

Waste Data Consultation

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

September 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/>

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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 website¹ and / or release on request.

The purpose of this consultation is to seek your view on this proposal. The consultation is targeted at waste management operators that provide data returns to SEPA, users of the data and interested members of the public.

How to respond

You can respond to this [consultation online](#) or by sending your comments on the proposal to:

Waste Data Consultation
Dataflows Unit
SEPA
Strathallan House
Castle Business Park
Stirling
FK9 4TZ

Email: waste.data@sepa.org.uk

Responses should be submitted to us by 14 October 2019.

¹ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/waste-sites-and-capacity-tool/>

Section 1: Background

Reasons for making more waste data available to the public

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.

In addition, there is a high-level of public interest about how waste is managed within and beyond Scotland, including the types and quantities of waste landfilled, incinerated or recycled.

Currently, we can't respond to this demand because only a subset of the site-level waste management information that SEPA holds is available to the public on our website or on request. Key information that people need to produce meaningful reports and make decisions is withheld from release. For example, there is considerable public interest in information about waste recycled, landfilled or incinerated which is needed to inform policy decisions as to how resources can be kept in the economy for longer.

We are proposing to change that by making more of the waste data we hold available to the public, providing it is not deemed to be commercially confidential.

This would bring Scotland into line with data sharing practices in England and Wales. At the moment Scottish businesses are potentially disadvantaged because they do not have access to the information they need to make informed waste management investment decisions.

It is also consistent with the Scottish Government's Open Data Strategy², which embraces the principle that non-personal and non-commercially confidential environmental data should be available to the public by default. This commitment is confirmed in Scotland's Waste Data Strategy,³ which has an action plan with a strategic aim to "improve the way we interact with data customers". The strategy details actions which include making available enhanced data, including the "development of plans to publish as much of the raw waste data that SEPA collects as possible, including site returns and exemptions data".

The waste data being considered for this proposal comes from two sources: returns from operators of licensed or permitted waste management sites and returns from operators of certain activities exempt from full waste management licensing. These are each described below.

The details of what data we intend to make public are given in Section 2. The consultation questions to consider and respond to are given in Section 3.

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-data-strategy/>

³ <https://www.environment.gov.scot/data/waste-data-strategy/>

Licensed/permitted site returns

SEPA receive data returns from operators of waste management sites that they regulate under the Waste Management Licensing (Scotland) Regulations 2011 and the Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The returns are required as a condition of a licence or permit, and in most cases are submitted on a quarterly basis (some are submitted annually).

Only a limited range of site-level data from these returns is currently available to the public:

- the amount of waste inputted to a site by European Waste Catalogue (EWC) code;
- the amount of waste outputted from a site by EWC code.

Data currently published can be found in SEPA's Waste Sites and Capacity Tool at <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/waste-sites-and-capacity-tool/>

Additional information collected in the licensed/permitted waste data returns, but not currently available to the public, includes:

- information on whether a weighbridge was used and what percentage of waste was weighed;
- a description of how waste was managed on a site;
- the geographical origin of waste that entered a site;
- the geographical destination of waste that left a site.

Waste management exemptions

Some activities that operate under a waste management exemption also provide waste data returns and these are submitted annually. These so-called 'complex' exemption returns collect information on the types and quantities of waste managed, including the geographical origin of the waste.

No waste data information from these returns is currently available to the public.

Section 2: Information in data returns available to the public - current and proposed new regime

Overview

This section details the contents of a licensed/permitted waste data return and exempt activity return, and explains which information is currently available to the public and which information we propose to make available to the public in the future.

Licensed/permitted waste data returns are usually submitted by entering data into worksheets in a Microsoft Excel document, although in rare cases returns are handwritten⁴.

Content of and proposed publication changes to the licensed/permitted site return data

Front Sheet – Section A

Field Name	Contains	Available Now	Available under proposed change
Quarter/Annual	Quarter or year	Y	Y
Licence / Permit number	Licence or permit number	Y	Y
Contact name	Name	N	N
Job title	Job description	N	N
Telephone number	Phone number	N	N
Mobile number	Phone number	N	N
Weighbridge used	Yes / No	N	Y
% Weighed	percentages	N	Y
How weighted	Free text	N	N

⁴ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/waste-data/guidance-and-forms-for-operators/licensed-and-permitted-sites/>

Front Sheet – Section F landfills only (no change)

Field Name	Contains	Available Now	Available under proposed change
Landfill Remaining capacity	Tonnes	Y	Y
Estimated date for cease of landfill	Date	Y	Y

Table B – waste inputs to site

Field Name	Contains	Available Now	Available under proposed change
EWC code	Six digit code	Y	Y
Description of Waste	Free text field	N	N
Quantity ¹	Number	Y	Y
Units ¹	Gallons, Kg, Litres, Tonnes	Y	Y
Geographical Origin ²	Origin code	N	Y
Management Method ³	Management method code: one of IN, LF, SO, TR	N	Y

- 1 Quantity is typically converted from the relevant unit to tonnes using standard conversion factors prior to publication and public dissemination
- 2 A description of geographical origin codes can be found in Appendix 2
- 3 A description of the management method codes can be found in Appendix 1

Table C – waste treated on site

Field Name	Contains	Available Now	Available under proposed change
EWC code	Six digit code	N	Y
Description of Waste	Free text field	N	N
Quantity ¹	Number	N	Y
Units ¹	Gallons, Kg, Litres, Tonnes	N	Y
Management Method ²	Management method code: one of BT, CP, CS, CT, OT, PT, RC	N	Y

- 1 Quantity is typically converted from the relevant unit to tonnes using standard conversion factors prior to publication and public dissemination
- 2 A description of management codes can be found in Appendix 1. Management Methods.

Table C4 – waste landfilled or incinerated on site after treatment

Field Name	Contains	Available Now	Available under proposed change
EWC code	Six digit code	N	Y
Description of Waste	Free text field	N	N
Quantity ¹	Number	N	Y
Units ¹	Gallons, Kg, Litres, Tonnes	N	Y
Management Method ²	Management method code: one of IN, LF	N	Y

- 1 Quantity is typically converted from the relevant unit to tonnes using standard conversion factors prior to publication and public dissemination

2 A description of management codes can be found in Appendix 1. Management Methods.

Table D – Waste sent off site for transfer, treatment or disposal

Field Name	Contains	Available Now	Available under proposed change
EWC code	6 digit code	N	Y
Description of Waste	Free text field	N	N
Quantity ¹	Number	N	Y
Units ¹	Gallons, Kg, Litres, Tonnes	N	Y
Geographical Destination ²	Destination code (see Appendix 2)	N	Y
Management Method ³	Management method code: one of BT, CP, CS, CT, IN, LF, OT, PT, RC, TF	N	Y
Name of Destination Facility	Free text field	N	N

1 Quantity is typically converted from the relevant unit to tonnes using standard conversion factors prior to publication and public dissemination

2 A description of geographical destination codes can be found in Appendix 2.

3 A description of management methods can be found in Appendix 1.

Content of and proposed publication changes to the exempt activity return data⁵

Exempt site return

Field Name	Contains	Available Now	Available under proposed change
Exemption Number	Exemption number	Y	Y
Site Address	Address	Y	Y
Paragraph Number	Paragraph exempt under WML Regulation	Y	Y
Exemption start and expiry dates	Date	Y	Y
Completed by	name	N	N
Job title	text	N	N
Company Name	text	Y	Y
Telephone number	Phone number	N	N
Email	email	N	N
EWC Code	6 digit code	N	Y
Description of Waste	Free text field	N	N
Quantity (tonnes)	Number	N	Y
Geographical origin ¹	Origin code	N	Y

¹ For a description of origin codes, refer to Appendix 2 – Geographical Codes

⁵ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/waste-data/guidance-and-forms-for-operators/exempt-activities/>

Section 3: Consultation

There is considerable interest in waste data, with SEPA receiving regular requests for this type of information.

The Scottish Government released its Open Data Strategy in 2015⁶, which embraces the principle that non-personal and non-commercial open data should be available to the public by default. Scotland's waste data strategy⁷ is more specific, including an action plan for SEPA to develop plans to publish more raw waste data including site returns and exemptions data.

There is considerable public interest in information about waste recycled, landfilled or incinerated within and out with Scotland; however, this can only be obtained by including additional fields from the licensed/permitted site returns, namely the management method and the geographical origin and destination of waste, which are not currently part of the information available to the public. Additionally, a large proportion of Scottish waste recycling occurs at activities regulated under complex exemptions and none of the annual returns from these activities are currently available to the public.

A further two fields in the licensed/permitted site return - whether a weighbridge was used and how much waste was weighed - can help users as it provides more accurate data. These fields are not currently available to the public.

We are proposing to remedy all of the above by making the relevant content of the waste data returns available to the public as set out in detail in Section 2.

The proposal is also consistent with the English Environment Agency⁸ and Natural Resources Wales⁹ who make the equivalent components of the data return available to the public, unless a claim for commercial confidentiality has been accepted¹⁰. Differing rules among UK countries could cause confusion for waste management companies, many of which operate across borders, and potentially disadvantage Scottish businesses because they do not have access to the information they need to make informed investment decisions.

⁵ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/waste/waste-data/guidance-and-forms-for-operators/exempt-activities/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/open-data-strategy/>

⁷ <https://www.environment.gov.scot/data/waste-data-strategy/>

⁸ <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/c7c3c433-4656-44e9-9e1c-a4a565bf7b56/waste-data-interrogator-2016>

⁹ <https://lle.gov.wales/catalogue/item/WastePermitReturnsDataInterrogator/?lang=en>

¹⁰ SEPA proposes to adopt a similar position to that taken in England and Wales, where a claim for commercial confidentiality can be made by an operator on a site-by-site basis. A successful claim will result in restriction of information about the geographical origin and geographical destination of the waste that is provided to the public.

As well as aligning with data sharing policies for waste data across the UK, and being consistent with Scotland's waste data strategy and the Scottish Government's policy on open data, this proposal means that people can have access to the data quicker.

Consultation questions

Visit our [consultation hub](#) to complete this consultation online.

Question 1: Your name

Question 2: Your email address

Question 3: What category best describes your role?

- Government or agency
- Waste industry
- Research institution, university or college
- Other – please specify

Question 4: Do you agree that the additional content of the licensed/permitted site returns as detailed in Section 2 of this consultation should be made available to the public?

Question 5: If you have answered “no” to Question 4, please tell us of your concerns and specify areas you think should not appear in the public domain.

Question 6: Do you agree that the content of complex exempt activity returns as detailed in Section 2 of this consultation should be made available to the public?

Question 7: If you have answered “no” to Question 6, please tell us of your concerns and specify why you do not agree.

Question 8: Do you have any other comments on the proposal to make more information from waste data returns available to the public?

Appendix 1. Management Methods

Table B Management Methods

Management Code	Management Method
IN	Incinerated
LF	Landfilled
SO	Sent Offsite
TR	Treated On Site

Table C Management Methods

Management Code	Management Method
BT	Biological Treatment
CP	Composted
CS	Crushed/screened
CT	Chemical Treatment
OT	Other Treatment
PT	Physical Treatment
RC	Recycled

Table C4 Management Methods

Management Code	Management Method
LF	Landfilled
IN	Incinerated

Table D Management Methods

Management Code	Management Method
BT	Biological Treatment
CP	Composted
CS	Crushed/screened
CT	Chemical Treatment
IN	Incinerated
LF	Landfilled
OT	Other Treatment
PT	Physical Treatment
RC	Recycled
TF	Transferred Off Site

Appendix 2. Geographical Codes

Geographic Origin and Destination Codes – WML and PPC Site Returns

Origin Code	Geographic Area
AB	Argyll & Bute
AC	Aberdeen City
AN	Angus
AS	Aberdeenshire
CE	City of Edinburgh
CG	Glasgow City
CL	Clackmannanshire
DC	Dundee City
DG	Dumfries & Galloway
EA	East Ayrshire
ED	East Dunbartonshire
EL	East Lothian
EN	England
ER	East Renfrewshire
EU	Europe (Outwith Uk)
FA	Falkirk
FI	Fife
HIG	Highlands, Islands & Grampian
HL	Highland
IN	Inverclyde
ML	Midlothian
MO	Moray
NA	North Ayrshire
NI	Northern Ireland
NL	North Lanarkshire
OEU	Outwith Europe
OF	Offshore
OR	Orkney
PK	Perth & Kinross
RE	Renfrewshire
SA	South Ayrshire
SB	Scottish Borders
SC	Scotland
SE	South East Scotland
SH	Shetland
SL	South Lanarkshire
ST	Stirling

SW	South West Scotland
WA	Wales
WD	West Dunbartonshire
WI	Western Isles
WL	West Lothian
WSA1	Orkney And Shetland
WSA10	Inverclyde, Renfrewshire & East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, North & South Lanarkshire And East & West Dunbartonshire
WSA4	Moray, City of Aberdeen And Aberdeenshire
WSA5	City of Dundee, Angus And Perth & Kinross
WSA6	Stirling, Clackmannanshire And Falkirk
WSA8	City of Edinburgh, East And West Lothian, Midlothian & Scottish Borders
WSA9	North, East & South Ayrshire, Dumfries And Galloway

Geographic Origin Codes – Exempt Site Returns

Origin Code	Geographic Area
AC	Aberdeen City
AS	Aberdeenshire
AN	Angus
AB	Argyll and Bute
CE	City of Edinburgh
CG	City of Glasgow
CL	Clackmannanshire
DG	Dumfries and Galloway
DC	Dundee City
EA	East Ayrshire
ED	East Dunbartonshire
EL	East Lothian
ER	East Renfrewshire
FA	Falkirk
FI	Fife
HL	Highland
ML	Midlothian
MO	Moray
NA	North Ayrshire
NL	North Lanarkshire
OR	Orkney
PK	Perth and Kinross
RE	Renfrewshire
SB	Scottish Borders
SH	Shetland
SA	South Ayrshire
SL	South Lanarkshire

ST	Stirling
WD	West Dunbartonshire
WL	West Lothian
WI	Western Isles
SC	Scotland
EU	Europe (outwith UK)
OEU	Outwith Europe