Waste data consultation

Summary of responses

Proposal to expand the range of data from waste operator returns that are available to the public

November 2019

Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment, helping communities and businesses thrive within the resources of our planet.

We call this **One Planet Prosperity**

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http://contactscotland-bsl.org/

www.sepa.org.uk

03000 99 66 99

Strathallan House, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TZ

Executive summary

We're changing today, creating a world-class organisation fit for the challenges of tomorrow, including producing information and evidence that people use to make decisions. As environmental issues become more central to health, well-being and sustainable economic growth, environmental information should be needed more to make decisions that achieve all three objectives. If our information and advice is top-quality, people will use it in their decision-making; it will not just 'raise awareness'.

Waste data returns from waste management operations regulated by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) include significantly more information than is currently made available to the public. In line with SEPA's direction in publishing and sharing more waste data in an open format, to align with Scotland's waste data strategy and The Scottish Government's Open Data Strategy, we propose to make more of the information from waste data returns available to the public via publication on SEPA's website and / or release on request.

We consulted on our proposal from 2 September 2019 to 14 October 2019 and received a total of 65 responses. There was strong support to make more data available to the public. In response we will publish more waste data and aim to do this by summer 2020.

Section 1: Introduction

There is considerable interest in waste data, with SEPA receiving regular requests for this data at site, geographical and waste type levels from industry, the Scottish Government, governmental bodies, consultants, the media and the wider public.

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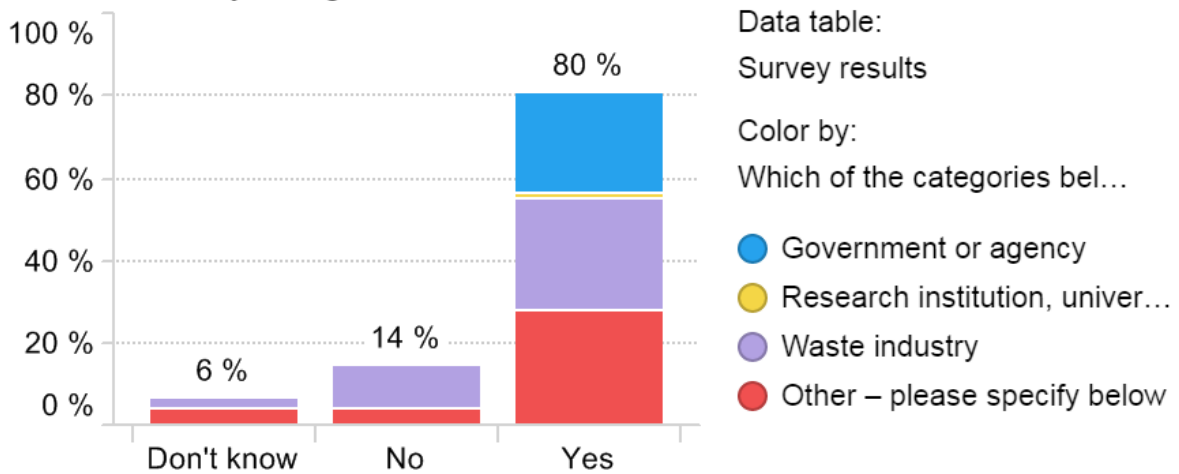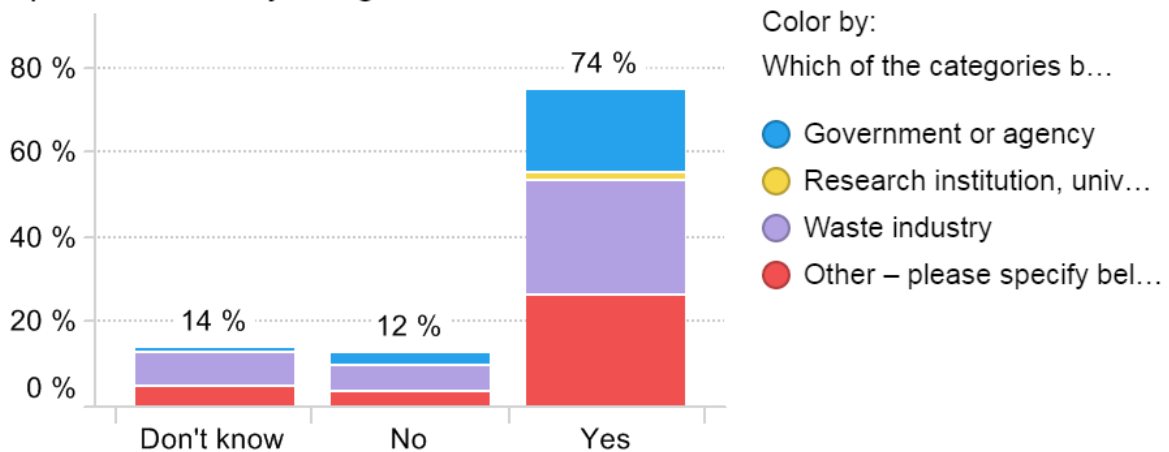
Section 2: Summary of responses

Overview

We received a total of 65 responses from a variety of organisations and individuals. The main responders were from government and the waste industry. Others included a range of responders such as local authorities, land owners, consultancies and developers.

For both questions, the majority of responders agreed that more data should be made available.

Site returns - do you agree additional content should be made available?

Data table:
Survey results

Color by:
Which of the categories bel…

- Government or agency
- Research institution, univer…
- Waste industry
- Other – please specify below

Exempt returns - do you agree additional content should be made available?

Color by:
Which of the categories b…

- Government or agency
- Research institution, univ…
- Waste industry
- Other – please specify bel…

Commentary on responses

The majority of responders agreed with making more waste data available, for the reasons outlined in the consultation. Support came from all types of responders, in particular the waste industry, government/agencies and local authorities.

Of the responders who were not in favour of publishing more data, there were a few common concerns. These are summarised below along with our response.

- Concern about misinterpretation of data – we recognise the importance of presenting data in a factual way and making any limitations clear. We are continually improving our data presentation tools and accompanying explanations to promote correct use of the data provided.

- Concern about commercial sensitivity – we understand the concern and provision has been made for commercially sensitive information. An operator can make a claim in relation to commercially sensitive data.

- Concern about having to report more data or having to report data in a different way – there is no change to the existing reporting processes, only to releasing more information if it is already provided.

Section 3: Next steps

Given the strong support, we will publish more waste data as detailed in our consultation. We will aim to make the additional data available on SEPA's website by summer 2020.