

Supplementary Strategy 4:

Environmental Management

2007 - 2010

1. Introduction

The environment, both locally and globally is the most valuable and precious asset we possess. We are dependent on it for our quality of life, including food and water, resources, energy, and recreation and to receive our wastes and for the success of the economy. Today, more than ever, the need to address environmental issues is compelling from major global concerns such as climate change, resource depletion and loss of biodiversity to local issues such as poor air quality through pollution and congestion, graffiti, fly-tipping and methods of waste disposal. Ultimately, as a leading organisation on Merseyside we have a responsibility to minimise our own impacts on the environment and influence how others can reduce theirs.

Regardless of sector or size; customers, financial institutions, employers, suppliers, purchasers and the general public are showing greater interest in environmental issues especially their impacts and the performance of organisations. As with any business or public service provider, environmental impacts are a continuous by-product of daily activities. The level of impact on the environment is down to the way activities are managed.

MWDA has a duty of care and legislative responsibilities in the performance of its duties but also needs to demonstrate best practice to stakeholders and lead by example especially through achieving sustainable levels of production and consumption on Merseyside and beyond. In 2006/07, we managed more than 800,000 tonnes of waste or in other words 800,00 tonnes of unwanted resources. We need to raise awareness and effect behavioural change by our residents so they recognise there are alternative options other than landfill for dealing with unwanted household items such as, not consuming resources in the first place (prevention), reuse, composting and recycling.

2. Environmental issues

Most organisations spend approximately 4% of turnover generating waste. The cost of waste is not just the cost of disposal but includes wasted energy, water, resources, consumables and labour. The true cost of waste on average is about 10 times the cost of disposal. The less waste that is produced and the fewer resources that are used the smaller the impacts will be on the environment. Environmental issues can be aligned under the four key headings:

- 2.1 Energy:** Our current lifestyles are heavily dependent on energy for power, heating and transportation. Most energy consumed in the UK is derived from non-renewable fossil fuels – coal, gas and oil. For today's economy, British coal although plentiful is deemed too expensive to extract whilst indigenous gas and oil reserves are in decline. An unavoidable by-product of burning fossil fuels is the emission of pollutants such as, carbon dioxide, nitrous oxides, sulphur dioxide and particulates, which affect local air quality and contributes to the poor health of residents. Unquestionably, the biggest problem with fossil fuel combustion is its contribution to climate change.

For the Authority, there is a strategic need to seek alternative renewable sources of energy for its activities where appropriate. This will lead to self-sufficiency and to a significant reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. This approach is also likely to offer value for public money in the long term as most renewable energy installations or retrofits pay for themselves over time.

- 2.2 Waste:** Landfill is a waste of natural resources and the decomposition of biodegradable waste in landfill releases carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere contributing to climate change.

The Authority's primary function is the sustainable management of waste. This includes the waste it produces as an authority. The Authority already recognises the importance of managing its office waste and has reduced its volume by 3% and increased recycling from by 3% from 64 to 67% (2005 – 2007). EU best practice for office recycling is between 60 and 70 per cent.

Our goal to prevent waste whenever possible and reuse, compost and recycle useful materials will assist in the protection of global, natural resources:

Reuse prolongs the life of a product and conserves resources for the future;

Composting reduces the amount of biodegradable waste sent to landfill and reduces the production of methane, which contributes to climate change. Composting also protects the extraction of peat bogs which contain scarce flora and fauna.

Compost can also be used in large scale landscaping and gardening as a bulking agent and soil conditioner and assist with the retention of scarce water resources when used as mulch;

Recycling is important for the protection of resources as it retains the embodied energy of unwanted products. Embodied energy is the energy required to initially make a product, including the fossil fuel used in machines to extract base resources such as oil and aggregates and the transportation of the resources and goods produced and distributed. Taking aluminum as an example: although, it takes energy to turn a drinks can back into aluminum, recycling saves 95% of the embodied energy it took to make the can in the first place.

Water: Water is the most essential natural element for sustaining human life but over 1 billion people world wide do not have access to clean drinking water and many parts of the world suffer from increasing drought conditions. Being office based, the Authority consumes water for its own purposes including washrooms, drinks (hot and cold) and kitchen use. We have recently changed from bottled water for staff consumption to a permanent filtered system using mains water.

Resources: An environmental audit of the state of the planet for the United Nations found that each person in the world requires a third more land to supply their needs than the Earth can supply. Some of the major findings of the report included;

- 2007 – world population is 7.6 billion up 34% in twenty years and will reach 9.1 billion by 2050;
- 2007 - the first year in world history that the majority of people live in towns and cities;
- A threefold increase in global trade;

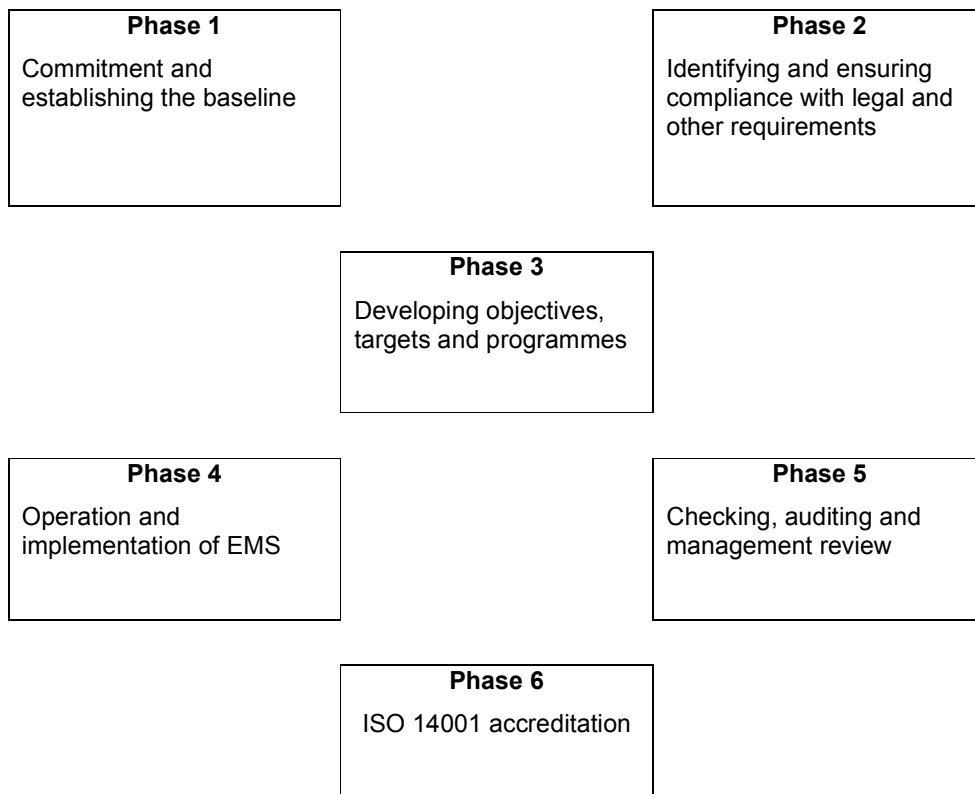
The undeniable single cause of the planet's decline in recent years is the constant supply of virgin resources for a constantly growing population. For example, the average UK household purchases over 4.5 tonnes of materials each year. It is clear that future generations will not be sustained if we continue with our current consumption patterns. It is up to today's society to ensure that there are sufficient resources remaining for future generations. This is the overall ethos and the logic behind sustainable development.

3. Environmental Management System

As a Waste Disposal Authority and a service provider to stakeholders we must ensure that we proactively manage and minimise our environmental impacts and provide verified evidence of measuring both the positive and negative impacts of our activities. It is our policy to ensure that we meet environmental and legal requirements as a minimum and demonstrate best practice in environmental management wherever practicable. We are committed to continually monitor environmental risks and deliver environmental improvement. We will also ensure that others who undertake work on our behalf or provide a service to/for us, will also have in place as a minimum, an environmental policy, with an agreement that they will progress to an environmental management system.

The Authority's approach to environmental management is designed to meet the requirements of a staged approach to environmental management (see Fig 4).

Figure 4. An outline of a phased approach to implementing an EMS



3.1 Environmental Management Aim and objectives

The environmental management aim is to

- **To minimise or eliminate negative environmental impacts from the activities of the Authority and its contractors on our environment.**

The environmental management objectives are to:

- **Develop and implement an Environmental Management System for the Authority;**
- **Report annually to stakeholders on the environmental impacts of the Authority's activities.**