



A new initiative to help construction companies in the South East substantially reduce costs and lessen their environmental impact was launched on 3 March 2009 that, according to the Rt Hon Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, will be "a bold step towards the sustainable, low-carbon, zero waste economy that we all want to achieve".

Pathway To Zero Waste (PTZW) aims to create a culture of resource efficiency that will see business waste volumes - which currently account for 80% of all waste in the South East - greatly reduced, with far more material reused, recycled, or converted to energy instead of being sent to landfill.

"The economic benefits we will unlock are considerable - an estimated £370m reduction in operating costs by 2011 alone," said Dr Chindarat Taylor, director, PTZW.

"The comprehensive network of recovery and recycling infrastructure needed to support smarter resource use - which PTZW will help establish - will create thousands of new jobs, providing further economic benefits and helping to deliver long-term sustainable prosperity."

Founded by SEEDA (the South East England Development Agency), the Environment Agency and WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme), PTZW focuses their activities in the South East, combining their skills, resources and expertise to be a powerful force for change.

Environment Secretary Hilary Benn, welcomed PTZW's launch, saying: "This is a bold step towards the sustainable, low-carbon, zero waste economy that we all want to achieve. We need to stop asking how we will dispose of the waste we create and ask why we are getting rid of it at all. Because in many cases, we shouldn't. In difficult economic times, reducing waste and unnecessary costs makes sense. We must recognise that there are opportunities here, particularly in the South East. But we need to think of waste as a resource, and Pathway To Zero waste is a big step towards doing just that."

With landfill space in the South East set to run out within in five years, PTZW is focusing initially on construction and demolition (C&D) waste, the biggest source of waste sent to landfill in the region. Food and wood waste will follow.

PTZW's targets for C&D waste are:

- by 2011, a 50% reduction in C&D waste sent to landfill against 2008 levels - one year ahead of national and industry targets
- by 2020, a 90% reduction in C&D waste sent to landfill against 2008 levels, paving the way for a zero waste region.

"Businesses in the South East waste millions of tonnes of usable material every year by sending it to landfill," continued Dr Taylor.

"Most don't realise that once the value of wasted materials and labour is included, the true cost can be up to ten times more than the disposal cost. PTZW will act as a catalyst of change, bringing private and public sector organisations together and focussing on what needs to be done to deliver rapid, significant and lasting improvements to the way we view and manage waste. The result will be lower costs, new jobs and a better environment. It's a win, win, win situation for the South East."

