



**Leonie Cooper AM**  
**Chair of the Environment Committee**

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(Sent by email)

8 February 2024

Dear Steve,

Congratulations on being appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in November.

I am writing on behalf of the London Assembly Environment Committee. We recently held an investigation into waste and recycling in London, including a meeting on 15 November 2023 that featured a range of guests from the Greater London Authority (GLA), ReLondon, Chartered Institute of Wastes Management (CIWM), Western Riverside Waste Authority (WRWA), Biocollectors, and the London Borough of Islington.

I am writing to you to highlight three key conclusions that came out of the discussions which are relevant to your work:

- The ability to enforce recycling would support local authorities to increase recycling rates.
- Appropriate 'new burden funding' is needed to help local authorities in urban areas adapt to new waste and recycling rules.
- The need for additional capacity in Anaerobic Digestors (AD) to meet new food waste collections.

### **The ability for Councils to encourage household recycling**

In the meeting, the Committee heard from Matthew Homer, Waste and Strategy Manager at Islington Council who said that efforts to improve recycling rates are limited by current legislation. He told us:

“a real barrier for us as local authorities is about enforcement...we cannot take enforcement action where people willingly are not using the very, good, reliable and convenient recycling services that we provide them.”<sup>1</sup>

**The Committee asks the Government to consider what steps it can take to substantially increase the level of recycling – this could include reinstating enforcement powers for local authorities. In addition, making the diversion of recyclables away from incineration or landfill should be made as convenient as possible for households, including measures the Government could introduce to improve awareness of what can be recycled.**

### **‘New burden’ funding**

The Committee also discussed the implications of the Government’s recent announcements on waste and recycling in October 2023, known as ‘Simpler Recycling’. The Committee heard that delays in making the announcements had led to uncertainty. The new announcements on simplifying recycling rules and limiting the number of bins households need to use are therefore welcome, but it is important that there is appropriate funding to support the changes.

Wayne Hubbard, Chief Executive of ReLondon told the Committee on the issue of uncertainty that:

“the Government have talked about providing funds under new burdens to provide for things like additional food waste collections, for example. No authority is going to implement new recycling collections unless it gets that new burden funding.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Matthew Homer from the London Borough of Islington said:

“As an authority, we are committed to providing our residents food waste recycling services and most of them already have it, but there are a number of questions and a number of issues around the announcement. Funding is an issue. It is a new burden, and the Government is committed to provide New Burden Funding, but we do not know the level of that funding and we do not know how it will be applied.”<sup>3</sup>

There are also specific challenges in London, including a high proportion of flats, which mean that increasing recycling rates requires additional measures. The Committee heard of the positive impact of the ‘Flats Recycling Package’, developed by ReLondon, in increasing recycling rates but highlighted that Councils lack sufficient resource to implement best practice measures endorsed in the package.

**The Committee believe that it is essential that sufficient “new burden” funding is allocated to London’s local authorities, Waste Authorities and ReLondon, including recognising the additional challenges faced in urban areas, to allow cities such as London to properly implement these new requirements.**

### **Capacity in Anaerobic Digestors**

---

<sup>1</sup> London Assembly Environment Committee, [Minutes](#), 15 November 2023, pp. 21-22

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.31

While increasing food waste collection is welcome, the Committee also heard concerns about whether there will be sufficient capacity in Anaerobic Digestors to process this additional material.

Phil Roche from Bio Collectors told the Committee that the current capacity of Anaerobic Digestors to process food waste in London is around 500,000 tonnes, but it is expected that capacity for 1 million tonnes of food waste may be needed. It may take some significant time for the additional capacity to be constructed.<sup>4</sup> The Committee of course recognises that the most important thing is to prevent food waste in the first place, and to continue to educate and engage Londoners about ways to ensure edible food is not wasted. Additional capacity will be required to cope with additional food waste collection.

**The Government should examine carefully what actions it can take to ensure that this additional capacity is in place in time for when new regulations come into force in 2026.**

I would be grateful if you can consider these points, and let me know your response, please. We would expect to publish your response. Please send this information by 8 March 2024.

Please see attached a draft transcript of the relevant Committee Meeting. The transcript will be published on the GLA's website as a draft, until it is confirmed by the Committee at its next appropriate meeting.

Please contact Jack Booth, Committee Officer, [jack.booth@london.gov.uk](mailto:jack.booth@london.gov.uk), if you have any questions about the meeting.

Once again, thank you for your time.

Yours,



**Leonie Cooper AM**  
**Chair of the Environment Committee**

---

<sup>4</sup> London Assembly Environment Committee, [Minutes](#), 15 November 2023, p.30