

Torbay Council

**Consultation on
Waste Strategy
Options**

Workshop Outcomes Report

December 2006

Entec UK Limited

Report for

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1. Introduction

1.1 Involving People

The Municipal Waste Management Strategy will guide how services are delivered and developed in the future and where resources are targeted. This will therefore affect everyone living and working in Torbay, and will also impact or influence the activities of neighbouring authorities. As such, Torbay Council is keen to involve stakeholders in the development of its Strategy to make sure the resulting document reflects their priorities and expectations and addresses any concerns they may have.

The first stage in this process was to involve key stakeholders (representatives of different communities, organisations and interests) in the early stages of identifying the key issues for waste management in Torbay and in reviewing potential options for more detailed appraisal.

1.2 More than Consultation

Torbay Council recognises that the support of its community is crucial in the development and acceptance of the Waste Strategy and its success in the future – not only through public efforts in reducing waste at source and increasing recycling and composting to help meet targets, but also their ideas for how Torbay's recycling services and waste management facilities can be improved.

As such Torbay Council is keen to more actively involve stakeholders; providing an opportunity not only for people to comment on draft documents, but also to involve them in identifying priorities and contributing ideas from the early stages of the Strategy preparation process. As well as providing an opportunity for the community to air their concerns, it is important that this process is constructive and positive.

As part of this process, Torbay Council undertook a workshop with key stakeholders on Friday 24th November 2006 to gauge opinion regarding waste management and to involve stakeholders more actively in reviewing potential strategic options. Representatives from different areas and a number of different organisations were specifically invited (based on their roles as representatives, their involvement in previous initiatives and expressed interest in waste management issues). Approximately 40 people attended the workshops, providing a valuable insight into the concerns, priorities and needs of Torbay's community and stakeholders.

1.3 Identifying Key Issues

Working with Torbay Council, a programme of activities was developed for the workshop. The programme was designed to address the project objectives, which were to:

- Help the participants to understand the waste management issues for Torbay and the difficulties of the decision-making process;

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- Help the participants to understand the scale of the problem faced by Torbay, particularly regarding potential LATS penalties;
 - Involve the participants in reviewing and endorsing the waste management options to be evaluated further; and
 - Involve the participants in discussions about different technologies and moving towards a preferred solution.

As such the following workshop sessions were developed:

- ***Presentation introducing the Waste Strategy development process*** – informing the audience of the different stages of developing the Waste Strategy, including consultation and Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA).
- ***Presentation and workshop discussion to help understand key issues and drivers for waste management in Torbay*** – informing the audience about the key drivers for change and discussing the key waste management issues for Torbay.
- ***Workshop discussion to support the development of a vision and principles for the Strategy*** – a series of discussions to elicit stakeholders' views on what they would like to see for waste management in Torbay, including overall vision and guiding principles.
- ***Presentation and workshop discussion to introduce the different waste management technologies*** – informing the audience of the pros and cons of different waste technologies and encouraging them to discuss their thoughts about the alternatives.
- ***Workshop discussion to review the potential strategic options*** – involving the participants in reviewing the possible options (including suggesting alternatives) to identify a list of options to be taken forwards for detailed assessment.

1.4 Reporting Outcomes

This report sets out the key outcomes from the stakeholder workshop. The notes taken during the workshop have been typed and collated. The information relating to each discussion session was reviewed and the key (consensus) themes identified where possible. Whilst there will always be an element of subjectivity to the analysis of qualitative information, the review and analysis was undertaken in an independent manner, with no preconceived issues in mind. The key outcomes are presented in Section 2, with supporting quotes and comments made where appropriate¹.

¹ Please note that quotes are taken from facilitators' notes and may not be direct quotes of participants. They are intended to illustrate the key themes emerging during the workshop discussions.

2. Summary of Outcomes

2.1 Issues for Torbay

The workshop participants were asked to identify the key issues that they considered to be influencing the waste management situation in Torbay. Some of the main issues discussed by the participants included:

- ***Future population growth.*** All of the groups identified that future population growth in Torbay, as a result of natural population increases and as a result of additional development proposed, is a key issue for Torbay. Participants recognised the need to decouple waste production from population growth and felt that this should be achievable through the Waste Strategy developed: *‘although we can’t stop population growth, we should be able to stop waste growing per household.’* In addition, the issue relating to tourism and transient populations was also recognised.
- ***Potential for new facilities.*** Again, all groups identified that the geography of Torbay and the limited space available would be a key issue in determining possible solutions for Torbay. Most participants perceived that there were limited sites available in Torbay that would be appropriate for a waste facility and that exporting waste or working in partnership with other local authorities would be necessary. Linking to this, some participants identified that the relatively small amount of waste produced in Torbay would also mean that export or joint facilities would be needed. Others, however, recognised that this may mean that a smaller site could house a facility large enough to manage Torbay’s waste.
- ***Enhancing existing facilities.*** As well as recognising the need for additional facilities, several participants expressed their expectations for existing systems and facilities to be upgraded to ensure recycling could be maximised. It was recognised that, by doing this, the need for a facility to deal with residual waste may be reduced. Several participants felt that more research was needed to understand the implications of optimising recycling. They stated that they would like to know how optimisation would compare with not focusing on recycling options and sending all waste to an Energy from Waste facility instead.

2.2 Vision and Principles for Waste Management

The workshop participants were split into four smaller groups for ease of discussion². Each group was asked to consider the approach they would like to see Torbay Council take to address

² As a small number of participants left the workshop early, the final workshop discussion on ‘potential options for Torbay’ was undertaken in three smaller discussion groups.

its waste management issues and to discuss the overriding vision for waste management and the principles it would like to see driving Torbay's approach.

All stakeholders agreed that, at minimum, Torbay must develop a Strategy that will meet its targets for recycling. Some groups identified that, in addition to this, the potentially significant penalties associated with the Landfill Tax Trading Scheme (LATS) should also be a primary consideration in shaping a vision for the Strategy. Recognising the time pressure faced by Torbay and the level of action required to simply avoid penalties, one group felt that the vision was unimportant and that making any progress was the most important thing for Torbay:

"There is a danger of doing nothing due to indecision".

It was clear that the stakeholders would like to see Torbay 'be the best' possible. They did, however, recognise that it was important to take into consideration the costs associated with this, and consider the constraints presented by Torbay's key issues. One group concluded that it was important to aim to be the best at minimisation and recycling, even if it couldn't be achieved in practice:

"We should aim to be the best, do what we can to achieve it and then choose the best environmental option to deal with what's left."

Whilst some participants discussed the need to 'be at the forefront of new technology' to ensure that sufficient progress could be made, others suggested that, although they would like to see Torbay be the best it can, they would be reluctant to see it lead the way:

"Of course we want to be the best but what will this cost? Do we want to face the risks of being first?"

One group also felt that the Waste Strategy vision should be aligned with the Council's corporate vision.

2.3 Expectations for Meeting the Vision

Each group was asked to discuss their expectations for meeting the vision and principles, and addressing the key issues, that they had previously identified. A broad range of expectations were discussed. The following list represents the general outcomes of the different groups' discussions:

- We need to improve the use and effectiveness of existing services and encourage participation by educating the community about the importance of taking personal responsibility for waste production and management;
- We need to do something quickly to avoid the impact of LATS penalties;
- We need to look at options presented by all levels of the waste hierarchy (from waste minimisation to disposal);
- We need an approach that is tailored to the needs of Torbay and its people (including seasonal populations and the issues relating to specific areas and housing types); and
- We need to look beyond our boundaries for better and/or alternative solutions (with neighbouring authorities and also those further afield).

2.4 Towards Effective Solutions

2.4.1 Partnership Working

The participants were asked to consider whether Torbay should aim to deal with its waste within its political boundaries. Group discussions aimed to elicit participants' views on this and the alternative of importing and exporting waste across political boundaries.

Several of the participants felt that partnership working was the only way forward on account of the key issues previously raised. It was felt that the difficulties with geography and availability of appropriate locations may mean that exporting waste (or at least some elements of waste) would be essential for Torbay to manage its waste effectively. Building on this, one group suggested that a partnership approach in which each partner authority specialises in a certain waste stream, mechanism or technology could provide a fairer and more effective option:

'a network of facilities in sub-region offers more flexibility and reduces risk'.

It was also recognised that with a small residual waste arising, it may not be viable for Torbay to deal with its own waste independently:

'Newer technologies may mean we can be self sufficient but they are higher risk.'

Most participants agreed that, to benefit from more effective technology and economies of scale, a sub-regional solution is required.

Although it was clear that participants considered the principle of a partnership approach to be an effective solution, it was identified that there would be associated political issues, particularly if importing waste. Participants expressed scepticism towards a partnership approach working in practice:

'Each council will ultimately look after its own taxpayers meaning not everyone will agree'.

Adding to the scepticism was a belief by some participants that it would be easier to get planning permission for a facility that is *'only dealing with Torbay's own waste'*.

An alternative solution proposed was for Torbay to focus on optimising recycling/composting and manage a smaller amount of residual waste through external (or joint) facilities. Others discussed the potential for Torbay to import waste:

'Can we build a facility big enough to sell surplus capacity to make a profit?'

Implications of import/export of waste

The groups went on to discuss the potential implications of dealing with waste across political boundaries. The following factors were identified:

- Benefits from economies of scale, shared risks and potential for joint borrowing, easier financing;
- Implications of new approach on existing collection methods and sorting facilities;

- Transport and associated environmental, cost and congestion implications, although it was recognised that Torbay is already transporting waste and waste could potentially be transported by sea; and
- Ultimately it will be difficult to come achieve a partnership approach in practice: *'OK as long as it's somebody else's authority'*.

Implications of self sufficiency

Similarly, the groups were asked to consider the implications of a 'self sufficiency' approach. The following factors were identified:

- Benefits of independence;
- Higher costs of dealing with a small amount of waste and difficulty in obtaining appropriate funding;
- Meeting the capacity of a plant would be difficult (even with potential growth); and
- Finding an appropriate site or sites would be difficult.

2.4.2 Waste Management Technologies

The participants were encouraged to discuss their views regarding the different technologies presented. All participants recognised that some of the technologies are unproven and that it would be difficult to get commercial support. They recognised that this therefore presents a key factor in deciding what technologies are possible for Torbay.

Two groups discussed the fact that the choice of technology would depend on available sites and the area required by each technology. A number of participants felt that facilities should be limited to industrial sites.

All groups recognised that public acceptability of technologies was an over-riding factor not only in the choice of technology but also in the amount of time required for associated planning processes. A number of participants did, however, recognise that *'unpopular decisions sometimes have to be taken'*.

Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT)

Several participants expressed some uncertainty around MBT technology and felt that investing in the technology would not be worthwhile:

"There's a high marginal cost of trying to squeeze out an extra few per cent of recycling through an MBT. Why not maximise/optimize kerbside recycling instead, then send the rest to an EfW?"

However, others suggested that MBT offered a good interim solution to ensure that initial targets could be met.

In-vessel Composting (IVC)

IVC was identified by one group as a commercially viable option. It was also recognised that IVC could help Torbay to minimise biodegradable waste going to landfill. The main concern regarding IVC was the *'concern about end uses/markets for outputs'*. One group identified that an existing IVC at Heathfields already takes food waste so Torbay may not need another one.

Autoclaving

Several participants discussed how autoclaving requires another treatment but allows further recovery and recycling. Others expressed concern regarding the extent to which recycling rates could be increased:

“We could use autoclaving to negate the need for multiple stream collections but it may not meet recycling targets. It could increase percentage recycled if it was used in MBT.”

Reflecting earlier comments regarding the vision for waste management, a number of participants were reluctant for Torbay to ‘try out’ newer technologies:

“Don’t want to jump into an unknown technology, wait for someone else to do it first.”

Energy from waste (EFW)

All groups recognised the potential public acceptability issues associated with energy from waste options:

“People think that EFW contributes to global warming. It would require education of the public and effective consultation.”

“We can’t have an incinerator, not in Torbay. People would be up in arms.”

It was, however, recognised that people expect to be consulted and that it must not be assumed that the public’s views are known. Participants felt that the public should be involved in the process to ensure that they understand the dilemmas, alternatives and the need for additional facilities

In fact one group felt that, as Torbay has had an incinerator at the hospital for a number of years, it is likely that people would be more accepting of EFW. It was suggested that this would be more likely if new, cleaner, technology was used and if the technology was used to produce electricity.

Even with the potential acceptability issues, EFW was identified by most groups as the best long term solution. Several participants did, however, feel that EFW could prove to be an expensive option – in planning, construction and operation.

Advanced Thermal Treatment (ATT)

Two groups considered ATT to be an attractive option because they tend to avoid political/public issues. One participant identified Bristol as an example, where there was little objection to pyrolysis yet it has no different emissions to an incinerator. Other participants suggested that there could still be long term planning issues, which can hold up progress.

2.5 Determining Options

The final workshop session focussed on reviewing the possible strategic options for waste management. The proposed options were presented and each group was asked to discuss their views regarding the pros and cons of each option and make recommendations on the list of options proposed for further evaluation.

2.5.1 Options Appraisal

The options presented in the workshop are presented in Figure 2.1 below. In addition to the options identified, the groups were able to discuss alternative options not presented if they wished. In addition, participants were prompted to consider whether their views would be different depending on the type of technology selected.

Figure 2.1 Options presented to workshop participants

			Disposal Options			
			A	B	C	D
			Export to landfill only	Export to facility outside Torbay	Work in partnership with neighbours	Build facility in Torbay
Collection Options	1	Continue current system	1A <i>Continue with current collection system and export residual waste to landfill elsewhere</i>	1B <i>Continue with current collection system and export to alternative facility elsewhere</i>	1C <i>Continue with current collection system and work in partnership with neighbours to deal with residual waste</i>	1D <i>Continue with current collection system and build facility in Torbay to deal with residual waste</i>
	2	Build on current system	2A <i>Build on current collection system and export smaller amount of residual waste to landfill elsewhere</i>	2B <i>Build on current collection system and export smaller residual waste to alternative facility elsewhere</i>	2C <i>Build on current collection system and work in partnership with neighbours to deal with remaining residual waste</i>	2D <i>Build on current collection system and build a facility in Torbay to deal with the remaining residual waste</i>

Two collection options were presented. Option 1 is to continue with the current collection system, expecting gradual improvement and development over time. Option 2 is to build on the current system, creating more of a step change in approach, for example in the collection of new recycle streams or the introduction of new systems or even new infrastructure.

Four disposal options were identified. The first involves continuing the current approach of exporting residual waste to landfill. The second option involves exporting waste to an a facility (alternative to landfill). The third option involves working in partnership with neighbouring authorities. The final option involves building a facility in Torbay, facilitating a self-sufficiency approach.

These alternatives presented 8 potential strategic options (combinations) to be considered. Drawing on the outputs of all groups, Table 2.1 presents the key outcomes from the initial options appraisal by participants.

Table 2.1 Option Appraisal Outputs

Option	Summary of comments made
1A	<p>Easy option and cheap Not acceptable, does not address any of the key issues Will not meet Government targets Will run out of landfill LATS trading not viable Current transport/collection is unacceptable Not consistent with tourism and green credentials are important in this area</p>
1B	<p>Not taking responsibility for your own waste Poor transport Less complex and less responsibility on Torbay LATS trading likely to increase Maybe no markets Fuel costs and pollution Proximity principle is common sense if life cycle assessment supports it. Would be a commercial arrangement, which could have risks in the future, insecurity of arrangement. Alternative is that commercial arrangement could be cheaper and therefore beneficial. We have to export at the moment so difference in transport may be minimal Politically easier as it does not involve building in Torbay</p>
1C	<p>Partnership with neighbours can be an advantage but there may be different needs and priorities Would work in principle but it is difficult to form effective partnerships Capacity is larger so benefits from economies of scale, choice of facility and funding Economies of scale in investment possible Who are neighbours? Regional or local? Should learn from the experience of partnerships Could also have combined collection services. Transport still an issue</p>
1D	<p>Proximity and control will help ownership and waste reduction etc. In charge of own destiny, can keep it on our own terms now and in the long term NIMBY within Torbay Public perception may be negative Need to educate public about modern incineration Doesn't rule out partnerships in the future Availability of sites an issue Costs would be huge Size of waste arising may make this unviable Councils are already struggling to get decent tender interest and there may be less interest in a small facility May be difficult to get the size right and estimate growth predictions correctly</p>
2A	<p>Budget implications but could generate income from increased recycling Weekly collections Community recycling centres Extend to include kitchen and garden waste Improvements to flow-through traffic at MRF Better green waste facility i.e. dedicated facility Minimise packaging – education and awareness initiatives Would be more likely to be fit for purpose Storage facilities may be an issue Need to get the collection service right to encourage people to take ownership Great short term option</p>
2B	<p>Less transport than 1B Growth increase unknown Putting risk on other authorities Transport infrastructure already congested Environmental protection is an important driver in this area One sided relationship presents risks and insecurity</p>

Table 2.1 Option Appraisal Outputs (continued)

Option	Summary of comments made
2C	Partnership working with neighbours to share risk/costs and gain economies of scale What about small scale house-related systems of waste management e.g. composting, recycling, waste as fuel etc? Torbay needs to play full role, so this would also mean facilities in Torbay. Need a partnership board to achieve common goals. Could have a suite of facilities in partnership, each specialising. Knowledge and capacity of authorities to do this. EfW would only work as part of a partnership approach as would need to ensure capacity could be met.
2D	Total control of where your waste is going/how it is dealt with. Transport costs are avoided Internalising risks Funding may be difficult to find Public acceptability and impact on planning system an issue. District heating/generating electricity for new build housing developments. MBT possible in the short term, building on MRF Thermal treatment possible in the longer term Wouldn't rule out partnerships in the future - could sell surplus capacity to offset the costs. Would this provide value for money? Would need to buy skills for example in PFI Limited availability of appropriate sites

2.5.2 Optimising recycling

All of the groups identified that option 2 (building on the current collection system) was a preferred approach. One group identified that optimising recycling would mean less pressure on the requirements for a residual waste facility:

“Depending on the effort at the front end will influence the land take needed at the back end.”

It was, however, recognised that it would be important to understand where to focus attention. For example, some waste streams may be simpler to collect, or may have more profitable end markets.

All of the groups agreed that optimising collection and recycling activities was important to raise awareness and build ownership for waste management. It was felt that it would help both in encouraging waste minimisation and recognising the need for an EfW facility.

2.5.3 Importing/exporting recyclates

One group in particular recognised the possibility of exporting the treatment/separation of recycle streams too. It was agreed that this should be considered as an option but that additional transportation issues may make it unfeasible. It was suggested that a policy for exporting all waste should incorporate a maximum distance or criteria by which an assessment should be made in each case.

2.5.4 Towards a Preferred Option

Following their discussions regarding possible options, each group was asked to identify options they felt should definitely not be considered and options which they felt would be preferable. Participants were asked to place a sticky dot (red for negative feeling or green for preferable) only on options that they felt most strongly about (not all options had to be marked). Table 2.2 and the text that follows provides an indication of the outcomes of this exercise. It must be recognised that these preferences were made on the limited information available and that further investigation will be necessary to enable a preferred option to be identified.

Table 2.2 Outcome of preferences discussion

Option	Outcome
1A	Marked as negative by all three groups (one group placed all six of their red dots on this one option)
1B	One group marked this as negative
1C	One group marked this as negative
1D	Two groups marked this as negative
2A	All three groups marked this as a preferable option (particularly for the short term)
2B	One group marked this as negative
2C	All three groups marked this as a preferable option (one group placed two dots on this option)
2D	All three groups marked this as a preferable option (one group placed six dots on this option)

All groups identified option 1A as an option they did not wish to be considered. Although it was recognised by some participants that this may have to be evaluated as the ‘base case’, it was felt that continuing ‘as is’ was not an option for Torbay. It was recognised that continuing to landfill as much as is currently landfilled would not be an appropriate solution for the future for both environmental and economic reasons.

Building on this, one group identified that all options based on continuing the current collection system were inappropriate for Torbay as it was important to optimise recycling as much as possible. Other groups did consider options 1B, 1C and 1D as they wanted to understand more about the feasibility and cost effectiveness of optimising recycling in comparison to other treatment options such as EfW.

One of the three groups concluded that self sufficiency was the only option for Torbay, despite the obvious planning and public acceptability issues. The main reasons for this were the potential implications of transporting waste elsewhere and the likely difficulties (and impact on time) in reaching an effective and beneficial commercial or partnership arrangement with other authorities.

Option 2B was identified by one group as being inappropriate for Torbay, particularly if relating to recycle streams also being exported to facilities elsewhere. The main concerns seemed to be

regarding transportation and the associated impacts on the environment and Torbay's road networks. The other two groups did not identify option 2B as a positive or negative option.

All groups agreed that they were happy for options 2A, 2C and 2D to be the basis of further evaluation, taking into account specific technologies. It was identified that a financial and risk analysis was required to enable a preferred option to be identified. All groups felt that option 2A would help to meet short term targets and help to build awareness for waste minimisation and the challenges faced by Torbay in managing waste. It was felt that a greater understanding of the feasibility and implications of options 2C and 2D would also be needed to

3. Conclusions

3.1 Key Messages

A considerable amount of information was gleaned through the workshop process, all of which will be valuable in shaping the approach to strategy development and the eventual document itself. The key messages of note include:

- Time pressure was identified as a key issue for Torbay. Participants identified the need to make progress quickly to ensure short term needs can be met.
- All groups agreed that they wanted Torbay to be the best, but most participants felt that being pioneering held too many risks. Preferences were expressed towards tried and tested technologies.
- It is clear that a partnership approach to working would be preferred but that many participants felt that this would be difficult to facilitate effectively in practice. Whilst some participants expressed a wish for greater evaluation of options requiring partnership, one group felt that self-sufficiency was the only option for Torbay.
- All groups identified the need to optimise collection and recycling services. All groups agreed that Torbay's strategy should recognise all of the waste hierarchy and focus on enhancing the existing systems and facilities prior to determining the need for additional residual treatment facilities. Most felt that considerable effort should be placed on educating and engaging residents to build ownership and make the most out of existing collection/recycling systems.
- All three groups identified that Option 2A (building on the current collection and recycling system and continuing to export residual waste to landfill) would be a good option to meet short term targets. It was identified that this could also help in raising awareness of waste management challenges, whilst a longer term solution was developed.
- Public perception was recognised to be a key issue for Torbay (as it is elsewhere). However, it was felt that ongoing effort should be made to communicate to the public regarding the waste management challenges and dilemmas faced by Torbay. This would ensure that residents would be more likely to understand the reasons for any decisions made (and recognise that those decisions were difficult to make).

