

Wales is set to become the first country in the UK to introduce statutory recycling targets for local authorities.

The National Assembly for Wales passed legislation today [2 November] which introduces legally-binding targets for the amount of municipal waste councils recycle or compost from 2012-2013, with a 2024-2025 target of 70 per cent.

The legislation forms parts of a waste measure introduced by Environment Minister Jane Davidson, who said:

“Recycling rates in Wales have increased by more than anywhere else in the UK in the past decade, and this is down in no small part to the fantastic job our local authorities have done. But we cannot afford to lose momentum and risk missing out on the economic and environmental benefits of being a high recycling society.

“Seventy per cent recycling makes good economic sense. It means a saving of £38 million, more jobs, lower landfill taxes and fines, and greater opportunities for councils to make money from selling on valuable materials. And it means we will reduce our environmental debt – the damage we are doing to our planet now whose consequences must be faced by our children and grandchildren.

“We cannot simply ignore our waste; if we do not recycle it we must burn it or bury it. Recycling creates more jobs than either of these options, while research by Waste Awareness Wales this year shows most people in Wales believe that landfill is no longer the best way to manage our rubbish.

“We have already seen how successful statutory targets can be in keeping biodegradable waste out of landfill. I believe that just as every local authority in Wales has met every one of these landfill targets then every local authority in Wales can – and will – meet the statutory recycling targets. Judging by the excellent job they have done in recent years I have every faith in them.”

Today's decision means that Wales will be able to implement statutory targets for the rates of municipal waste recycled, as set out in Wales' waste strategy *Towards Zero Waste*. It also gives Welsh Ministers the powers to introduce other statutory waste targets in the future.

*Towards Zero Waste* sets a target of 70 per cent recycling by 2025. This level of recycling will mean:

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- An overall saving of at least £38 million
- A 23 per cent reduction in Wales' ecological footprint associated with municipal waste

In addition, recycling creates significantly more jobs than burying or burning waste. A recent Friends of the Earth report showed that if the UK as a whole adopted 70 per cent recycling this would create more than 50,000 new jobs.

The waste measure also includes:

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- The power to require retailers to donate net profits from the sale of single-use carrier bags to environmental causes if a voluntary agreement with retailers is not successful
- The power to make regulations about a fees and charging scheme for site waste management plans for the construction and demolition sector
- The power to introduce bans or restrictions on landfilling certain materials such as food waste, plastics and metals