The Construction Commitments: Halving Waste to Landfill

Signatory Report 2011
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At WRAP, we’re involved with a number of voluntary agreements – or responsibility deals as they’re also known. Our experience tells us they really work. They stimulate businesses to come up with their own ways to solve problems, give them far greater flexibility and allow them to meet their own corporate needs.

The Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment is a great example. Over 600 organisations have now signed up - in a little over two years since its launch this is a fantastic achievement. The Commitment is now firmly embedded within the industry and is growing organically as champions for waste reduction push good practice requirements throughout the construction supply chain.

Halving waste sent to landfill by 2012 is a target for the whole industry. Some companies can and will exceed this benchmark. However, they can only measure and improve performance with the support of the whole construction supply chain. The fact that signatories are representative of the entire industry – clients, designers, main contractors, sub-contractors, manufacturers and suppliers, waste management contractors and sector bodies – is a testament to this collaborative approach.

This report provides a snapshot of the progress being made by signatories to the Commitment, and specifically those who have submitted data to WRAP’s Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal. Those currently reporting represent the leaders in the industry and account for an annual construction spend of a staggering £24bn. Their reporting data show an absolute decrease in waste sent to landfill, and more importantly, that they are wasting less in the first place. The actions of these signatories should be applauded and I hope they will act as a beacon for the rest of the construction industry and the wider UK business sector.
Drivers for change

The construction industry is responsible for over 100 million tonnes of construction, demolition and excavation (CD&E) waste every year – around one third of all waste in the UK. In England alone almost 13 million tonnes of this waste ends up in landfill without any form of recovery or reuse1.

Recognising the environmental and economic impacts of these levels of wastage, the joint Government-industry Strategy for Sustainable Construction established a target (in England) of a 50% reduction in construction, demolition and excavation waste to landfill by 2012. The target of halving waste to landfill by 2012 also supports the Scottish Government’s Zero Waste Plan and construction waste reduction policies in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment was designed by WRAP to provide a supportive framework to encourage the construction industry to work together to reduce waste and deliver the target. The Commitment’s clear supply chain approach to measurement and common metrics helps signatories to achieve year on year improvement and generate significant cost savings.

Signatories make a simple statement of intent:

“We commit to playing our part in halving the amount of construction, demolition and excavation waste going to landfill by 2012. We will work to adopt and implement standards for good practice in reducing waste, recycling more, and increasing the use of recycled and recovered materials.”

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Turning words into action: a thriving commitment

The Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment was launched in October 2008. Signatories to the Commitment need to take a number of steps to translate their statement of intent into action. By engaging key players in their own organisation and supply chain, signatories define a target for waste reduction, set a baseline to measure against and embed the target within corporate policy.

WRAP provides tools and good practice guidance to support implementation of the key actions required by the Commitment and help turn a corporate target into a real outcome.

- Clients and contractors use WRAP’s model procurement wording within contractual documents to ensure waste reduction is a priority from the beginning of the project.
- Designers use WRAP’s Designing out Waste process and online tools to identify and quantify waste reduction opportunities.
- Waste management contractors use WRAP’s Site Specific Waste Analysis Tool to provide robust waste recovery data to their clients.
- All stakeholders in a project input into WRAP’s Site Waste Management Plan Template to track waste created and recovered.

Signatories are encouraged to register their baseline and targets within WRAP’s Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal. The Portal integrates with WRAP’s other tools to collect waste data from projects and allows signatories to monitor their corporate progress. The data from the Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal forms the basis of this report.
Influence through good practice procurement

One of the Commitment actions critical to the implementation of good practice waste reduction and recovery is setting corresponding project procurement requirements. WRAP provides guidance for the procurement process to help construction clients and contractors achieve good practice. WRAP’s model procurement wording covers waste reduction, waste recovery and the greater use of recovered materials at all stages of a project – policy, preparation and design, pre-construction, construction, use and post-completion.

By supporting signatories to embed good practice waste to landfill requirements within their contractual documents WRAP has influenced projects with a construction value of £38 billion.

Supply chain approach

Clients

- Set procurement requirements for good practice and measurement

Designers

- Identify opportunities to reduce waste and use more recovered materials

Contractors

- Implement good practice and measure performance

Manufacturers

- Offer low waste, recyclable, and higher recycled content options

Waste contractors

- Collect and recover more waste to higher quality; provide robust data
Setting a baseline: combined figures for 2008 and 2009

Over 280 signatories are now registered with the WRAP Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal. The 67 contractors that have set a reporting baseline (in either 2008 or 2009) have a combined total annual spend of approximately £24bn. This represents a quarter of the UK construction market, and includes 32 of Construction News magazine's 2010 top 50 contractors.

Contractors setting baseline performance for waste have reported that their activities across the UK have resulted in 16.9 million tonnes of CD&E waste\(^2\). Of this, 73% of arisings are recovered with only 4.6 million tonnes of waste being sent to landfill.

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2. Excluding materials reused on site
Signatories reporting data: 2008 to 2009

Figures from the Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal show that from 2008 to 2009 there was an absolute decrease in waste to landfill. The 32 companies reporting so far for this period spent an average total in excess of £21bn annually on construction projects.

For 2008 the reporting data shows that signatories generated over eleven million tonnes of waste. Of this just over three million tonnes, was sent to landfill.

For 2009 the total waste arisings decreased slightly in absolute terms but waste sent to landfill was cut by 28% – approximately 900,000 tonnes.

When construction spend is taken into account the amount of waste sent to landfill per £ million decreases by 44% – from 178 tonnes/£ million in 2008 to 100 tonnes/£ million in 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Waste Arising per £ million construction spend</th>
<th>Total Waste sent to Landfill per £ million construction spend</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>643 t/£m</td>
<td>178 t/£m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>494 t/£m</td>
<td>100 t/£m</td>
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Waste sent to landfill was cut by 28%
Measuring industry progress: Strategic Forum for Construction

Responsibility for measuring overall industry progress towards the 2012 target rests with the Strategic Forum for Construction. The 2008 baseline of CD&E waste sent to landfill in England and measurement methodology were published in March 2010.

Signatory reporting data from the Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal cannot be compared directly to the Strategic Forum’s figures as very different approaches were used to derive them. However, the figures shown within this report are consistent with the reduction in CD&E waste sent to landfill identified by the Strategic Forum in their report on overall waste performance based on Environment Agency and landfill tax returns data for England.

The Strategic Forum report describes a decrease in CD&E waste going to landfill, for England alone, from 12.5 million tonnes to 9.7 million tonnes - an absolute fall of 23%. After taking into account the change in total construction output over this period, this represents a 13% decrease from 2008 to 2009 in waste to landfill.

Taken together, the WRAP and Strategic Forum results show the significant steps the industry is taking in reducing its waste going to landfill and indicate in the first year it’s on track to achieve the 50% reduction target by 2012.
Implementing Halving Waste to Landfill

**Client case study**

**Great Portland Estates**

Great Portland Estates is a central London property investment and development company, owning over £1.5bn of real estate, predominately operating in the West End and city with office and retail tenants.

The company has placed emphasis on training both internal staff and external contractors to ensure the Halving Waste to Landfill message is communicated fully. Internal project managers are equipped with the information they need to achieve compliance with Site Waste Management Plan regulations and information about how to get the best from procuring contractors and consultants, while external designers are provided with guides to help focus on using design as a means to reduce waste generation. External contractors are required to focus on measuring, managing and reporting on waste.

These simple steps have helped Great Portland Estates to put waste reduction and increased reuse/recycling at the core of what they do which, in turn has lead to cost reductions and a stronger environmental performance.

**Designer case study**

**MCM Architecture**

MCM Architecture is an architecture and interior design practice, and a leader in sustainability. It was one of the first architectural practices in the UK to become CarbonNeutral®. The first design practice to become Network Partners of Jonathan Porritt’s Forum for the Future, and the first design practice to feature in The Sunday Times Green Business list.

Signing up to the Construction Commitments: Halving Waste to Landfill was a natural extension of this forward thinking. MCM is a strong advocate of the view that designers have a key role in influencing waste reduction on projects. This is now central to their policies and design processes. Through this their design teams can advise their clients and deliver waste reduction through the most cost effective and sustainable solutions.
Implementing Halving Waste to Landfill

**Contractor case study**

**Sir Robert McAlpine**

Sir Robert McAlpine is a family owned UK building and civil engineering company which operates across the whole of the UK.

Managing and monitoring waste has been integrated into Sir Robert McAlpine’s practices and procedures for a number of years, so signing up to the Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment was an easy decision to make.

Since 2007 the company has achieved a 23% reduction in overall waste arisings and has cut the amount of construction waste sent to landfill by 13%, helping to keep the company on target for the 2012 target. To help achieve these figures, Sir Robert McAlpine has introduced incremental objectives and allocated responsibility to maintain focus.

In addition, much of the company’s work is subcontracted so embedding the targets into project procurement processes and working closely with its supply chain is instrumental to success.

**Contractor case study**

**Thomas Vale Construction**

Thomas Vale Construction provides construction services in the public and private sectors working across key regional centres throughout the Midlands.

In 2009 Thomas Vale Construction signed up to the Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment, the company went beyond minimum requirements and stretched their target to send zero non-hazardous waste to landfill by 2012.

In 2009 Thomas Vale Construction diverted 80% waste from landfill and is on schedule to achieve their 2010 target of diverting 85%.

Thomas Vale Construction’s approach to meeting the targets has been two fold; embed it in corporate policy & procedures and measure performance at a project level.

**Find out more about the steps Sir Robert McApline and Thomas Vales Construction took to embed the Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment and the project and cost benefits they are now reaping. Visit www.wrap.org.uk/halvingwastetolandfill**
For more information, visit www.wrap.org.uk/halvingwastetolandfill

You can access:

- information on the Commitment;
- the wall of fame;
- tools and guidance; and
- the Waste to Landfill Reporting Portal (a free online tool for collecting waste data from your projects, monitoring your corporate progress and reviewing your performance)

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