

## CIWM welcomes the clarity and update provided by Government's Residual Waste Infrastructure Capacity Note

1 year ago



Following the publishing on 30 Dec 2024 by Defra of the Residual Waste Infrastructure Capacity Note, [CIWM](#) makes the following observations.

The note presents the evidence and analysis relating to municipal residual waste arisings and infrastructure capacity in England from 2020 to 2035, for the first time accounting for the effect of Defra's packaging reforms, including Simpler Recycling and Extended Producer Responsibility.

It provides pragmatic guidance and useful clarifications to inform future planning decisions and potential policy and regulatory development to ensure that the risk of over-capacity in energy from waste (EfW) incineration facilities is minimised, and that a more circular economy is incentivised.

Its publication underlines Government's intention to set stricter standards for any new EfW facility, stating that new EfW plants must demonstrate the deployment of the best pollution prevention controls, be able to utilise the heat produced, and be able to capture and store or utilise the carbon that they would otherwise emit to atmosphere.

The note, and the useful associated analysis of residual waste treatment infrastructure, shows that there are clear current regional shortfalls of available capacity for residual waste treatment, notably in the East Midlands and East of England.

It highlights the fact that there are a number of local authorities that remain over-reliant on landfill disposal. As the note outlines, landfill will continue to provide an essential outlet to responsibly manage

non-recyclable and non-recoverable waste but must be limited to no more than 10% of all residual waste by 2035 as it is the least desirable, most wasteful option, with the most significant environmental impacts.

The note also underlines the essential role that EfW facilities have played in moving millions of tonnes of material produced by businesses and households up the waste hierarchy to improve overall UK resource efficiency. These facilities – financed, built and operated by innovative waste and resource management professionals – now safely treat over 14 million tonnes of residual waste every year, producing vital and largely renewable energy as a by-product.

It also highlights the essential role that EfW incineration plays in destroying persistent organic pollutants (POPs) – harmful chemicals which have been used in a large range of everyday products. This is an increasingly important and often-overlooked function as our knowledge of these substances and their environmental and health impacts improves.

Crucially, the note highlights the importance of new and forthcoming regulations, particularly Simpler Recycling, packaging Extended Producer Responsibility and the Emissions Trading Scheme for EfW, to stimulate and drive higher recycling levels from the current rates that have stagnated for several years.

It provides a useful reminder that currently each person in the UK produces over half a tonne of post-consumer waste each year, and that we must as a society reduce this by 50% by 2042 to move to more sustainable lifestyles that don't exceed our global and UK carrying capacity.

Dan Cooke, CIWM Director of Policy, Communications & External Affairs, said: 'CIWM welcomes the Residual Waste Infrastructure Capacity Note as useful analysis and clarification. It sets out the Government's clear intention to move toward a more circular economy, and also recognises the important role of EfW. It should help to ensure a robust planning framework that delivers only highly efficient and carbon capture-ready EfW facilities, and that limits the potential for over-capacity in EfW capacity in England, aligning with higher recycling and circular economy ambitions.'