Achieving our objectives
The waste that we generate represents one of the major environmental challenges facing Britain today. England recycles or composts just 12% of its household waste – one of the lowest rates in Europe – and the Government has set a target that this rate should rise to 25% by 2005/06.

In 2000, the Government published a Waste Strategy which set out a vision of sustainable waste management in England and Wales, and offered an overview of waste policy and the tools we could use to tackle the problems of waste. Last year, the Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit produced a report – *Waste Not, Want Not* – looking at what further steps could be taken to achieve the targets set out in *Waste Strategy 2000*. This reiterated the economic as well as the environmental benefits of acting now: waste volume will double and disposal costs will increase by £1.6bn per year by 2020, unless action is taken.

The report made a number of recommendations, and the Government has already acted on some of these. In his Pre-Budget Report in November, the Chancellor proposed:

- raising the level of Landfill Tax to a medium to long-term level of £35 per tonne from 2005/06, thus providing an incentive for industry and local authorities to develop alternatives to landfill, and in recognition of the long-term environmental costs caused by landfill;
- reform of the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme; about one-third of funding (around £47m) will be made available through a re-formed tax credit scheme for spending on local environment projects; the remaining £100m in 2003/4 will be allocated to public spending to encourage sustainable waste management; and
- a study to bring together the literature and evidence on the relative health and environmental effects of different waste management options.

There were over 30 other recommendations to consider, and the Government will shortly publish its response to these, setting out whether, and how, these recommendations will be taken forward.

This will be an important next step if the growth in waste is not to outstrip the growth in recycling. It helps to address the position that 25% of local authorities expect that they will not meet their statutory recycling targets. A major increase in recycling is a crucial first step for the credibility of the Government’s environmental policy and to meet the diversion requirements set out in the Landfill Directive.

Defra’s aim, is to ensure:

- effective partnership between local and central government;
unfettered development and take-up of new and innovative technologies;

- a robust evidence base to inform sound waste management;

- greater waste awareness and education; and

- reduced levels of household waste.

Defra has five broad sets of targets it will focus on meeting. These are:

- landfill Directive Article 5 targets;

- other EU Waste Directives and future targets under the 6th Environmental Action Programme;

- waste recovery, recycling and composting targets; and

- waste target to reduce the landfilling of commercial and industrial waste;

- radioactive substances.

Resources will be required for both Defra and local authorities. Resources are required for the package of strategic measures in response to the Strategy Unit Report. Funds need to be raised by local authorities in order to meet any increases in the level of Landfill Tax, and to meet their ongoing responsibilities to cope with rising volumes of waste.

**Landfill Directive Article 5 targets:**

- by 2010 to reduce biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to 75% of that produced in 1995;

- by 2013 to reduce biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to 50% of that produced in 1995; and

- by 2020 to reduce biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to 35% of that produced in 1995.

**Other EU Waste Directives and future targets under the 6th Environmental Action Programme:**

A framework through the 6th Environmental Action Programme which may include:

- specific targets in the thematic strategies;

- the Waste Framework Directive in relation to non-natural agricultural waste, mining and quarrying wastes;

- amendments to the Hazardous Waste Directive;

- the Waste Oils Directive;

- the Waste Electrical and Electronics Directive;

- the Batteries Directive;

- the Packaging Directive;

- the Packaging Regulations;

- the End of Life Vehicles Directive; and

- the Mining Wastes Directive.
Waste recovery, recycling and composting targets:

- to recover value from 45% of municipal waste by 2010, at least 30% through recycling or composting;
- to recover value from two-thirds of municipal waste by 2015, at least half of that through recycling or composting, and to go beyond this in the longer term;
- to recycle or compost at least 25% of household waste by 2005;
- to recycle or compost at least 30% of household waste by 2010; and
- to recycle or compost at least 33% of household waste by 2015.

Waste target to reduce the landfilling of commercial and industrial waste:

- by 2005 to reduce the amount of industrial and commercial waste landfilled to 85% of 1998 levels.

Radioactive substances – over the next three years:

We will take forward the process, mapped out in our consultation document *Managing Radioactive Waste Safely* and subsequent announcements, leading to a new policy for dealing with our legacy of nuclear waste. Working through a new independent Committee on Radioactive Waste Management, we will use a wide variety of means to engage the public and consult all shades of opinion on one of the most difficult, sensitive but vital of all environmental issues. We will first determine the best technical solution before moving to discussions about citing of processes or stores.