

# On The Right Path

**Chindarat Taylor**, director of Pathway To Zero Waste, explains how we need to take a catalytic route to zero waste, kick-starting the economy along the way



## Zero Waste

There have been many debates in every corner of the UK in the past year about “zero waste”. Is it realistic and achievable? Most end up with everyone sitting on the fence, with no one prepared to stick their necks out. Getting to zero waste needs the right state of mind as much as determination and hard work. I firmly believe that it is possible to achieve zero waste or, at the very least, negligible waste... it's the journey that counts.

Landfills space is running out fast – within three to five years in the South East of England – so the debate about whether we should take the pathway to zero waste is entirely academic; there is no choice.

We cannot get there by skirting around the issues and carrying on as we are now. We need to be bold and innovative; we need to undergo a transformation. Incremental change in the way we do things, such as planning, building partnerships and procurement will not get us to the

destination in time before landfills run out. The route to zero waste in the South East (particularly) has to be a catalytic one and Pathway To Zero Waste will be the catalyst to make it happen quickly and spread widely.

The rewards for business are considerable: lower operating costs; new income streams and growth opportunities; a reduced carbon footprint; and enhanced reputation. In addition communities will benefit from job creation and the increased prosperity that goes with it, as well as a better environment, but what is the Pathway To Zero Waste (PTZW)?

### Pathway Partners

PTZW WAS set up to transform the way we view waste and to deliver resource efficiency and its focus is on the South East – a significant economic region within the UK and at a global level and, as already discussed, an area with rapidly

diminishing landfill capacity.

The PTZW is a partnership, founded by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the Environment Agency and WRAP, with other partners such as Defra, Improvement and Efficiency South East, the South East Centre for the Built Environment, the Government Office for the South East, the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme and Envirobusiness. It was a contribution from Defra's aggregate sustainability fund that actually kick-started the PTZW programme in the first place.

This partnership business model provides us with unique advantages, such as access to a wide range of skills and expertise, well-established channels of communications and additional funding.

PTZW is a regional initiative with national significance. Lessons learned from it will be shared across the UK to help accelerate zero waste implementation in other regions. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Hilary Benn MP, was extremely interested to hear about this ambitious programme of work, and said: "It is imperative that we start to think of waste as a resource wherever possible. Against a challenging economic background it is more important than ever that we enable businesses to find a market for materials which would otherwise be disposed of as waste."

Over three years PTZW will work to divert three waste streams from landfill: construction, food and wood. The first phase will target the South East's 37 000 construction companies, with combined annual revenue of £18bn. This will save the region's businesses £370m by 2011. Once the infrastructures and market mechanisms are set up they are expected to positively impact on other waste streams, such as plastics and electronics.

It is very clear the current reliance on landfill disposal is unsustainable. Landfill capacity is running out and its carbon footprint is unacceptable. The PTZW partners feel very strongly that this situation has to change and that strong leadership is needed to drive a major transformation from waste disposal (the "throw away society") to waste minimisation, re-use,



Achieving this zero means everyone is a winner

recycling and resource efficiency.

Another key driver is sustainable prosperity, through which we will create genuine and long-term economic growth in the region. This is even more important now because of the severe downturn in the economy. Using the environment as a lever to create jobs and beat the recession is now a global trend – President Obama has already given us a

a 50 percent reduction in C&D waste to landfill by 2011, one year ahead of the national and industry targets; and to achieve a 90 percent reduction in C&D waste to landfill by 2020, paving the way to zero waste.

The PTZW team combines best practice from the private and public sectors. It will operate with real customer focus, helping businesses develop resource efficiency solutions

*The PTZW team... will operate with real customer focus, helping businesses develop resource efficiency solutions that work for them*

flavour of his agenda by announcing a US\$150bn investment in green technology over the next 10 years, creating 5m green jobs in the US. Japan also plans to invest heavily to create a million green jobs of its own.

## PTZW Objectives

OUR OBJECTIVES for PTZW are to change the mindsets and practices of both the private and public sector, from "waste" to "resource" and to divert materials from landfill in the South East.

Our targets for construction and demolition (C&D) waste are to achieve

that work for them. PTZW is also result focused – taking actions and not just talking – and everything we do will be backed up with a sound business case and commercial focus. The six work streams shown in the diagram (over the page) are the backbone of the PTZW programme.

Creating demand is about increasing the take-up of re-used and recycled materials: PTZW will work to drive out waste through better design and planning and will work to increase the usage of energy from waste.

Market development is about finding an effective market mechanism to buy and sell re-used and recycled products. Infrastructure is essential in



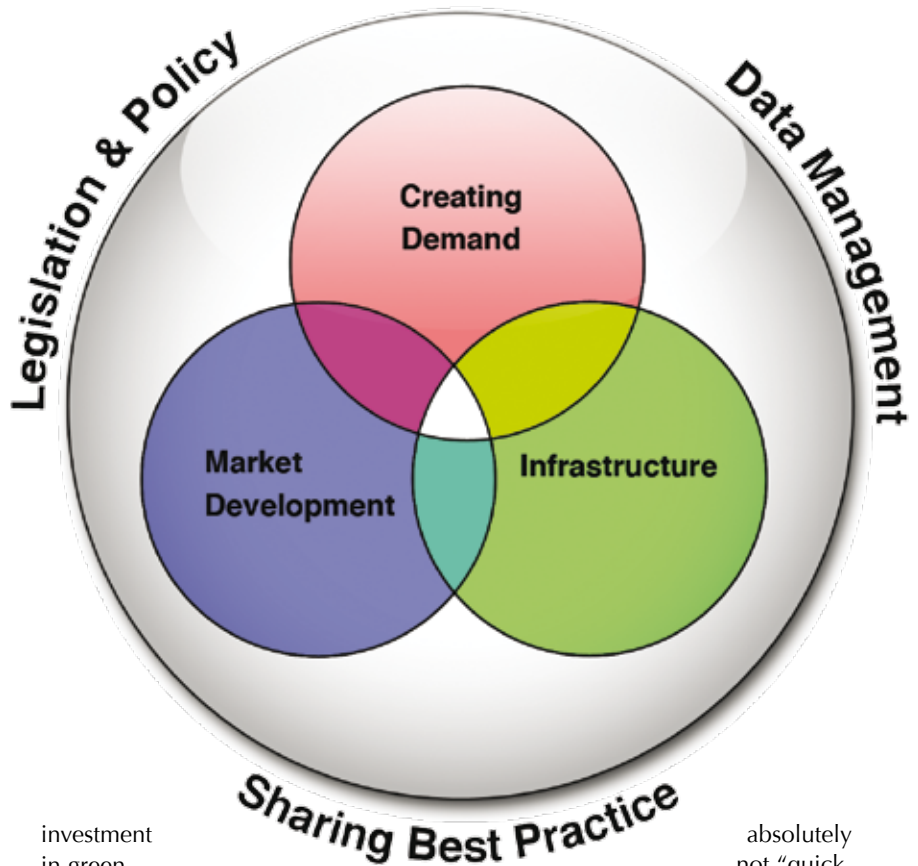
enabling the supply side – infrastructure such as construction consolidation centres, anaerobic digestion plants and construction material recovery facilities (as well as environmental technology and reversed logistics) are crucial in diverting materials away from landfill. Three others support these three core work streams: legislation and policy, data management and sharing best practice.

The cornerstone of the programme is to create a strong market for re-used and recycled materials by increasing demand through public and private sector procurement and supply chains. We are looking at the existing mechanism for the buying and selling of re-used and recycled materials and we will identify more effective alternatives with sufficient economies of scale.

A 50 percent reduction in C&D waste to landfills is equivalent to about 2.7m tonnes of material that needs to be diverted. This requires substantial investment in infrastructure as a matter of urgency. The current recycling and reprocessing sector is not sufficiently developed to support the goals of PTZW. We will work with both the public and private sectors to ensure that an effective network of facilities is developed.

Because of the long lead-time in planning and building these facilities, infrastructure development is absolutely top of our agenda at the moment. Infrastructure development in our region also represents fantastic opportunities for us to create new markets and new jobs to beat the current recession and, of course, help combat climate change. There will be considerable commercial opportunities for companies and organisations that have the capability to operate in this area.

To move this agenda forward we need a strong partnership between the private and public sectors, in particular local authorities in land use planning and waste strategies. The best way for infrastructure to develop is to follow market forces and there are many examples of successful commercial infrastructure operations. In fact, even during this severe credit crunch, we found that banks are very receptive to



investment in green infrastructure.

Meanwhile, we also have access to seed corn funding for companies that need help to get started. We will open doors and broker deals to get organisations to work together to speed up the development of infrastructure in the region.

## Making It Happen

PTZW IS a major transformation programme in resource efficiency coupled with infrastructure and market development – we need to take a quantum leap if we are to achieve it and I am confident that it is achievable. But we have to work together and attack this agenda with bold determination and imagination; we have to figure out how to get results by doing things differently.

We will use the catalytic approach and the Pathway To Zero Waste will be the catalyst. We need to focus on getting important things done quickly to deliver quick wins (projects delivering results within six months). Chasing quick wins requires methodical business development skills to follow leads and take them to successful conclusion. Quick wins are

absolutely not “quick fixes”... we want

real and lasting results.

We will then use these quick wins to generate more quick wins, building momentum until we reach critical mass, or the tipping point, where PTZW will keep going with massive support from public and private sectors behind it. In this situation, instead of us contacting you, you will be contacting us to find out how to join.

Doesn't it sound simple? Well, to make this work requires absolute passion and the belief that it can be done – it's that winning attitude you can see when you look into the eyes of athletes on the starting blocks, for example.

After many months of planning, PTZW has just moved into its delivery stage and will have formally launched (on March 3) by the time you are reading this. The time is now right for businesses and local government to join the Pathway To Zero Waste; to work together to benefit both their business and the environment; and to help kick start our economy along the way. **CIWM**

Visit [www.ptzw.co.uk](http://www.ptzw.co.uk) or email [chindarat.taylor@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:chindarat.taylor@environment-agency.gov.uk)