

Consultation on the Scoping Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the draft Waste Management Plan for England

Introduction

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

We welcome the opportunity to submit a response on the following issues:

General comments

1. We note that the *Waste Management Plan for England* (WMPE) introduces no new policies (as stated on page 5 of the draft WMPE: "*It is not, therefore, the intention of the Plan to introduce new policies or to change the landscape of how waste is managed in England*") and it is not site-specific. As a result, clarity is needed regarding the reasonable alternatives to be assessed in this SEA. We trust that a broad approach will be taken that makes clear the policy options being considered and assesses those options in sufficient detail to take account of their potential effects on the historic environment.

2. Linked with this broad approach, we note that the draft WMPE refers to its role as an "umbrella" document (page 5 of the WMPE), also referring to policies in the Resources and Waste Strategy (RWS) and the National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW). Focusing on these two documents in turn:

- We note that the RWS was not subject to an SEA and so there is no Environmental Report documenting the likely significant effects of implementation, "*although there is evidence available*" (quoting from page 5 of the Scoping Report). We note page 16 of the RWS states (**bold emphasis added**): "*This Strategy is for the long term. It is our **policy framework** for decision making and action and establishes what we all need to do to achieve our goals. We will go further in areas where we are already doing well, including the move to a low carbon economy. The Strategy does not answer all the questions for implementation or cover historic waste policy. Instead, it aims to be a **guide to future government policy**, our commitment to safeguard the planet's precious natural resources and environment. It encourages and invites you to play your part.*"

- We note that the 2014 NPPW was screened separately for SEA which concluded that as the NPPW was unlikely to have significant environmental effects. Any revision of the NPPW may well lead to the same outcome.

3. Presumably the policies that are outlined, but not yet fixed, in the RWS and which are referenced in the draft WMPE, will form part of the broad approach to this SEA. For example, the draft WMPE cross refers to the RWS in various ways, including amongst others:

- Page 9: *Both the Plan and the Resources and Waste Strategy will contribute to the delivery of five strategic ambitions:*
 - *To work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025;*
 - *To work towards eliminating food waste to landfill by 2030;*
 - *To eliminate avoidable plastic waste over the lifetime of the 25 Year Environment Plan;*
 - *To double resource productivity by 2050; and*
 - *To eliminate avoidable waste of all kinds by 2050*
- Page 13: *The Resources and Waste Strategy promotes the greater efficiency of EfW plants through utilisation of the heat generated in district heating networks or by industry, and by seeking an increase in the number plants obtaining R1 recovery status.*
- Page 14: *The Resources and Waste Strategy recognised that there is an ongoing role for landfill in managing waste, particularly for inert waste that cannot be prevented or recycled, but that its use should be minimised as much as possible.*
- Page 19: *Our Resources and Waste Strategy also includes a commitment to consult on further ways to encourage hazardous waste producers to implement the waste hierarchy.*
- Page 24: *The Resources and Waste Strategy also sets out measures to extend the lives of products through repair, reuse, and remanufacture.*
- Page 25: *Following on from the commitment in the Resources and Waste Strategy we have as part of the consultation on Consistency in recycling sought views on the introduction of mandatory separate food waste collection and also free garden waste collection for houses with gardens. Subject to consultation we would expect to introduce these measures from 2023.*
- Page 25: *In the Resources and Waste Strategy the government also announced that it would carry out and publish a review of policies to support bio-waste recycling through anaerobic digestion and composting to ensure we can maximise the benefits of these treatment options whilst managing the risks.*
- Page 26: *Our Resources and Waste Strategy also includes a commitment to consult on further ways to encourage hazardous waste producers to implement the waste hierarchy.*
- Page 33: *The Resources and Waste Strategy sets out the government's objective of supporting the need for resource and waste management*

infrastructure through the planning system including a greater emphasis on the circular economy.

- Page 37: *The Resources and Waste Strategy considered whether further capacity was needed to manage residual waste and welcomed further investment in energy from waste facilities that raises efficiency standards and minimises impacts on the environment*
- Page 39: *Our recently published Resources and Waste Strategy includes measures that will help to change the way we use and think about our resources, and help to reduce litter along the way.*

4. The examples cited in paragraph 3 above give an indication of potential policy options. Also in this regard we note the draft WMPE refers to the Government's evaluation plan for the key RWS policies, which will affect the development of waste streams in the future, citing the following five evaluation projects under a 'Policy to be evaluated' column heading:

- *The new provisions for extended producer responsibility on packaging waste*
- *The new provisions on a deposit return scheme*
- *The effectiveness of Resources & Waste Strategy actions on plastic*
- *The effectiveness of the requirement for consistent collections*
- *Analysis of the contribution the Resources & Waste Strategy has made to observed changes*

5. We look forward to working with Defra and others as appropriate in the consideration of waste policy options and identifying their potential effects on the historic environment.

Consultation questions

Does the Scoping Report set out sufficient information to establish the context for the assessment, both in terms of the scope of the baseline analysis presented, and the plans and programmes reviewed (Section 2, Appendix B and C)? If not, which areas do you think have been missed from the baseline analysis and/or what additional plans or programmes should be included? Alternatively, are there any topics covered in the baseline that are considered to be unnecessary? Similarly, are there any plans and programmes currently included in the review of plans and programmes that is identified as being unnecessary and could be discarded?

6. Page B38 states that "*Historic England has produced many Conservation Area site specific assessments and guidance which provides important information on the state of the Conservation Area*". This should in fact read "*Historic England has produced advice on the production of site-specific Conservation Area assessments, which themselves provide important information on the state of Conservation Areas*".

7. We note that pages B38 and B39 refer to *MHCLG (2015) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for Waste* and *MHCLG (2016) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on the Natural Environment*, having already referred to *Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2014) Planning Practice Guidance*. Clearly it is important also not to overlook other elements of the PPG eg its section on the historic environment. To avoid confusion we suggest either adding reference to the PPG section on the historic environment or, preferably, deleting reference to only selected subsets of the PPG.

8. In terms of sources of heritage data to be referenced on page C73 and in the main text, whilst we appreciate that a cut off needs to be made when preparing a Scoping Report of this type. A more recent source of data on the position in England is Heritage Counts eg.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2018/hc2018-heritage-indicators/>

Additionally, referring to the data available via the Heritage Counts website could also enable greater consideration of heritage-related trends. On page 35, within the summary of key topics relating to Cultural Heritage, the Scoping Report includes a subheading of Key Trends; but some of the data presented are focused on a single year.

9. Also in terms of data sources, there is also a more recent source of heritage at risk data than 2017 (<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/heritage-at-risk-2018>). As an aside, we suggest that the point being made on setting on page 36 is in fact more relevant to link to our [Good Practice Advice on setting](#) rather than heritage at risk (footnote 83 refers).

Do the SEA objectives and guide questions (Table 3.3) cover the breadth of issues appropriate for appraising the effects of the draft WMPE? If not, which objectives and/or guide questions should be amended and how? Are there any additional objectives or guide questions that you believe should be included? Alternatively, are there any objectives and guide questions which are unnecessary and could be removed?

10. Draft SEA Objective 14

Draft SEA objective 14 states: “*To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment including cultural heritage resources, historic buildings and archaeological features and their settings.*” This inclines toward a narrow view of the historic environment and does not acknowledge the breadth of designated heritage assets or indeed the important considerations associated with non-designated heritage assets. Also, enhancement is something which should be promoted in line with the NPPF. We suggest a revised objective as follows: “*To conserve and ~~where appropriate~~ enhance the historic environment including designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings~~cultural heritage resources, historic buildings and archaeological features and their settings.~~”*

Currently there are four draft guide questions under this objective as follows:

- *Will the draft WMPE affect the significance of internationally and nationally designated heritage assets and their settings?*
- *Will the draft WMPE affect non-designated heritage assets, archaeological remains and their settings?*
- *Will the draft WMPE conserve or enhance heritage assets and the wider historic environment including landscapes, townscapes, buildings, structures and archaeological remains?*
- *Will the draft WMPE affect the fabric and setting of historic buildings, places or spaces that contribute to local distinctiveness, character and appearances?*

In the second question, given archaeological remains can be a key component of both designated and non-designated heritage assets, it would be simpler just to refer to non-designated heritage assets ie *Will the draft WMPE affect non-designated heritage assets, ~~archaeological remains and their settings?~~*

In the third question, we note that the NPPF refers to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment (paragraph 20) which presumably should be reflected in the approach taken with regard to the WMPE too. Furthermore the wording of the question is somewhat tautological, as the elements listed in the second half of the question can be heritage assets (already referenced). We suggest simpler revised wording as follows: “*Will the draft WMPE conserve and/or enhance ~~heritage assets and the wider~~ historic environment including landscapes, townscapes, buildings, structures and archaeological remains?*”

11. Draft SEA objective 15

Draft SEA objective 15 states: “*To protect and enhance landscape and townscape quality and visual amenity*” and lists Landscape and Human Health as relevant SEA topics. We suggest adding cultural heritage as a third relevant SEA topic, given there is a cross-over with the historic environment, which is acknowledged in section C1.12.

Do you have any other comments?

12. On page 35, within the summary of key topics (in the section on key issues relevant to the draft WMPE) and more specifically its coverage of Cultural Heritage, the Scoping Report refers to the following:

- Effects on air quality, dust and climate change have the potential to affect heritage assets.
- The construction and operation of infrastructure (including waste management infrastructure) could have adverse impacts on the significance of heritage assets and archaeological remains both directly (through the loss of, or damage to, assets) or indirectly (through effects on setting), depending on scale and location of works.

- Wetlands are fragile and vulnerable to subtle changes arising from development that can affect paleoenvironmental deposits and archaeological assets.

With regard to the first bullet point, it should be noted that issues such as air quality, dust and climate change can affect heritage assets and their enjoyment.

With regard to the second bullet point, impacts on setting may be direct impacts; and again archaeological remains are a type of heritage asset. We suggest the following revised wording: “*The construction and operation of infrastructure (including waste management infrastructure) could have adverse impacts on the significance of heritage assets ~~and archaeological remains~~ both directly (through the loss of, or damage to, assets and direct impacts on the setting of assets) or indirectly (through other effects ~~offsite on setting~~), depending on scale and location of works.*”

13. In section C1.12, we note that the Scoping Report refers to the following existing problems for cultural heritage:

- *The settings of some heritage assets are at risk from new development.*
- *Scheduled monuments in rural areas are at risk from agricultural practices, land disturbance and unrestricted plant, scrub or tree growth.*
- *Challenging economic conditions are reducing the funds available to conserve and manage heritage assets.*
- *Wetlands are fragile and vulnerable to subtle changes arising from development that can affect paleoenvironmental deposits and archaeological assets. Other aspects of the wider historic environment that could be affected include disruption to historically important water sources, the flooding or drying of deep archaeological sites and assets such as mills and bridges which can be affected by local water levels.*
- *The impact of climate change on wetland heritage is currently poorly understood. Measures introduced to protect and enhance natural environmental qualities (water quality or biodiversity) may also inadvertently threaten wetland heritage if not handled sensitively.*

Furthermore, it is noted that the summary of key issues on page 35 and 36 abridge the key issues identified in section C1.12 and omits reference to the challenging economic conditions leading to reducing funds available to conserve and manage heritage assets. Depending on how the Scoping Report is to be used, if the reference to economic conditions is stated as a problem in C1.12 presumably the issue should also be restated in the main text?