

The Great Waste Survey 2008

CIWM's annual Great Waste Survey threw up some interesting results. **Helen Amos** provides a run-down of what you think on the hottest topics

We asked you for your views on everything from alternate weekly collections to energy from waste facilities, and you responded with some very interesting answers. With the Governor of the Bank of England predicting that the recession is likely to last at least another 12 months, it is noticeable how many of you responded to the question: "What will be your main focus next year?" with such comments as "getting a job",

"keeping my job" or simply "surviving"! There are clearly tough times ahead for this industry, so where do you think investment should be focused? "Infrastructure" and "communication" seem to be recurring themes.

Waste Facilities

ONLY TWO percent thought that enough waste treatment facilities are being built in the UK, with 61

percent saying there were not enough or that we are "not even close" to having enough. Negative public attitude was overwhelmingly cited as the main barrier (43 percent), with planning issues (28 percent) and lack of investment (27 percent) as the other major culprits. Only two percent of you thought that technology was not up to scratch, and therefore to blame. When narrowed down to energy from waste (EfW) facilities, the response was even more striking. To

the question: "Should we, as a nation, be focusing on generating energy from waste?" 78 percent answered: "Yes, it's a no-brainer". Of those (nine percent) who took the pessimistic view that there is too much public opposition for this ever to be realised, 59 percent thought this was due to the negative influence of the media. One respondent summed up the problem thus: "I think the EfW industry has a great product but terrible marketing. Energy from waste must be seen as biomass energy, because it is. We need to get that message across."

A spokesperson for German company MVV Umwelt, a leading European operator of EfW facilities (see page 26), commented on these responses, saying: "It is not surprising that so many people believe that energy from waste is the way forward. This has been the case for a long time in Germany and it is good to note that the view is changing in the UK. From what we can see, the historic reason for such a lack of progress is education of the community, and the unfounded fear this encourages. The media may well have a part to play in this. In Germany the same problems exist, but to a lesser degree because we engage the community at a very early stage."

Interestingly, 28 percent thought that a negative public perception of EfW facilities followed through into a planning process that was too consultative. So, should major, essential energy infrastructure be fast-tracked through to planning permission? And what about planning for domestic waste? More than three quarters of respondents (77 percent) believed that insufficient provision is made for the storage and collection of waste in the planning of new housing developments.

Alternate Weekly Debate

STILL HIGH on everyone's agenda, of course, is the thorny issue of alternate weekly collections. Most expressed support (45 percent wholly in favour, 35 percent could "see benefits"), but this is clearly an issue that will continue to ruffle feathers. More than half of you thought

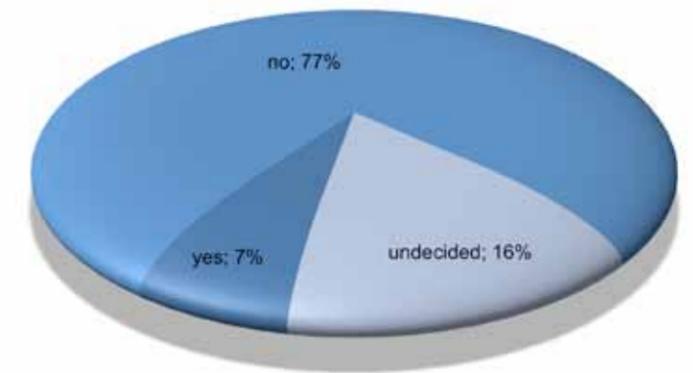
that the introduction of fixed penalty notices has, to a greater or lesser extent, helped to improve householder behaviour in respect of waste collection and separation. However, 53 percent thought that media coverage has hindered the effectiveness of the regime, with only 10 percent thinking that media coverage has actually been positive. Nearly half were in favour of introducing a waste charge separate from Council Tax to encourage behavioural change (incidentally, we asked the same question in 2007 and only 25 percent were in favour). Overwhelmingly, respondents were in favour of rebates for those actively diverting waste from landfill, but education, public relations and

positive media coverage were, once again, highlighted as essential. Other innovative suggestions for ways of improving behaviour included:

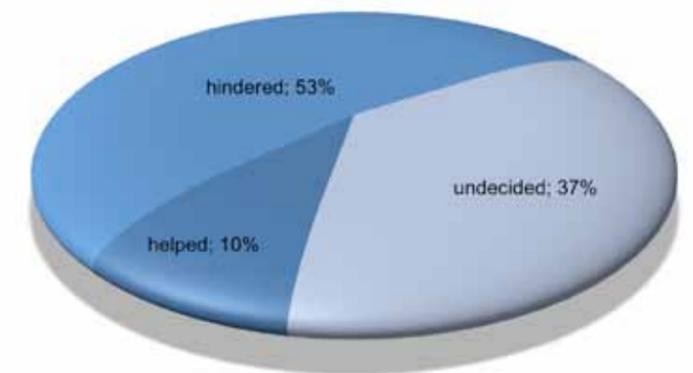
- provision of can crushers to reduce volume
- a return to deposits paid on bottles and other packaging
- competitions for streets to achieve the least waste to landfill
- setting up of community-based infrastructure.

Plastic Bags

THIS YEAR has seen a number of major retailers charging for plastic carrier bags at the checkout and some re-usable shopping bags have



Is proper provision being made for the storage and collection of waste in the planning of new housing developments?



Has media coverage helped or hindered the introduction of fixed penalty notices?



even become fashion accessories. But will this have the effect of reducing the number of single-use plastic carriers going to landfill? Only partly, according to a huge majority (65 percent) of respondents.

A spokesperson for WRAP commented on these responses, saying: "Retailers and government realise that single-use carrier bags are an icon of a throwaway society and that this is an issue that needs to be addressed. As part of the process of delivering the Waste Strategy objective of making the single-use carrier bag "a thing of the past", WRAP will continue to work with retailers and government on ways of delivering this objective. For example, WRAP will continue to work with retailers on delivering the existing voluntary agreement on carrier bags of 25 percent reduction in the environmental impact of bags by the end of this year."

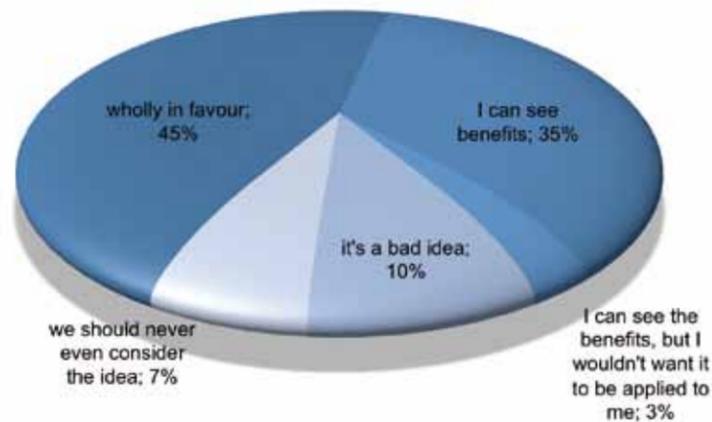
One area where communication has clearly failed is the pre-treatment of waste prior to landfill. In 2007, 62 percent of respondents said the requirements were understood only by those "in the know". We asked the same question this year and 69 percent thought the requirements were still only understood by those "in the know".

Looking Ahead

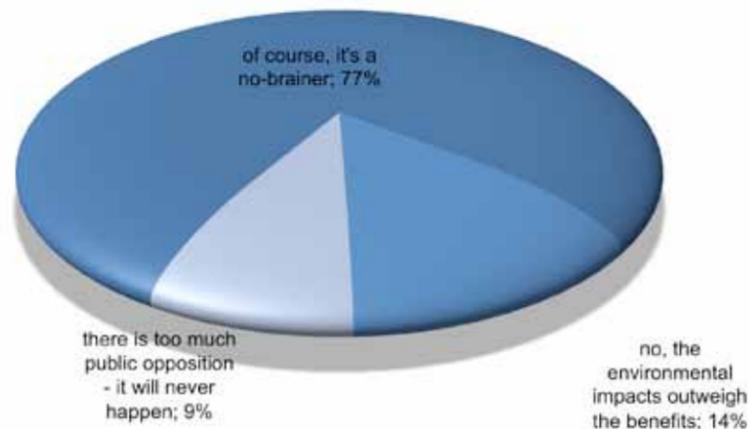
SO WHERE do we go from here? Apart from surviving a period of recession, many of you will be concentrating your efforts on very specific areas over the coming year. Increasing the collection and treatment of food waste is a priority for many, others cite new technologies and renewable energy as top of the "to do" list. One respondent wants more support for SMEs in the skip hire sector as they feel the pinch and another wants to concentrate on "sustainability, sustainability, sustainability".

Whatever your areas of expertise, and even if you did not take part in the online survey, we still want to hear your views on any of the questions or responses. [CIWM](mailto:helen.amos@ciwm.co.uk)

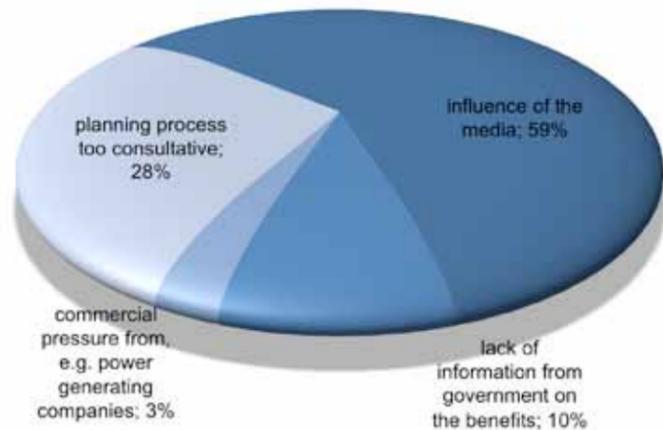
If you would like to view the results of the survey in full, please email helen.amos@ciwm.co.uk



My opinion on fortnightly collections is best summed up as...



Should we, as a nation, be focusing on generating energy from waste?



If you think there is too much public opposition to EFW facilities, why do you think this is?

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