

SANITATION COUNTRY PROFILE

UNITED KINGDOM

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Please note. The information contained in this report relates only to the activities of the UK Government and bodies responsible to the UK Government. On some issues different arrangements may apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Decision-Making:

A. Basic Sanitation: The Environment Agency (EA) is charged with protecting water resources, the quality of water in inland and coastal waters and the natural aquatic environment. The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive sets priorities for the treatment of sewage according to the nature and sensitivity of the area receiving the sewage discharge and the size of the discharge. For the most significant discharges, the Directive specifies secondary treatment as the norm but provides for higher standards of treatment for discharges to sensitive areas and at least primary treatment for discharges to areas with high natural dispersion characteristics. The Directive will also require an end to the disposal of sewage sludge at sea by the end of 1998. The Government considers that such an arrangement would facilitate the environmentally sustainable management of water resources, including the protection of aquatic ecosystems and freshwater living resources.

The UK has taken steps to reduce inputs of organohalogens in water bodies, but does not believe that full elimination is currently achievable or that these substances should be treated as a uniform group. Major Groups participate fully at the national and local level. For aspects related to freshwater, see under the Freshwater Profile.

B. Solid Wastes: Waste Strategy 2000 provides a policy framework for sustainable waste management by encouraging waste minimisation and recovery. The waste strategy was directed at a wide audience, including industry and the public sector, as well as individual householders and consumers. The strategy sets a range of primary and secondary targets for reducing waste to landfill and to increase the amount of waste recycled.. The Government has undertaken to review this strategy in 2005.

The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 1997 came into force on 6 March 1997. Developed with industry, they aimed increase the amount of recovery and recycling of packaging waste in the UK to around 50% by 2001. As an extension of the 'polluter pays principle', they oblige businesses in the packaging chain, which have an annual turnover of more than £2 million and which handle more than 50 tonnes of packaging a year, to recover and recycle a specified amount of packaging waste. The Government has periodically reviewed the Regulations since 1997 with the help of the Advisory Committee on Packaging (ACP). The ACP was first established in 1996 and is made up of industry representatives. The ACP advises Government on ways to improve the workings of the packaging Regulations.

The 2002 Strategy Unit's Report 'Waste Not, Want Not' looked at ways to implement the Landfill Directive. The report made 46 recommendations to aid Government in meeting its targets. The Government accepted the majority of these recommendations in its response and is working towards achieving them. A number of recommendations have already been met.

Through the policy of producer responsibility, the Government is working with business to achieve higher levels of re-use, recovery and recycling in the packaging, vehicles, tyres, batteries, newsprint, and electrical and electronic equipment sectors. Most of these sectors are already the subject of EC recycling legislation. The Packaging Directive has been implemented in the UK through the packaging Regulations and full implementation of the End of Life Vehicle (ELV) and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directives should follow shortly.

C. Hazardous Wastes: The UK's obligations under the Basel Convention are implemented by Council Regulation (EC) 259/93, subsidiary UK regulations (SI 1137/1994) and the UK Management Plan for Exports and Imports of Waste, published in 1996. This framework includes measures to prevent and punish illegal international traffic in hazardous wastes. The Plan bans all exports from the UK of waste destined for disposal operations, and most imports for disposal are also banned, except where wider environmental considerations apply. Exports of hazardous waste for recovery to non-OECD countries are

prohibited consistent with the UK's obligations under the Basel Convention, and as implemented under the EC Waste Shipment Regulation. Exports to OECD countries are permitted. To preserve legitimate trade in wastes for recovery, imports for genuine recovery operations are permitted, including energy recovery. However, the Plan prevents imports for disposal under the guise of recovery, containing guidance designed to combat "sham recovery." The plan implements the UK's policy of self-sufficiency in waste disposal, as well as the proximity principle. Transfrontier shipments of waste are controlled in line with the Government's commitments as a Party to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. The Government has respected the 1994 decision and from May 1994, exports of hazardous waste from the United Kingdom to non-OECD countries have been banned, other than in exceptional circumstances.

The UK has designated 72 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones under the EC Nitrate Directive (91/676). Since December 1998, farmers within the Zones have been required to comply with mandatory measures to control nitrate pollution from agriculture. These include requirements to limit applications of fertilisers and organic manures and to observe closed periods for fertiliser and some applications of livestock manures as well as rules on record keeping and waste handling and storage facilities.

D. Radioactive Wastes: The last statement of Government policy on radioactive waste management was the previous Government's White Paper, 'Review of Radioactive Waste Management - Final Conclusions' (Cm 2919), published in July 1995. The White Paper followed a review that explored how to ensure that radioactive waste, whatever its origin, is properly managed so that people and the environment are not exposed to unacceptable risks. The White Paper set out the roles of the Government, regulators and operators in the sustainable management of radioactive waste. Specific policies included a commitment to the disposal of intermediate level radioactive waste in a deep repository on land; developing a disposal strategy for high level radioactive waste; five yearly reviews of nuclear operators' decommissioning strategies; establishing a regime to deal with radioactively contaminated land; and the import and export of radioactive wastes. The 1995 White Paper also reaffirmed that UK Nirex Ltd has the task of providing a deep underground repository for intermediate level waste. In 1989 it was announced that Nirex would conduct detailed geological studies in the vicinities of Dounreay and Sellafield, and in July 1991 Nirex chose to concentrate its investigations on Sellafield. Nirex chose to concentrate its work on a site at Longlands farm, near Sellafield, Cumbria. To test the geology and the hydrogeology of the site, Nirex proposed to construct an underground rock laboratory or a 'rock characterisation facility' (RCF). In July 1994, Nirex submitted a planning application to Cumbria County Council for the RCF. In December 1994, the County Council refused planning consent, Nirex appealed against the decision and a planning inquiry was held. The Inspector of the inquiry submitted his report to the Secretary of State for the Environment in late November 1996. In March 1997, the then Secretary of State for the Environment decided to dismiss Nirex's appeal. The Government is now considering the implications for radioactive waste management policy of the former Secretary of State's decision.

Programmes and Projects :

A. Basic Sanitation: A major investment programme is being developed to ensure compliance with the European Community's Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. The Environment Agency (EA), in England and Wales, and the parallel authorities in Scotland and Northern Ireland lay down legally required standards for all sewage discharges to inland, estuarial and coastal waters. All sewage discharged to inland waters from communities greater than a 2,000 population is given at least secondary treatment before discharge. For aspects related to freshwater, see under the Freshwater Profile.

Partners for Water and Sanitation is a UK tri-sector initiative comprising Government, civil society and private sector organisations in a partnership to assist developing countries, initially from Africa, with work in the provision of clean water and adequate sanitation to achieve the Millennium Development Goal for Water and the equivalent target for sanitation agreed at WSSD. Its aim is to contribute to

achieving international development targets relating to poverty reduction through sustainable access to safe water and sanitation.

B. Solid Wastes: : In Waste Strategy 2000 the Government committed to reducing the proportion of controlled waste going to landfill from 70% to 60% by 2005, and to recovering value from 40% of municipal waste by 2005. A new revised Packaging Directive has set targets for December 2008 and the targets have already been implemented by the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 1997 (as amended). The Regulations set a business recovery target of 70% for 2008 and separate material specific recycling targets. In addition, the EU Landfill Directive introduced targets for the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste (BMW) from landfill. The UK needs to reduce the amount of BMW it sends to landfill to 35 per cent of 1995 levels by 2020, with interim targets of 75 and 50 per cent set for 2010 and 2013.

C. Hazardous Wastes: The UK has programmes for acid rain, heavy metals and persistent organic pollutants. See also under Decision-Making and Financing.

In 1996, the UK designated 72 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones for the protection of drinking waters against nitrate pollution under the EC Nitrate Directive (91/676). However, the ECJ ruled that the Nitrates Directive requires the protection of *all* waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural land. Therefore, in 2002/03, additional Zones were designated in the UK to comply with the ECJ judgment (total coverage is now 55% of England, 13.5% of Scotland, 3% of Wales, and <1% of Northern Ireland. Farmers within the Zones are required to comply with mandatory measures to control nitrate pollution from agriculture. These include requirements to limit applications of fertilisers and organic manures and to observe closed periods for fertiliser and some applications of livestock manures as well as rules on record keeping and waste handling and storage facilities.

The Nitrate Sensitive Areas offered five-year voluntary agreements to farmers in designated areas for the adoption of practices designed to reduce or stabilise nitrate levels in public water supplies. The Scheme has now closed and the last of the five-year agreements are coming to an end. Research into the effectiveness of the Scheme in tackling nitrate pollution is currently being assessed.

The Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) offers payments to either encourage farmers to convert to organic farming, or to help existing organic farmers maintain their land in an environmentally beneficial way. At the beginning of 2005, existing Defra agri-environment schemes, including OFS are to be replaced by a new scheme, the Entry Level and Higher Level 'Environmental Stewardship Scheme'.

D. Radioactive Wastes: See under Decision-Making.

Status :

A. Basic Sanitation: About 96% of dwellings are connected to the mains sewerage systems. Some 1.1 million tonnes (dry weight basis) of sewage sludge is produced annually in the UK as a by-product of sewage treatment processes. This will rise to 1.5 million tonnes by 2005 as treatment standards are raised, in particular for coastal discharges. Disposal of sewage sludge to sea was banned from the end of 1998 under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. Currently, some 55% is used as fertiliser on agricultural land, 22% incinerated and 11% landfilled. In the Government's view, the recovery of value from sewage sludge, in the form of fertiliser and organic matter, through controlled application on land is the best practicable option for most sludge.

B. Solid Wastes: See under Decision-Making and Financing.

C. Hazardous Wastes: See under Decision-Making and Financing.

D. Radioactive Wastes: Discharge reductions have caused the impact of radioactive substances in the marine environment to decline to the extent that the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2000 does not list this as an issue of major importance. In the past, the driving force for reducing radioactive discharges has been the protection of human health. The new challenge is to ensure that nonhuman biota are also adequately protected. This is being addressed internationally, in part through the OSPAR Convention.

The OSPAR Commission has set a target of ensuring that discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances are reduced to levels where the additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels, resulting from such discharges, emissions and losses, are close to zero by 2020.

In June 2000 the Government issued for consultation a draft UK Strategy for Radioactive Discharges 2001-2020 to show how the UK is working towards achieving the OSPAR target for 2020. The final version of the UK strategy, which will be updated every four years, will be published this year. It will include estimated discharge profiles, from the various nuclear sectors, from 2001 to 2020 and show how we will implement the OSPAR targets rigorously and transparently and in a way that is proportionate to the risks, costs and benefits involved.

Capacity-Building, Education, Training and Awareness-Raising:

A. Basic Sanitation: For aspects related to freshwater, see under the Freshwater Profile.

B. Solid Wastes: The Government has established a diverse range of programmes aimed at delivering resource efficiency in business. A good example is Envirowise (formerly the Environmental Technology Best Practice Programme), which provides business with advice on waste minimisation. The Programme offers a range of free services, including: a telephone Helpline and website; best practice guides and case studies; free on-site waste review visits; and workshops. Since the Programme was established in 1994, the Programme has helped UK business to make cumulative resource efficiency savings of over £800m

Improving awareness and stimulating behavioural change through public education is a major focus of the Waste Implementation Programme (WIP) and its partner organisation the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). £30m has been committed over the three years to 2006 to fund a re-evaluation of current awareness programmes and the development of national and local campaigns, aimed at maximizing participation rates in recycling schemes.

With publication in September 03 of a Framework for Sustainable Consumption & Production, the Government recognised that there is an important debate to be had about consumption patterns in modern societies. Government for its part is taking a lead in making its own consumption - worth some £13 billion - more sustainable by requiring, from November 2003, all new central Government department contracts to apply the minimum environmental standards when purchasing certain types of product, covering aspects such as energy efficiency, recycled content and biodegradability. Government is also working with others to help inform thinking and stimulate action in the whole area of sustainable consumption e.g. with the Green Alliance on a series of seminars to bring together academics, policy-makers, business people and NGOs, and working with the Sustainable Development Commission in partnership with the National Consumer Council on their proposals to convene a Round Table. The role of consumers is particularly crucial to the sustainable consumption debate and recent work by the Government's Advisory Committees - on Consumer Products and the Environment and the Committee on Business and the Environment - have provided useful contributions in this area and a number of proposals about how progress could be made.

WIP and WRAP are also working closely with local authorities (LAs) to improve capacity at the LA level to deliver more sustainable waste management, for example through practical advice on the development

of kerbside recycling schemes and the provision of targeted consultancy support to LAs on planning, procurement and waste-technological issues.

C. Hazardous Wastes: As a country the UK produces a significant amount of hazardous waste each year – some 5 million tonnes in England and Wales alone. Against a background of significant change in the European legislation affecting hazardous waste, it is the Government's aim to see that amount reduced, and to ensure that any hazardous waste produced is managed safely. To achieve these aims the UK will work together with waste producers, the waste management industry, regulators and ensure the views of the public and environmental interests are taken on board. In achieving this goal the UK has set up a Hazardous Waste Forum to advise on the reduction and safe management of hazardous waste.

The Forum has met five times since February 2003 and established three sub groups to consider: i) waste arisings and scope for minimisation, ii) treatment capacity and ii) the strategic way forward by way of an advisory document. The document, "Hazardous Waste - an action plan for its reduction and environmentally sound management" sets out the key issues and recommended actions for stakeholders.

D. Radioactive Wastes: No information available.

Information:

A. Basic Sanitation: No information available.

B. Solid Wastes: No information available.

C. Hazardous Wastes: The Chemicals Stakeholder Forum was launched by the Minister for the Environment in December 2000, to "provide a voice for people and organisations with an interest in chemicals and their effects on the environment". Membership of the Forum includes environmental and conservation organisations, the chemical industry, trade associations, consumer groups, trade unions and the scientific community. It advises on public concerns about chemicals in the environment; on the selection and assessment of chemicals considered likely to cause serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and on industry proposals for action to reduce these risks. The Chemicals Stakeholder Forum is primarily concerned about environmental exposure to chemicals through their production and use in products rather than dealing with hazardous chemical waste. However, where a particular issue of waste chemicals arose as part of a life-cycle analysis of a particular substance it would offer appropriate advice.

D. Radioactive Wastes: In 2002, the Government set out its vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas in the first Marine Stewardship Report - Safeguarding Our Seas: A Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of our Marine Environment.

Among other things, the report sets out the UK commitment to managing radioactive wastes, whether they are in solid form or as liquid or aerial authorised discharges, in ways that will not place greater burdens on future generations. It describes how the UK and others have dramatically reduced the most harmful radioactive discharges into the marine environment. The report can be found on the website of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) at:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/stewardship

Research and Technologies:

A. Basic Sanitation: Industrial collaboration in environment-related biotechnology research and development within the UK is promoted through such programmes as Biological Treatment of Soil and Water is promoted The Department of Trade and Industry's Biotechnology Means Business programme promotes the use of modern biotechnology by industry to improve competitiveness and enhance

environmental performance, e.g., the use of living organisms as an alternative to chemicals in processes of cleaning up water.

B. Solid Wastes: No information available.

C. Hazardous Wastes: See under *Capacity-Building, Education, Training and Awareness-Raising*.

D. Radioactive Wastes: No information available.

Financing:

A. Basic Sanitation: No information available.

B. Solid Wastes: The 2003 Budget announced that the Landfill Tax, introduced on 1 October 1996, will rise by £3 from 2005/6 to a maximum of £35 in the medium term to discourage the use of landfill as an economically viable method of dealing with waste.

C. Hazardous Wastes: The UK strongly supports the objectives of the Basel Convention, and is an active contributor to the work of the Convention and its subsidiary working groups. The Convention is funded through contributions from Parties to a General Trust Fund which provides financial support for the ordinary expenditure of the Secretariat and a Voluntary Trust Fund to assist developing countries implement the Convention. The UK contributions for the last three years have been £192,000, made up of an assessed contribution of £147,000 and a voluntary contribution of around £45,000.

D. Radioactive Wastes: No information available.

Cooperation:

A. Basic Sanitation: The UK has also taken an active part in negotiations on the legally binding instrument on PIC and the proposed UNECE Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants. For aspects related to freshwater, see under the Freshwater Profile.

B. Solid Wastes: A number of initiatives have taken place at EC level, including energy labelling, eco-labelling and public information and awareness campaigns.

C. Hazardous Wastes: The United Kingdom ratified the Basel Convention on Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal on 7 February 1994, and ratified the amendment to the Convention, banning exports of waste characterised as hazardous from Annex VII parties to non-Annex VII countries on 13 October 1997.

The UK has also taken an active part in negotiations on global harmonisation of classification and labelling of chemicals, the legally binding instrument on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and the proposed UNECE Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The UK reviewed 30 assessments of chemicals from other OECD countries. The Draft Directive on Control of Major Hazards (COMAH) ensures the uniform implementation and enforcement of accident prevention and control measures across the EC.

D. Radioactive Wastes: In 2003 the UK joined other contracting parties of the London Convention in adopting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) document on specific assessments in IAEATECDOC-1375 as guidance to Contracting Parties regarding de minimis for candidate materials under the London Convention. The meeting urged the IAEA to continue its work on the development of a mechanism for environmental protection from the effects of ionizing radiation so that the protection of the environment could be adequately addressed in a specific assessment under the London Convention. Contracting Parties were encouraged to use a precautionary approach and to ensure that an assessment of

potential effects on marine flora and fauna, and legitimate uses of the sea, be included in specific assessments using contemporary scientific information.

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