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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Welsh Government
Consultation Document

Changes to local authority municipal waste statistical outputs

Date of issue: 27 June 2017

Action required: Responses by 19 September 2017

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Overview	This consultation seeks views on: Changes to Local Authority Municipal Waste Statistical Outputs.
How to respond	You can respond to the consultation by using the separate response form (in Excel format). This can be emailed to stats.environment@wales.gsi.gov.uk or posted to: Luned Jones Housing and Environment Statistics Knowledge and Analytical Services Welsh Government Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ
Further information and related documents	Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.
Contact details	For further information, please contact Luned Jones Email: stats.environment@wales.gsi.gov.uk Telephone: 0300 061 6023
Data protection	How the views and information you give us will be used Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations. The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

Background

The Welsh Government currently publishes regular statistical information on Local Authority Municipal Waste including key indicators such as the amount of waste generated and the percentage prepared for reuse, recycling or composting.

Waste statistics are used for policy development and planning the delivery of public services such as waste management. More specifically, data on local authority municipal waste are used to monitor progress against the statutory targets set out in the Welsh Government's waste strategy [Towards Zero Waste](#). Data on Local Authority Municipal Waste also forms part of the information used to monitor one of the 46 National Indicators for Wales: Amount of waste generated that is not recycled, per person.

The information is sourced from the Waste Data Flow system (monitored by Natural Resources Wales). Information on local authority municipal waste is submitted by local authorities to the Waste data Flow System on a quarterly basis.

Dissemination – Current Position

Provisional quarterly local authority municipal waste data are published via four detailed quarterly statistical releases (in November, February, May and August every year). In addition to analysing quarterly data at a national and local authority level, these releases also analyse data on a rolling twelve month period. Local authority rates for residual household waste per person and per dwelling are also included.

Quarterly data is also published on StatsWales (but no 12 month rolling average figures).

Final annual (financial year) data is published and analysed in a detailed annual statistical bulletin in the October following the end of the financial year. Accompanying annual data is published on StatsWales.

[Local authority municipal waste outputs](#)

The full data set are available on [Stats Wales](#).

Issues

The content of the quarterly statistical releases is detailed, and can be confusing for users. Some indicators included in the quarterly statistical release are not replicated in the annual release. The quarterly releases are based on provisional data which are subject to amendment in the annual publication. The publication of the quarterly releases is also resource intensive.

Proposal

The purpose of this consultation is to seek users' views on proposals to:

- (a) Cease publishing the detailed quarterly Statistical release and replace with a short Statistical Headline outlining key points at a Wales level. Publish accompanying key data at a Wales and Local Authority level on StatsWales, to include the following (quarterly and 12 month rolling average):
 - Municipal waste arisings
 - % Reused/recycled/composted
 - % Reused/recycled
 - % Composted
- (b) Cease publishing Quarter 4 provisional data in August, and publish Quarter 4 data as part of the final annual release in October. The annual release would provide a detailed analysis of the local authority municipal waste data, and would be accompanied by StatsWales data tables.

The evidence for change

The quarterly statistical releases are detailed and resource intensive. Whilst there is some user and media interest in the quarterly data, we do not believe that the full analysis included in the quarterly statistical releases is required. The quarterly releases are based on provisional data which are subject to amendment in the annual publication. Publishing a short Statistical Headline outlining key points at a national level on a quarterly basis would make it easier for users to access the key points, and would save resources. Publishing key results at national and local authority level on StatsWales would allow users to access key data at local authority level as is currently the case.

Quarterly Local Authority Municipal Waste data are subject to fluctuation and are affected by a number of factors. For example, some local authorities have a higher tonnage of waste in the summer due to an influx of tourists. Weather conditions (eg snow) also impact on waste collections, and the time lag between materials being collected and sent for recycling can cross different quarterly periods. Therefore the quarterly figures alone are of limited use in assessing progress. The factors affecting quarterly data tend to balance out over a 12 month rolling average period, and the annual data are therefore more reliable for interpretation purposes. Publishing 12 month rolling annual figures alongside quarterly data on StatsWales would provide users with improved information and minimise the risk of trends being misinterpreted by users.

Currently, the quarterly release and StatsWales tables include an analysis of national and local authority rates for residual household waste per person and per household (on a quarterly basis only). These rates are not published on an annual basis within the annual bulletin. We believe it would be more appropriate to publish such rates on an annual basis within the annual publication because of potential misinterpretation when viewing data on a quarterly basis.

Currently, publishing provisional Quarter 4 data (and hence provisional financial year data) at the end of August, and final financial year data around 6 weeks later, is inefficient and can be misleading and confusing for users. Publishing Quarter 4 data as part of the annual release in October would allow additional time to quality assure the data.

Publishing a brief Statistical Headline (with StatsWales tables) on a quarterly basis and an annual statistical release would make the outputs consistent with quarterly statistical outputs published on a number of other topics including housing and health.

Specific consultation questions:

- (a) Do you agree with the proposals to cease publishing the detailed quarterly Statistical release and replace with a short Statistical Headline outlining key points at a Wales level (whilst adding 12 month rolling data to StatsWales tables)? Please briefly explain your answer.*
- (b) Do you agree with the proposals to cease publishing Quarter 4 provisional data in August, and publish Quarter 4 data as part of the final annual release in October? Please briefly explain your answer.*
- (c) What are your views on the current format and content of the annual release? Are there other alternative analyses that you require?*

You can respond to the consultation by using the separate response form (in Excel format). This can be emailed to stats.environment@wales.gsi.gov.uk or posted to:

Luned Jones
Housing and Environment Statistics
Knowledge and Analytical Services
Welsh Government
Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

A comprehensive summary of consultation responses will be published on the Welsh Government website.

The outcome of this consultation will inform our decision as to whether these changes can be implemented. This is in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice which states that effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value.

As this is a statistical consultation, the final decision on the outcome of the consultation rests with the Welsh Government's Chief Statistician. The Chief Statistician is the Head of Profession for statistics in the Welsh Government. The Code of Practice for Official Statistics states that the Chief Statistician has the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical releases.

If the proposals in this consultation are agreed, the Welsh Government will implement the changes from the publication of Quarter 1 2017-18 data in November 2017.