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Dear Ms Lindsay,

### **RE: Consultation on the Waste Management Plan for Northern Ireland**

Thank you for providing Belfast City Council with the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Waste Management Plan for Northern Ireland.

The question posed by the Department is as follows;

Will the Waste Management Plan for Northern Ireland (WMPNI), including its constituent parts (detailed on page 5 of the WMPNI), when combined with the location specific guidance in the waste planning policy - meet the requirements of Article 28 of the revised Waste Framework Directive and the additional requirements as detailed in Schedule 3 to the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (see Appendix 1)? If not, what else is, in your view, needed?

It is noted that the mandatory requirements of **Article 28 of the rWFD** specify that the WMPNI should be established in accordance with Articles 1 (Subject matter and scope), 4 (Waste hierarchy), 13 (Protection of human health and environment) and 16 (Principles of self-sufficiency and proximity) of the rWFD and should contain the following information:

- An analysis of the current waste management situation in the geographical entity concerned, as well as the measures to be taken to improve environmentally sound preparing for re-use, recycling, recovery and disposal of waste and an evaluation of how the plan will support the implementation of the objectives and provisions of this rWFD.
- As appropriate, take account the geographical level and coverage of the planning area:
  - the type, quantity and source of waste generated within the territory, the waste likely to be shipped from or to the national territory, and an evaluation of the development of waste streams in the future;
  - existing waste collection schemes and major disposal and recovery installations, including any special arrangements for waste oils, hazardous waste or waste streams addressed by specific Community legislation;
  - an assessment of the need for new collection schemes, the closure of existing waste installations, additional waste installation infrastructure in accordance with Article 16 (on the proximity principle), and, if necessary, the investments related thereto;

- sufficient information on the location criteria for site identification and on the capacity of future disposal or major recovery installations, if necessary;
- general waste management policies, including planned waste management technologies and methods, or policies for waste posing specific management problems.

In addition, **Schedule 3 to the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997**, as amended, sets out other obligations for the WMPNI which have been transposed from the rWFD. These other obligations include:

- a chapter on the management of packaging and packaging waste, including measures taken pursuant to Articles 4 (prevention) and 5 (re-use) of the Packaging Waste Directive<sup>2</sup>;
- measures to promote high quality recycling including the setting up of separate collections of waste where technically, environmentally and economically practicable;
- measures to encourage the separate collection of bio-waste with a view to the composting and digestion of bio-waste;
- measures to be taken to promote the re-use of products and preparation for re-use activities, in particular—
  - measures to encourage the establishment and support of re-use and repair networks; the use of economic instruments;
  - the use of procurement criteria; and
  - the setting of quantitative objectives.
- Policies in relation to preparing for re-use, recovery and recycling targets including—
  - measures to be taken to ensure that by 2020, at least 50% by weight of waste from households is prepared for re-use or recycled;
  - measures to be taken to ensure that by 2020, at least 70% by weight of construction and demolition waste excluding—
    - hazardous waste; and
    - [F2naturally occurring material falling within code 17 05 04 in the Annex to the List of Wastes,] is subjected to material recovery.

The core aim of the Waste Management Plan for Northern Ireland as set out at page 6 of the Plan is;

*“to bring current waste management policies under the umbrella of one national plan”.*

The Plan therefore essentially provides only a review of the current position in relation to waste management arrangements (plans and policies) within Northern Ireland and as it states (again at page 6);

*“It is not, therefore the intention of the WMPNI to introduce new policies or to change the landscape of how waste is managed in Northern Ireland”.*

The consultation question posed by the Department seeks consultees to comment on whether the Plan meets the requirements of Article 28 of the revised Waste Framework Directive.

Technically and on the basis of the core aims of the Plan and the references to other plans and policies within the Plan it is believed that the WMPNI meets the requirements of Article 28. However, this comment is without prejudice and it would ultimately be the responsibility of the governance and judicial framework of the EU, which would determine if the Plan meets EU legislative requirements.

However, in terms of progressing the strategic management of waste within Northern Ireland the WMPNI provides little or no strategic direction. Waste Management within Northern Ireland, in particular municipal waste, has developed significantly since “Delivering Resource Efficiency” (Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy) was published over six years ago in October 2013. With regards to the two key drivers of Landfill Diversion as set out in the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme and the 50% EU composting and recycling target; both of these are now in their final target years of 2019/20 and both are set to be exceeded.

The lead-in times in achieving these significant milestones are probably better measured in decades rather than in months and years; changes in public attitudes to waste, as set out in the wider environmental, circular economy and sustainable development agenda take time to change, as does the establishment of infrastructure to collect, treat and dispose of waste. As recent history has demonstrated, these changes can be achieved but only through strong central government leadership backed up and supported by appropriate legislation and adequate levels of subvention.

Given the level of change that has taken place since “Delivering Resource Efficiency” was published in 2013, what is now required is a new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland rather than a gathering together of pre-existing and to some extent outdated plans and policies under the umbrella of a WMPNI.

It is therefore of concern that the Department has chosen to adopt this approach of an umbrella document and whilst there may be mitigating circumstances relating to the lack of a sitting Assembly, Brexit and EU timelines, it is surely incumbent on the Department to at the very least set out its timetable for the production of a new Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland. If councils are to produce meaningful Waste Management Plans then these need to be developed against the background of a revised and updated Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further or if you require any more details, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhan Toland

Operational Director