Resources and Waste Strategy for England

Valpak member summary

Background

Defra has published the awaited Resources and Waste Strategy (RWS) for England entitled "Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England". Whilst the strategy scope is England, Defra has committed to working with Devolved Administrations to align regimes where possible to reduce the impacts on businesses, organisations and companies which work across the UK.

The main aims of the RWS are to increase resource efficiency and minimise waste and the environmental impact of waste.

The RWS forms part of a suite of interconnected Strategies which have been published by Government:

- The Industrial Strategy (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), November 2017): Included a target of doubling resource efficiency by 2050, and specifically mentions moving towards a circular economy.
- The Clean Growth Strategy (BEIS, October 2017): Included targets and ambitions to achieve zero avoidable waste by 2050, increase recycling, repair and re-use and minimise food waste and use producer responsibility schemes to encourage resource efficient design
- The 25-Year Environment Plan (Defra, January 2018): Contained several targets and ambitions for the environment. For resource efficiency this included a commitment to reform producer responsibility regimes, a target of zero avoidable plastic waste by 2042 and tackling waste crime and sector poor performance.

With regards to EU Exit, it is reiterated that the UK will maintain, and in places enhance, environmental standards as we leave the EU. For example, the RWS has proposed a 75% target for overall packaging recycling in 2030, versus the EU target of 70%. This would be subject to consultation.

Consultations

The RWS commits to publishing a large number of consultations, many of which will be particularly significant to our members. The timeline on the next page attempts to consolidate the Packaging, DRS, WEEE and batteries consultative commitments regarding producer responsibility legislation. Any changes are subject to these consultations.

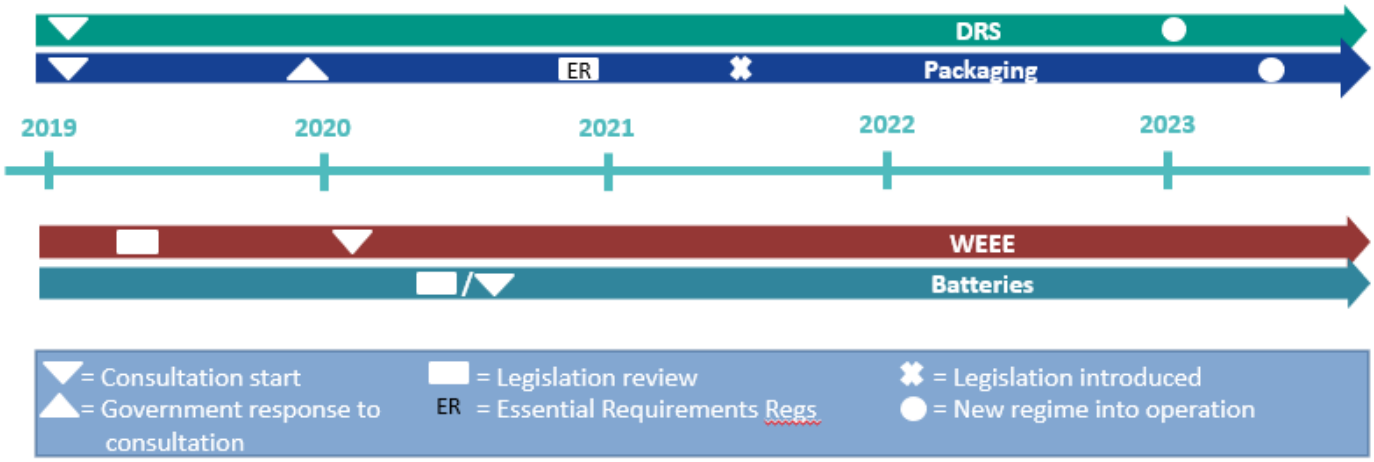
Other consultation commitments include:

- Early 2019: consistent collection of materials from households and businesses (legislation for mandatory separate food waste collections is due early 2023, subject to consultation)
- Early 2019: consultation on proposals for a plastic tax on any produced or imported plastic with <30% recycled content (NB: this is likely to be a HM Treasury consultation run in line with the other packaging consultations. The tax is proposed to come into effect April 2022)
- Early-mid 2019: biodegradable and bio-based plastics standards
- Mid-2019: food waste reporting
- Late 2019: Waste carrier / dealer / broker regime and Waste Duty of Care; and Transposition to the Circular Economy

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Details

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

The document includes a focus on EPR. As expected, there is commitment to consult on reforms to the packaging system, and also includes confirmation of consultation for other existing EPR regimes (WEEE, Batteries and end-of-life vehicles).

There is also the proposal for five further products to be covered by EPR schemes including: textiles; bulky waste (including furniture, carpets and mattresses etc.), fishing gear, vehicle tyres and certain construction and demolition waste.

The Strategy intends to embed the "polluter pays" principle via EPR and the requirement to meet full net costs (FNC). All EPR schemes, including packaging, will need to meet certain standards:

- Clear targets, roles and responsibilities of all involved in the EPR scheme
- FNC to be met, ensuring Local Authority costs are covered as appropriate; ensuring producers pay fair costs
- All producers will need to pay into the system although the mechanism across the supply chain may differ
- Modulated fees, or perhaps other economic measures to incentivise better design
- Simple for consumers to participate, including a focus on labelling. Producers to finance communications
- Be coherent and consistent with other policy, with increased transparency

WEEE will be reviewed early to mid-2019 with a consultation in early 2020. The focus is likely to be on how products can be designed for longer life, repair or remanufacture. There will also be a focus on how to ensure online sellers do not free-ride and a review of the DTS.

The battery consultation will take place by the end of 2020 and will include consideration of the changing types and uses for battery including in the automotive and industrial sectors. The review will have a specific focus on the sealed lead acid recycling rate issue and how portable battery collections may be increased, potentially with kerbside collection. The consultation will also consider if there is a need for chemistry specific targets.

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Other Important Commitments

There are two further consultations which are expected to run alongside the packaging system reform consultation. There will be a consultation on a Deposit Return Scheme for single use drinks containers, with a preferred option of a UK wide system (Scotland consulted on a DRS for Scotland early in 2018). There will also be a consultation on consistent set of recyclable materials collected from both households and businesses. Subject to consultation, businesses would be required to separate recyclable and food waste for collection.

For single use plastics Defra will continue to review the possible restrictions for certain single-use plastic products, either in line with the EU proposals for a Single Use Plastic Directive, or by going further than the EU proposals.

Food waste has a dedicated chapter in the strategy document, with commitments to consult on mandatory food waste reporting and mandatory food waste separate collections. A new food waste hierarchy will be launched with accompanying guidance to encourage a reduction in food waste. Two sectors, hospitality and public sector, will also have a specific food waste strategy.

There is also a focus on tackling waste crime and reducing sector poor performance. This includes a commitment to increase monitoring for waste exports to ensure a level playing field between domestic reprocessing and reprocessing overseas. This will be accompanied by investment in domestic waste infrastructure.

Contact

If you have any questions about the RWS or this document please contact Hannah Woodrose at Hannah.woodrose@valpak.co.uk or by telephone on 03450 682572.

We will be holding a webinar to answer your questions on Wednesday 16 January 2019. To sign up to the webinar please visit our Events page.

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