terms, annex III, IIIA and IIIB specify different types of non-hazardous waste, whilst annex IV and IVA specify different types of hazardous waste.

You must determine in which annex the code that best describes the waste being imported appears. To do this, you must take into account any contamination that may either make the waste more hazardous so that it should be classified by another code, or prevent it being recovered in an environmentally sound manner.

If you conclude that any waste you want to import is classified as hazardous waste within the UK, but you consider it can still be appropriately classified by a code in annex III, IIIB or IIIA, contact the relevant UK competent authority for further guidance.

If there is no appropriate code for the waste being imported, it is classed as 'unassigned'. Imports of unassigned waste to be recovered are always subject to notification controls.

To make them easier to understand, we have provided consolidated versions of the waste lists that appear in each annex. This is available at:
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wasteshipments.

3. Imports to be disposed of

These are generally not allowed and, where there is an exception, they will always be subject to notification controls. If you think the import you are concerned with may fall within one of these exceptions, you should contact the relevant UK competent authority to check before you make any applications to move the waste.

4. Imports to be recovered

These are generally allowed and will be subject to either notification or green list controls depending on the type of waste being imported.

- **Waste listed in annex IV and IVA** – Potentially allowed under notification controls.
- **'Unassigned' waste (waste not listed in annex III, IIIA, IIIB, IV or IVA)** – Potentially allowed under notification controls.
- **Waste listed in annex III, IIIA, or IIIB** – Generally allowed, 'normally' under green list controls.

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