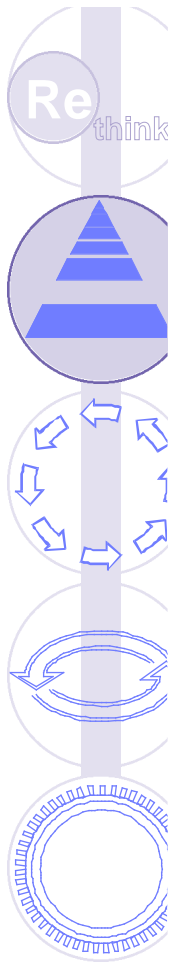


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Local Government: Roles and Responsibilities



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Changing our Ways,
DoELG, 1998.



Local Government: Roles and Responsibilities

'Good waste management practice is a test of Local Authority environmental management and responsibility'.

Changing our Ways, DoELG, 1998.

Local authorities (County Councils and County Borough Councils) have wide and varying functions in relation to waste. They have **increased legislative functions** under the 1996 Waste Act and subsequent regulations. As the level of government closest to the public they can have significant influence in their communities and have an important leadership role to play. They may also have influence with regard to decision making in Central Government and can lobby for legislative and economic tools that would benefit waste reduction both locally and in Ireland as a whole.

2.1. Setting the standard: Local Authorities as leaders

Besides their statutory obligations, local authorities have an important and responsible leadership role. Local government should be the first to implement the waste management hierarchy in all their offices and facilities. Their procurement and operational policies should also reflect this hierarchy. For example, all papers issued by local authorities should be printed on recycled paper where possible. Purchasing policy to be modified to discourage buying single use, disposable products and should encourage purchasing multiple use, durable products. Certain products, such as photocopiers, could be leased rather than purchased outright.

As a priority, local authorities should formulate their own waste reduction plans, preferably with the goal of achieving *zero waste to disposal*. All staff should be informed as to why this target is necessary and how it is to be reached, as staff commitment is essential if these strategies are to be effective. The guidelines for establishing waste reduction programmes in local government institutions are similar to those for commercial enterprises. Thus, local authorities can utilise their own experience when developing similar initiatives in

both the commercial and residential sectors of their communities. **By implementing waste reduction programs in their own offices and facilities, such as schools, parks and libraries, local governments can reduce their own waste while demonstrating their commitment to such programmes.** *Changing our Ways* emphasises the need for effective public participation and consultation. It is important that local authorities prioritise community involvement in their programmes and that they are open and transparent in all their dealings with the community (see Chapter 5.1: Public Participation).

2.2. Local Authorities and the 1996 Waste Management Act

Under the 1996 Waste Management Act, the responsibilities of local authorities include:-

- ▶ the preparation, implementation and regular review of waste management plans for all non-hazardous wastes produced within their functional areas. The making, review, variation or replacement of a waste management plan is a reserved function of the Authority;
- ▶ regulating all aspects of collection and movement of wastes, with the exception of the importation of wastes into Ireland, which is regulated by the EPA;
- ▶ regulating the movements of hazardous wastes within Ireland;
- ▶ authorisation and control of commercial waste collection activities (under forthcoming regulations); and
- ▶ the making of bye-laws regarding the presentation of waste for collection.

2.3 Local Authorities: Developing Sustainable Waste Management Strategies

'Local authorities have a pivotal role in achieving the necessary change: the waste management plans now being, and to be, prepared must provide the strategic framework within which change can be delivered'.

Changing our Ways, DoELG, 1998.

Local authorities nationwide are developing waste management plans that must aim to meet national and EU targets. Consideration should be given to the fact that in 1994, the Government set a general objective of diverting 20% of combined household and commercial waste away from landfill by 1999. These targets were not achieved, highlighting the fact

that simply setting targets is not enough. Central government and local authorities must be committed to delivering on the achievement of these targets. However, current targets must not be seen as the ultimate goal, but rather as a base to build upon. The need to be ambitious is highlighted in *Changing our Ways*, where it is stated that **'Ireland has the opportunity to achieve a high level of performance, beyond basic compliance with national and EU legislation'**.

Local authorities can largely choose the methods by which national targets can be achieved. They have, therefore, a major role to play in developing sustainable waste-resource management systems. **It is essential that local authorities are committed to delivering positive waste-resource systems, grounded in the principles of sustainable development.**