

The Challenge of Developing Markets for Recyclates in Wales

Waste Management in Wales has historically been characterised by an over-reliance on landfill as a disposal route. The Welsh Assembly Government has recently made great efforts in developing an integrated approach to tackle the issue and has published its own national Waste Strategy, *Wise About Waste*. The strategy recognises that the development of a sustainable waste management system in Wales can bring about economic, social and environmental opportunities and is advocating a cultural shift in waste practices in all realms of society. Following the UK waste strategy, it supports recycling activities through the funding of, for example, the Waste as Resources Action Programme (WRAP).

In its quest to bring waste management to the fore, the Welsh Assembly has also funded the production of a research report by the ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS) at Cardiff University on waste efficiency at the Welsh level. The project was funded under the Observatory for a Sustainable Knowledge based Region – (OSKaR) which is part of the TASK programme - Towards A Sustainable Knowledge based Region, managed by the Welsh Assembly Government. It is one of the projects approved under the European Commission's Innovative Actions Programme, which aims to stimulate innovative approaches to regional development and to disseminate information about innovative methods for applying Sustainable Development (SD).

The research investigates the progress of the implementation of the waste strategy for Wales, outlining the challenges and opportunities faced by the country. One of the key issues facing Wales is the need to find alternative uses for recycled materials. There are many opportunities for Welsh businesses to be gained from the development of markets for recyclates. The research will help to identify where do market opportunities lie and what current activities, programmes, organisations exist to help to stabilise and create efficient waste markets. Key issues which need to be considered include the need to develop an adequate infrastructure for recycling and to improve industrial waste data collection as these are fundamental to achieving the effective operationalisation of strategic waste policies. There is a lack of accurate data on specific waste streams and a need to trace their source, composition, growth rates, and life cycles. Second, it is important to reinforce stakeholders' working relationships and to establish a forum whereby actors (from industry, the voluntary sector and government) can meet and co-ordinate their activities to ensure that sufficient levels of materials are brought together at the Welsh level. Furthermore, it is worth exploring the potential transferability of sustainable waste practices and policies from other European countries to Wales. Best practice visits organised by OSKaR have provided an in depth look at leading waste management models such as those of Stena Metall in Sweden and the Lankhorst group in the Netherlands.

The devolved powers allocated to the Assembly with regard to waste remain limited. It does not hold the necessary power to raise taxes and create financial incentives which will send the right market signals and help recycling activities to thrive. However, by promoting green procurement in the public

sector, it provides incentives to local authorities to work together through joint plans and funds in order to create the demand for recycled materials and realise economies of scale.