Supplementary Written Submission from Scottish Environment Protection Agency(SEPA) post evidence session 7 February 2017

At the Committee meeting on 7 February I offered to provide further details of how SEPA is using producer responsibility as a tool to influence product design and waste prevention.

Currently in the UK producer responsibility regulations cover Packaging, Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEE), Batteries and End of Life Vehicles.

The common policy instrument used in such regulations are to:

- minimise waste arising from these products and also encourage their reuse
- require producers to take back their products at end of life
- ensure that the products are managed properly at the end of their life which usually includes prescribed mandatory recycling and or recovery targets.
- encourage the reduction of materials used at manufacturing stage and also the reusability of products
- placing a disposal charge on a product which finances the end of life of the product
- banning use of certain hazardous substances or material in the manufacture of new products

Key benefits of producer responsibility are:

- waste avoidance and associated pollution reduction
- reduction of waste management burden on public sector (Local Authorities)
- more efficient use of raw material and natural resources
- more reuse, recycling and
- increase in cleaner production of products.

Such tools also commonly place a responsibility on those individuals or companies placing the product on a market for the first time (commonly referred to as producers) to be financially responsible for the end of life management of the product.

SEPA’s producer responsibility duties mainly involve the compliance monitoring of approved Compliance Schemes to ensure that they fulfil the obligations of their producer membership as well as monitoring the achievement of such obligations. SEPA also approves operators of recycling facilities who offer the producers and compliance schemes recycling services for these materials to make sure their waste management practices are compliant.
SEPA also spends a good amount of effort in identifying Scottish based free rider companies, who are potentially obligated under the producer responsibility legislation but are not yet registered therefore not complying with law.

Examples of success are:

- There have been record levels of WEEE collections funded by producers, which have risen by 11% from 2015 to 591,000 tonnes in 2016.
- In 2008 the UK WEEE collections were 460,000 tonnes.
- In 2008 Packaging producers financed the Recycling and recovery of 6,900,000 tonnes of packaging waste. The common packaging materials are paper, glass, aluminium, steel, plastic and wood. This figure has risen to around 7,400,000 in 2015 and is expected to rise again in 2016 when the reports are finalised.
- Increase in obligated producers
- Increased producer responsibility awareness amongst end users

SEPA is currently working with the Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland in exploring options for improving producer responsibility. We are reviewing the successful aspects of the current regimes and also learning from the shortfalls. Part of the work also includes exploring ways of making producer responsibility more transparent and easy for producers to add new products, as well as options on how producer responsibility can be employed to support circular economy initiatives. Materials that have been identified for further policy development are tyres, furniture and mattresses.

I hope this clarification is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Jo Green
Chief Officer Performance and Innovation

6 March 2017