

**MINUTES OF THE WASTEDATAFLOW OPERATIONAL GROUP
MEETING HELD 28th September 2006
13:00 Room 5.8 ASHDOWN HOUSE, LONDON**

Attendees:

Jane Hinton (JH)	Defra ESI	Colleen Kennedy (CK)	SEPA
Elly Watson (EW)	Defra ESI	Sophie Easteal (SE)	GLA
Nigel Naisbitt (NN)	Enviros	Abigail Foster (AbF)	Welsh Assembly
Gary Armstrong (GA)	Enviros	David Greenfield (DG)	East Sussex
Kate Thompson (KT)	Enviros	Roy Probert	Council of Swansea
Heather Barker (HB)	EA		
Keith Rogers (KR)	WIP	Apologies:	
Francis Clephan (FC)	Hampshire	Tina Benfield (TB)	CIWM
Caroline Hawkins (CH)	EA (Wales)		
Adrian Fitzpatrick (AF)	NI EHS		

The group agreed that following requests from LA User Groups, the minutes from forthcoming Operational Group meetings will be made available to user Group members.

Therefore each member of the operational group is responsible for reading and checking the minutes before they are circulated to ensure the accuracy and content of information is fit for the wider audience. A null response from members will assume the minutes have been cleared for circulation.

1. Minutes from last meeting

No one had any comments to make regarding the minutes from the last meeting.

2. Progress report

(i) England

Response rates 2005-06: All authorities submitted data for all quarters and passed validation in 2005-06.

FC asked Enviros when the last set of LA returns were validated – KT confirmed that the last return was validated 11th September – a late WCA return.

Response rates 2006-07: Q1 2006-07 deadline is 30th September. To date a total of 252 returns have been submitted to National level 30; 164 WCA, 23 WDA and 45 UA returns. Enviros issued a reminder email one month before 30th September deadline. The Ea issued a reminder 15 days before the deadline.

Validation: The validation spreadsheet was further developed for 2006-07 including a range of BVPI related checks.

Calls to the helpline: In August 117 calls (UK) were made to the helpline. Enviro are looking at a new call logging system which will provide more detail of the types of queries raised and responses given.

System development since May

GA has been working with SE on the CWF data transfer and KR on the Data hub. Both systems are in place but the transfer of data from WDF has not yet been actioned.

Broadskill have developed the functionality to extract national level data and import to an Access Database which will provide a means analysing England WDF data for a National Statistics publication (to replace the annual Municipal Waste Management Survey). JH informed the group that the National Statistics Publication is due for release in November.

EA update on LATS

111 out of 121 disposal authorities (WDA&UAS) received draft reconciliations for 2005-06. 98 authorities have agreed the figures. Ten authorities who submitted very late returns will receive a final reconciliation on 2nd October and 13 authorities have disagreed with their draft reconciliation figures and their dispute is with the Local Authority Performance Team to resolve.

The EA will be rolling up to Level 40 within the next week/two weeks those authorities who have agreed their data with the EA.

DG raised informed the group that at a LATS stakeholder group he attended LAs expressed concern that they only had two weeks to trade following reconciliation. Issuing reconciliations was on time for 99 authorities giving them on month to trade. Reconciliations were delayed for those 12 authorities with late submission of data leaving these authorities only a couple of weeks to trade. Trading can take place throughout the year and the EA will issue predicted reconciliations quarterly if complete data are submitted.

The group discussed the issue of displaying the mass balance calculation on the summary spreadsheet. For UAs is relatively straightforward however it is more complicated to implement this for two tier authorities. This is being assessed as a development item.

➤ **Action: Enviro to investigate options for two-tiers and implement for UAs.**

FC asked about the progress of M-Beam and DG informed the group that many authorities do not have the expertise to model/forecast their data to input to M-Beam.

➤ **Action: JH to feedback to Defra Economists who are responsible for M-Beam.**

DG suggested that many authorities would find it useful to have a template of WDF (in Excel format). JH confirmed that this has already been produced and LAs were informed of this via an email from the WDF team (20th June for info templates can be found at - <http://www.wastedataflow.org/htm/datasets.aspx>).

- **Action: Send a reminder email to inform LAs of the core dataset template.**

DG proposed to the group that WDF could be linked to the Waste Infrastructure Network (WIN).

- **Action: DG to send weblinks and details to JH.**

(ii) Wales

Aim for more data quality assessment next year. Wales raised a query with Enviros regarding calculation of recycling rate in the online summary spreadsheet. This was a problem with reused rubble which was being deducted twice. This error has now been corrected.

CH informed the group that LAs in Wales were requesting quarterly mass balance reconciliations so they can check their data before the annual draft reconciliation is issued.

- **Action: Wales to consider whether they want to consider displaying the Mass Balance Calculation on the Summary spreadsheet – similar method as England.**

CH raised some user issues (i) other exempt sites – currently users are having to enter multiple exemption sites in the comments box can we make this process easier? (ii) re-structuring Q19 so material appears and then the site. FC suggested that the work involved in changing the data entry screen at this stage could be counter productive as many authorities are now familiar with the current layout and it could cause further confusion.

AbF informed the group that Wales will be releasing 2005-06 headline figures from WDF on 25th October.

(iii) Northern Ireland

Ninety-two per cent of data returns were submitted by the deadline of 31st August. Two to three councils are consistently late so AF has consulted Environmental Policy Division for advice on how to treat councils who fail to meet the deadlines and of the application of penalties.

NI carried out an audit of 6 councils during August – September, these were selected at random. They discovered that some councils had been incorrectly reporting MRF tonnages in Q19 as final destinations.

There is also an issue regarding municipal derived compost which is used for daily cover – this is not considered as diversion from landfill which would affect several councils which would be liable to reduced recycling/recovery figures. EHS are making further enquiries regarding the use to which compost is put, and will be adjusting the 2005/06 recycling/ recovery data accordingly.

EHS issued the draft NILAS reconciliation to all 26 councils and waste management groups as required by NILAS Regulation 13 by 31st August. One council exceeded its

allocation for the NILAS '05/'06 scheme year by 699 tonnes. EHS received a valid NILAS transfer form on 28th September, and has made the adjustment to the Landfill Allowances Register.

NI will be sending out a survey to councils to assess the usability of the system and compliance costs involved in completing WDF.

BMW calculation – report 36: there is an inconsistency with the classification of rubble in NI and other countries. NI will now classify rubble as non municipal for the purposes of the mass balance equation.

AF also informed the group that public access at Level 40 is not fully working. Outside sources cannot access all NI data currently at level 40.

➤ **Action: Enviros to ensure that public access is set at L40.**

AF informed the group that the most recent population figures (mid-year 2005) have now been uploaded for NI. JH confirmed that the pre-filled data has been uploaded for England also.

(iv) Scotland

The deadline for submitting returns for 2006-07 Quarter 1 data was 11th August. Three returns out of 32 are still outstanding, however these are expected in over the next two weeks.

Scotland's data for 2005-06 will be released at the Eventful Scotland conference on the 3rd October 2006.

Updating and testing of the validation tool for Scotland's questions will be signed off in the next couple of weeks. The summary sheet for Scotland which will be uploaded on to WasteDataFlow will include the mass balance calculation and will hopefully be put in the system in time for local authorities to help them submit Quarter 2 data.

An Audit team for auditing the Landfill Allowance Scheme in Scotland has been set up by SEPA and the remit and procedures will be established at the first meeting on the 11th October.

3. Feedback from user Groups

(i) England User Group

FC proposed that the WDF UG should be scheduled before the WDF OG meeting so the comments/suggestions from LAs can be fed back to the OG.

FC raised a concern regarding assistance from the WDF helpdesk. She reported a snagging problem and when she chased this up and it was suggested that she would have to report the issue every quarter. This is not correct – LAs do not have to report the same problem every quarter.

➤ **Action: Enviros to follow-up with the helpdesk.**

Members of the England UG felt that they were still not getting enough out of the WDF system compared to the amount of resources they are putting in. The reporting functionality needs to be improved. This was acknowledged by the group and is an option in the draft development list.

FC has experienced inconsistency during the validation process when different validators are assigned to different quarterly returns for an authority.

FC asked whether Enviros could assign the same validator to each authority i.e. one validator works on all four quarterly returns for each authority? Enviros said that this was how the process worked originally but they had to move away from this as it was not an efficient way of working. Often one validator would be very busy while another would not have a return to validate.

- **Action: HB, JH & Enviros to assess what is currently being done and what additional process could be put in place for validation of constituent data from WCAs for WDAs.**

FC asked when the selection lists would be updated. NN informed the group that the lists are currently with HB at the EA where a number of options and improvements for updating the system still need to be resolved before they can be updated in WDF.

(ii) Wales User Group

AbF enquired whether there was any development to include overseas destinations in the selection list. HB said not at the moment as EA do not hold this information.

RP asked what guidance is set out for participation rate (Q8). NN informed RP that the guidance is set out by WRAP but it does not specify individual circumstances e.g. frequency of how often an authority should measure participation rate – it depends on how often you introduce a new collection scheme.

(iii) Northern Ireland

AF already discussed the user survey they will be carrying out (see section 2 of minutes).

(iv) Scotland

The first User Group was held in July, this went well and the next meeting will take place in two weeks.

- **Action: CK to distribute the minutes from the user group to the operation group.**

CK asked whether it would be feasible to update the 31 material list to include materials such as tyres, food waste and wood composting (Wales). GA informed the group that the implications of changing the material list is bigger than actually amending the list on the WDF system for example it will impact on the summary sheet/reports etc. He advised that before any changes are made we survey users/see which categories are currently being used before making any changes to ensure that

changes are made in one hit. Possible changes will have to wait until the new reporting period.

- **Action: All countries to review the material list through their User Groups/user surveys.**
- **Action: now is the time to consider any other changes which may be needed for the next reporting period 2007-08.**

4. Communications Plan

NN introduced the communication plan for 2006-07. The communications plan needs to be kept under review throughout the reporting period for 2006-07.

SE provided feedback following the online discussion forum the GLA piloted for WDF on Capitalwastefacts. Despite being requested by users the forum was not used by London waste authorities and it will be taken down. This outcome may be of interest to the WDF OG as they consider investing resources in communication methods.

FC suggested changing the format of the emails which are sent out from the WDF team e.g. colour, text etc.

- **Action: Any comments the group has on the communication plan should be fed to NN.**

5. Draft Development Programme

This was collated following feedback from UG and comments etc. to highlight the areas which are important to develop further.

The group discussed the possible development items (set out in table below). No decision was made regarding which items will be taken forward. The group agreed to review the draft development items and provide feedback via email.

Table 1: Summary of possible development items

Scheduled processing (queuing process for roll-up of returns to reduce the burden on the server)	Scheduled processing needs to be completed by mid-September 2006 (for Q1 2006/7 data, England).
User feedback on data submission	A feedback mechanism is needed in WDF so an authority knows they have successfully completed the various stages of data submission.
Email broadcasting	Functionality to generate emails from the system should be developed, with flexible selection of distribution list criteria.
On-line status reports	The ability for national level users to run status reports automatically from the system.
Web-site upgrade	The current web-site (non data entry part of the system) is a very simple, flat structure. This needs to be upgraded to support better document management Note that this item refers to development of the part of the web-site that is NOT the data entry/management section.
User log-on	It is more sensible to request user log on at an early stage of access to the site and to modify what the

	user is presented with depending on their access rights. This development would sensibly be done in conjunction with the web-site upgrade item.
Review of menus, buttons and texts	Data manager section - a general spring-clean on the text and feel of the data entry part of website would be beneficial.
Upgrading of On-line help	This could be upgraded to be searchable with cross referencing and indexing etc.
Existing Reports	There is a need to review the definitions of the existing reports to ensure they are correct and consistent. It is suggested that this review be carried out with Enviro in liaison with the national authorities A decision will then be required as to whether to adjust the existing report(s) (in Crystal) or recreate in a new reporting product (see below).
Newly reporting functionality	Two areas are being explored: (i) As part of the development work in England, the ability to generate reports in Excel within the system (e.g. summary spreadsheet, BVPIs) has been developed. This format is most suitable for reports run by individual authorities on their own data and pulls up data according to pre-specified formulae. (ii) As part of work for the Environment Agency, the SQL Reporting Services product is being used. This enables the user to select the final report format (pdf, csv, html). This solution is more directly compatible with the SQL database.
Calculated variables	Calculated summary variables - this has implications both for processing time to generate a report, and, more importantly, for potential errors/inconsistencies in definitions of these calculated variables. If key data variables (total MSW, total hh waste, recycled tonnages, MSW to landfill etc) could be calculated on roll-up and stored in the database this would significantly facilitate report generation.
Quarterly question management by LAs	The LA would use the question management screen to exclude from their subsequent question list those questions not relevant to them.

For further detail of the development items, please see draft development documents circulated for the meeting.

- **Action: members of the group are asked to feedback the items they deem to be high priority from the development plan outlined by GA by Friday 13th October.**
- **Action: feedback from the UGs should be incorporated and then revised development programme and be circulated to the group.**

5. AOB

6. **Next meeting:** Tuesday 5th, Wednesday 6th, Thursday 7th December 2006.