

Preface

'In line with the Government's commitment to sustainable development, the Government's policy on waste minimisation seeks to break the link between economic growth and the amount of waste produced and to drive the management of waste up the waste hierarchy of reduction, re-use, recycling and composting, and energy recovery.'

Ben Bradshaw, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary
(Local Environment, Marine and Animal Welfare), Defra
(Hansard, 26 March 2006)

'Bulky waste and e-waste are the fastest growing waste streams...'

John Burns, Director
Waste Implementation Programme, Defra
(‘Taking waste seriously’, p10, The Loop, Autumn 2005)

Bulky waste – unwanted household items that are too cumbersome to go in the ubiquitous wheelie bin – is a waste stream that deserves everyone’s attention. In today’s throw-away society, where fashion and technological change mean that we change our furnishings and electrical appliances with ever-increasing frequency, there is an urgent need to find ways to tackle the mountains of unwanted yet re-usable items that would otherwise be consigned to landfill sites.

Furniture re-use organisations (FROs), the only nationally organised group of re-users in the UK, are ideally placed to meet the challenge of taking these items out of the waste stream for the benefit of the local community. FROs currently receive nearly 2 million items of furniture and almost 250,000 domestic appliances per year, and pass them on to people who welcome them, primarily low income families, or people setting up home for the first time. However, much more could be achieved by working in partnership with other waste collectors – primarily local authorities (LAs) and their contractors, the waste management companies (WMCs).

Bulky Basics sets out the requirements and standards expected for bulky re-use services set up either through LA collections or at civic amenity (CA) sites. Its aim is to help all parties achieve an effective, economic and efficient service, while setting a high standard of customer service and maximising the potential for re-use. Although the manual is primarily aimed at FROs around the UK interested in setting up a bulky waste partnership, and those already undertaking one, it will also be very useful to partner LAs and WMCs.

In order to make the guidance in this manual as user friendly as possible, it is based on a range of partnership ‘scenarios’, most of which are structures tried and tested by FROs across the country. The scenarios were developed during 2005/06, as the result of an extensive research and evaluation project looking into the practices of all parties involved in bulky waste services. The project involved both desk-top research and fieldwork. The author also drew on her own and others’ expertise and previous work undertaken in this field. The research, analysis and model costings for the cost-benefit analysis section were conducted by Eric Bridgwater of Network Recycling.

FROs already divert over 125,000 tonnes of waste a year from landfill, and almost 3,000 (FTE) people work with over 6,000 trainees and 9,000 volunteers in the UK to collect, refurbish and deliver furniture and appliances. But that is just the beginning. If we all work together, to turn ‘bulky waste’ into ‘bulky re-use’, then the future will be green and socially responsible.

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Caroline Lee-Smith
Bristol, May 2006



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Glossary

BVPs	Best value performance indicators
CA site	Civic amenity sites. Also known as HWRC (Household Waste Recycling Centre), HWC (Household Waste Centre) and HRC (Household Recycling Centre), amongst other names, but referred to in this document as CA sites.
CHIP	Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging) (Regulations)
CoSHH	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (Regulations)
DCF	Designated collection facility (with reference to the upcoming implementation of the WEEE Directive)
Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Defra WIP LASU	Waste Implementation Programme, Local Authority Support Unit
DSO	Direct services organisation
FRN	Furniture Re-use Network
FRO	Furniture re-use organisation. This is a term normally used to mean a community and/or voluntary sector organisation working to re-use furniture, appliances and other items and pass them on to people on low incomes.
HHW	Household hazardous waste
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
LA	Local authority
LARAC	Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee
LATS	Local Authority Trading Scheme
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
PPE	Personal protective equipment
RCV	Refuse collection vehicle
RPI	Retail price index
SLA	Service level agreement
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Regulations)
WCA	Waste collection authority
WDA	Waste disposal authority
WEEE	Waste electrical and electronic equipment
WMC	Waste management company

Note on “bulky waste collections” and “bulky re-use collections”

In order to differentiate, the term **bulky waste collections** describes the more traditional collections of bulky items, i.e. those involving a minimum amount of re-use and recycling, while **bulky re-use collections and services** describes the partnerships and arrangements outlined in this manual, i.e. involving re-use and recycling. However, the items that could be collected in either of these collections are still called **the bulky waste stream**.

Background to Bulky Basics

For many years, members of the Furniture Re-use Network (FRN) around the country have been working with local authorities (LAs) and waste management companies (WMCs) to pilot services that integrate re-use and recycling with the bulky household waste stream. Furniture re-use organisations (FROs) are motivated to provide these services because household furniture and electrical items from this historically ignored waste stream can be supplied to their clients, fulfilling their charitable objective of alleviating poverty by the provision of basic goods to people on a low income.

The integration of re-use and recycling activities with the LA bulky household waste stream is aimed at achieving the following broad environmental, social and economic aims:

- Minimise waste

- Divert materials that do arise into re-use or recycling streams

- Improve the service to householders

- Maximise social benefit from the re-usable items

- Minimise the environmental impact of collecting and re-using these items

- Minimise occupational and public health risks from operating the service

- Improve the value for money of the service to the local taxpayer.

Statutory obligations

Under the *Local Government Act 2000*, LAs were granted a general power to do anything intended to “promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of their areas”. Therefore it is within LA’s remit to consider the wellbeing of the local community, and to evaluate the triple bottom line – social, economic and environmental – when preparing specifications for the delivery of services. It is likely that future procurement guidance will further encourage LAs to consider broader, cross-cutting themes such as social inclusion and regeneration when making purchasing and contract decisions.

Previous good practice guidance

The Defra/Network Recycling publication *Local Authority Good Practice Assessment in the Re-use and Recycling of Household Collection Bulky Item Waste Stream* – toolkit and associated documents (April 2004) was the first step towards assisting LAs with forming partnerships with their local FROs. Although they included case study outlines of partnerships operating around the country, these documents were primarily focused on providing LAs with the tools to evaluate and chart their current status and progress towards good practice goals.

In 2004/05 over 20 bulky waste or civic amenity (CA) site consultancy projects were undertaken for LAs, funded by Defra’s Waste Implementation Programme, Local Authority Support Unit (WIP LASU). A further nine projects were completed in 2005/06. The majority of these projects included an element of developing community re-use partnerships. These projects were carried out by different consultants around the country and covered a wide range of approaches and conclusions. Consequently, an updated LA bulky waste toolkit, incorporating the learning from the above work, was published by Defra/Network Recycling/FRN in December 2005, entitled *Bulky Waste Collections – Maximising Re-use & Recycling, A step-by-step guide*.

The role of the FRN

The FRN, the national coordinating body for FROs, recognised that there was a gap in published material in assisting FROs in developing these partnerships. The FRN's Bulky Waste Project started in June 2005, aiming to address this knowledge gap. The project's aims were to disseminate good practice on forming partnerships through the publication of this manual, *Bulky Basics*, and to help FROs around the country to develop partnerships on an individual and group basis.

Furthermore, *Bulky Basics* aims to take the previously published materials one step further and demonstrate the true value of forming these partnerships, through a cost-benefit analysis of the various options for turning a bulky waste service into a bulky re-use service.

What is the bulky household waste stream?

Definition

Regulation 4 of the Controlled Waste Regulations 1992 (which sets out the circumstances in which waste collection authorities may make a charge for the collection of certain types of household waste) states that bulky waste is:

- Any article of waste which exceeds 25 kilograms in weight.

- Any article of waste which does not fit, or cannot be fitted into:
 - (a) A receptacle for household waste provided in accordance with section 46 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1990*; or
 - (b) Where no such receptacle is provided, a cylindrical container 750 millimetres in diameter and 1 metre in length.

- Green waste.

For the purposes of this manual, bulky waste therefore includes items presented to an LA for collection that are too big for a standard wheeled bin. Green waste is excluded because it is increasingly becoming a stand-alone collection service. The household bulky waste stream also includes items taken directly by householders to local CA sites or household waste recycling centres. LAs have a statutory obligation to provide a bulky household waste collection service and a general or bulky waste skip or container at CA sites into which these items can be placed.

Existing routes for the disposal of bulky household items include:

- Collected by LA or delivered to a CA site

- Collected or delivered to a FRO

- Collected or delivered to a charity shop

- Collected or delivered to a second hand furniture store

- Collected by a retailer (retailer take-back scheme in exchange for a new item)

- Sold or traded privately (e.g. through private ads paper or similar)

- Sold at a car boot sale or similar

- Given to a third party (family or friends)

- Fly-tipped.

Names of collection schemes

There are various terms used to describe LA collection schemes:

- Bulky collection or bulky waste collection

- Civic amenity collections or CA collection

- Special collection or special

- Bulky uplift

- Furniture collection.

What about WEEE?

Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) is a significant waste stream. New regulations governing the collection and recycling of WEEE are expected to come into force in 2007.

From a survey by The Recycling Electrical Producers Industry Consortium (REPIC) December 2005:

“Consumers are most likely to responsibly dispose of bulky items such as washing machines, fridge-freezers and tumble-driers. Just over 40% of those polled take large items to their local civic amenity site, while 33% pay their local council to collect their large items. 27% expect the retailer who sold them its replacement to take the old item away for free.

“Despite their low awareness of the new laws, the survey found that consumers have strong opinions on how items should be collected for recycling. Asked where they should be able to leave unwanted electrical and electronic equipment for collection, six out of ten opted for a designated recycling area or local civic amenity site. Other preferred options include outside their home (38%) and/or the retail store where they bought its replacement (32%).”

What is IN bulky waste?

Bulky household waste commonly consists of:

- Furniture – hard and soft
- Large and small electrical and electronic items
- Carpet.

It may also include:

- Baths and boilers
- Radiators
- Bicycles
- Garden waste
- Garden furniture, sheds etc.
- Cardboard
- Wood off-cuts
- Black bags
- Windows and doors
- DIY waste
- Hazardous items
- Asbestos.

Some of the 2004/05 DEFRA WIP LASU Bulky Waste projects conducted bulky waste audits. However, the results of these varied considerably from one LA to another and from one week to another, reporting a wide range of items in varying states of repair. Until more comprehensive data is published, the following table demonstrates estimated average proportions of potential composition:

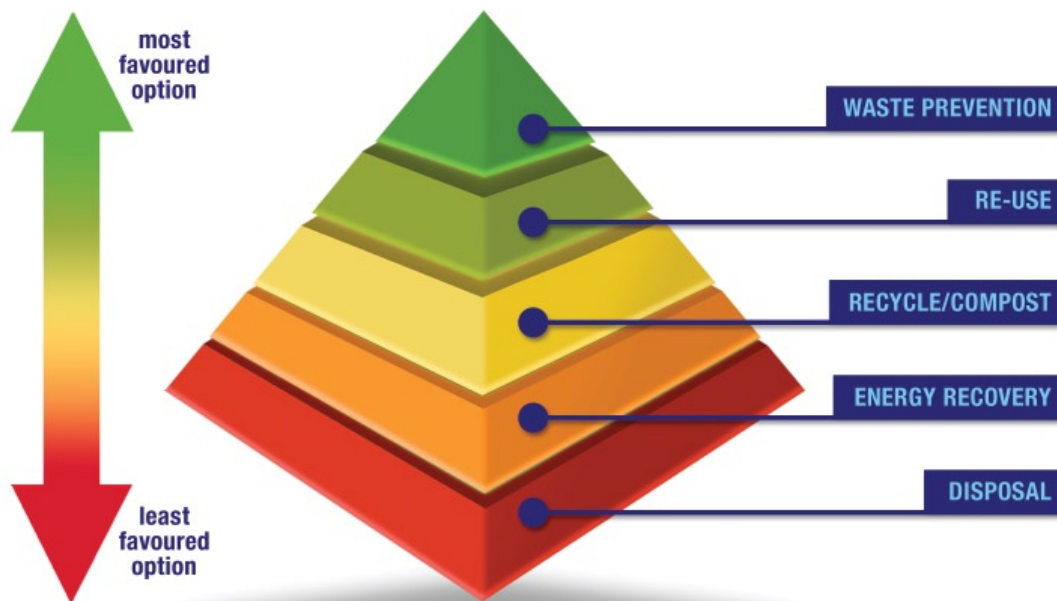
Composition of bulky waste

Category of material	Range of composition	Average figure
Furniture: re-usable in current condition	5-10%	7.5%
Furniture: potentially repairable	10-20%	15%
White goods: potentially repairable	5-10%	7.5%
White goods and other metal: recyclable	10-30%	20%
Disposal	30-70%	50%
Overall re-use rate		30% re-usable
Overall recycling rate		20% recyclable
Residual waste		50% waste

LAs have the discretion to include or exclude whichever items they see fit from their collection service. Many have taken the decision to exclude hazardous items since the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Regulations came into force in July 2005, and green waste, which is separated as a collection service and composted.

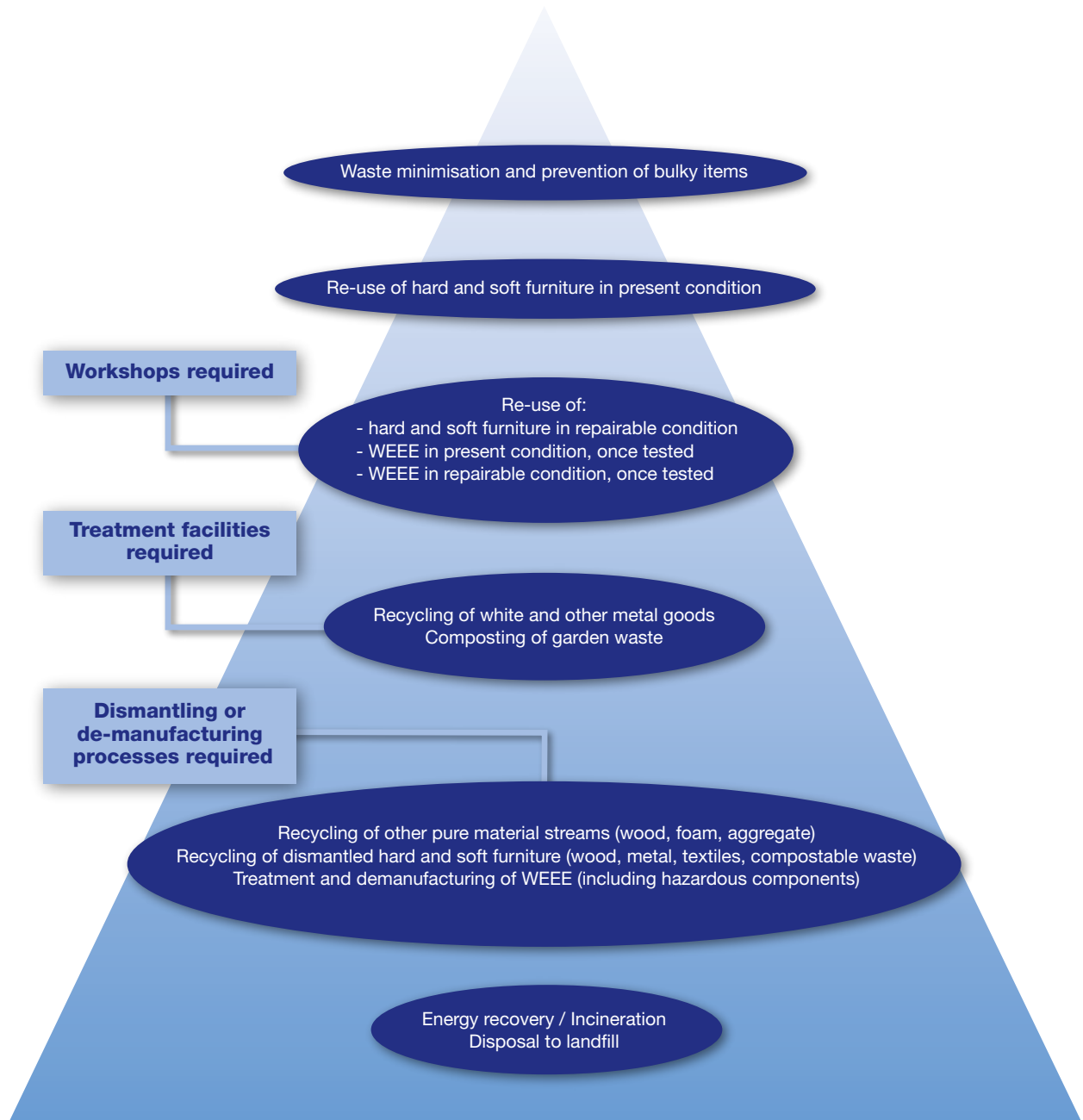
The bulky waste hierarchy

Re-use is the second most favoured option in Defra's 'waste hierarchy'.



If we apply this logic to the bulky waste stream, the hierarchy would be as follows.

The bulky waste hierarchy



Bulky waste partnerships

The FRO's viewpoint

Why would an FRO want a bulky waste partnership with an LA or a WMC?

- To assure a steady supply of re-usable goods
- To raise its profile with the LA
- To get paid for what they are already doing
- To develop a sustainable income stream
- To develop an integrated bulky items (waste and re-usable) service for the area, a one-stop-shop for members of the public.

FROs can offer:

- Expertise and experience in identifying, collecting and re-using
- Resource (not waste) management mentality
- Good customer service standards
- Community understanding and links
- Innovative, adaptable service
- Already established partnerships and routes for passing basic items onto people on low incomes.

What LAs/WMCs can offer FROs:

- Recognition of the service the FRO provides
- Funding – direct for service, or through grants
- Non-financial assistance: finding premises, access to publicity
- Potential integration of the services (LA/WMC and FRO).

The LA's viewpoint

The drivers include:

- Environmental objectives (re-use is high up the waste hierarchy)
- Legislative drivers: the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive and HHW Regulations
- LA targets: best value performance indicators (BVPIs), local authority trading scheme (LATS), national recovery targets
- WMC contract performance targets
- To encourage behaviour change – visible efforts to minimise waste
- To meet council/corporate social responsibility objectives – such as partnership working for the benefit of socially excluded groups
- Improve public opinion/public relations – by working in partnership with the community.

For many LAs, the move to draw materials for re-use and recycling out of the bulky waste stream is in line with the general movement to reduce the amount of waste in their authority area. These initiatives are being driven by European and central government targets, which translate into targets for each LA. Although there is to date no specific target for re-use, there are targets for recycling household waste and for reducing the amount of waste going to landfill. Moreover, since the introduction of LATS in April 2005, LAs are reaching for every extra tonne of biodegradable waste (e.g. wood) they can divert from landfill, to avoid financial penalties.

The recent review of the recycling credits system to include re-use is the latest Defra initiative (Guidance on the Recycling Credits Scheme 2004) and it is an incentive for LAs to set up a system to officially work with FROs. This is an important step in recognising re-use both at national and local level, and it sends out a clear message from Defra that waste streams should be moving up the waste hierarchy.

However, the main factors that may work against re-use partnerships are:

- Existing contractual arrangements
- Lack of political will, as diverting items for re-use is not yet a statutory requirement or broadly recognised as an important environmental option
- The prioritisation of recycling targets
- Council budget cut-backs e.g. through the Gershon Efficiency Review (see box).

However...

“[the] Value for money policy and the [Gershon] Efficiency Review need not present a barrier to sustainable procurement. Sustainable procurement should be mutually re-enforcing, particularly when the more sustainable option can be shown to offer the best value for money over the lifetime of the contract. It’s the lifetime assessment which may initially not necessarily be the cheapest choice but in the longer term may offer the better value of money and that’s what we need to consider.

...We do have ambitious policies and strategies in relation to sustainable production and consumption trying to change the trend/attitude within our own country dealing with ...less waste (more re-use and recycling).”

Elliot Morley MP – Speech on Implementing Sustainable Procurement QEII Conference Centre, London, 19 October 2005

Other stakeholders

Depending on the priorities of the LA, the following parties may also need to be involved in any partnership negotiations:

- Recycling organisations/kerbsiders (community sector and/or private)
- Other FROs
- WMCs, who may be already operating or tendering for the bulky waste collection service and/or management of a waste site
- Totters – LA or WMC staff or independent totters may already be selling or supplying items from bulky waste collections and/or CA sites.

Starting positions

In reality, each LA is at a different starting position with regard to:

- Current collection system
- Available budget
- Officer and manager resources for change/relationship building/partnership working
- Drive to include re-use
- Contractual constraints
- Other current priorities, e.g. rolling out green waste collections
- History between FRO(s) and the LA
- Waste or resource management mind-set.

So why aren't all FROs already doing it?

There are numerous reasons why FROs are not yet developing partnerships with LAs/WMCs to provide bulky re-use services. For example, some are concerned that there will be funding problems, or that they will not be paid enough; others focus on the practical issues, such as whether their funders or Board of Trustees will permit such a move, how to control the type and volume of re-use material they collect, and the potential volume of administration. Others have found their LA or WMC not interested or slow to respond to their advances, which of course can work the other way round too.

The aim of this manual is to allay some of the concerns, and to set out good practice guidance for establishing or developing a bulky re-use service.

Guide to this manual

Section 2: Scenarios – outlines the collection and sites ‘scenarios’ that are most common for FRO and LA/WMC bulky waste partnerships. Each scenario includes signposts to guide readers to the other relevant parts of the manual.

Section 3: Preparation – outlines what is necessary to set up or consider before starting to undertake a partnership arrangement. This includes advice on drawing up an agreement, resources required, organisational policies and other documentation, legal requirements, health and safety, and setting up monitoring, reporting and invoicing. It also includes a section on costing up an arrangement.

Section 4: Collections – sets out good practice arrangements for operating a call centre and undertaking re-use collections. The call centre section includes LA call centre referrals, FRO direct bookings from customers and taking payments. The collections section covers collecting both re-usable and waste items and delivering them to various sites.

Section 5: Sites – examines what is required to operate the various scenarios on CA sites.

Appendices – the various standard and sample agreements, procedures, forms and information sheets that are referenced throughout the manual.
