

South Tyne and Wear
Waste Management Partnership

Waste Strategy Interim statement



South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership – Statement of Intent (2025 – 2028)

Executive Summary

The South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership (STWWMP), comprising South Tyneside, Gateshead, and Sunderland Councils, is approaching an important stage in its waste and resource management strategy due to changes in legislation. This interim statement sets out our collective strategic intent for the next **three years (2025–2028)**, ensuring continuity while preparing for significant changes in legislation and the forthcoming Circular Economy Strategy.

Our shared commitment is to deliver sustainable, efficient and effective community-focused waste services while ensuring readiness for future regulatory, contractual and operational changes. This statement is not a formal policy but a strategic guide to support alignment, collaboration and informed decision-making across the partnership.

Strategic Continuity

The current Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy remains in place and continues to guide our operational and strategic decisions. However, the next three years will be used to:

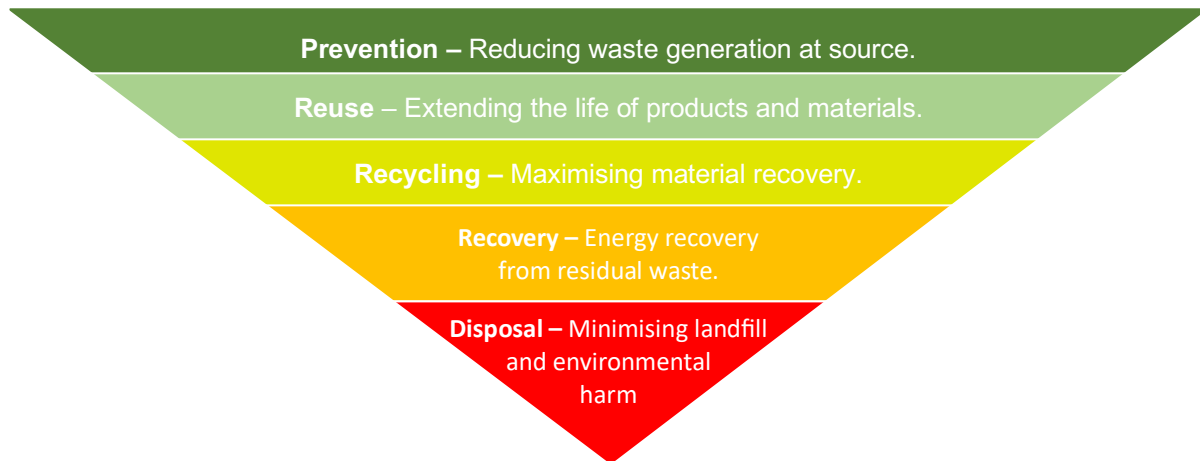
- Assess the implications of the changes in legislation on local authority services and contracts
- Consider the options for efficient and effective service delivery
- Engage stakeholders to co-design the next iteration of the joint strategy
- Publish the next Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy in 2028.

Waste Hierarchy

Our strategic decisions will continue to be shaped by the waste hierarchy, which prioritises:

1. Prevention – Reducing waste generation at source.
2. Reuse – Extending the life of products and materials.
3. Recycling – Maximising material recovery.
4. Recovery – Energy recovery from residual waste.
5. Disposal – Minimising landfill and environmental harm.

This hierarchy underpins our commitment to sustainability and will inform the development of the next joint strategy.



Strategic Context

The UK Government is implementing a suite of waste and recycling measures designed to support the transition to a zero waste, circular economy. These legislative changes aim to reduce residual waste, increase recycling rates, reduce contamination and stimulate investment in recycling infrastructure.

1. Simpler Recycling

- Introduces a consistent set of materials to be collected across all households and businesses in England.
- By 31 March 2026, local authorities must collect glass, metal, plastic, paper/card, food waste (weekly), and garden waste (where applicable).
- By 31 March 2027, plastic film must be collected.
- Paper/card must be collected separately unless a written TEEP assessment evidences that separate collection is technically, environmentally, or economically impracticable.

2. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

- Producers cover the full net cost of managing packaging waste.
- Producers must now report packaging data and pay fees based on recyclability and volume.
- Local authorities will receive payments to offset household packaging waste costs.
- EPR incentivises reduction of packaging and better packaging design.

3. Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)

- Applies a refundable deposit to single-use drinks containers (in England cans and PET plastic bottles).
- Roll-out is expected from October 2027.
- Consumers return containers to reclaim deposits.

4. UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)

- From January 2028, Energy from Waste operators must purchase carbon allowances.
- ETS aims to decarbonise the waste sector and support net zero targets.

5. Circular Economy Strategy

- Expected **2026**.
- Will promote resource efficiency, waste prevention and green jobs.
- Will guide long-term planning and investment.

Key Risks

Delays in the implementation of changes in legislation present several strategic and operational risks for the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership. There is a significant risk of financial exposure, as uncertainty around future requirements may delay essential infrastructure investment, leading to higher costs in the future.

Operational inefficiencies may increase as councils maintain legacy systems while preparing for changes in legislation. There is also a risk to public confidence and engagement; mixed messaging or delayed implementation could erode trust in local waste services and reduce participation in recycling schemes, undermining communication campaigns and long-term sustainability goals.

Strategy Development

As the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership prepares for the implementation of forthcoming legislative changes and the development of a new joint strategy, a range of mitigation options will be considered to ensure resilience, adaptability, and strategic alignment.

We will carry out options appraisals, scenario planning, and financial modelling to evaluate the potential impacts of different legislative pathways. This analysis will inform decision-making, budget planning, and service redesign, ensuring the partnership remains prepared for a range of outcomes and can respond flexibly to emerging national guidance and local priorities.

We will review existing waste treatment and collection contracts to ensure they remain compliant, cost-effective, and operationally viable under new regulatory requirements. Where necessary, we will explore contractual flexibility and renegotiation, as many current agreements were established before recent legislative changes.

We will continue to pursue joint procurement and shared services across the three councils. This collaborative approach has already delivered efficiencies and resilience and will remain critical for managing future infrastructure needs, service transitions, and the procurement of new technologies or systems required under forthcoming legislative changes.

In parallel, we will initiate advance regional infrastructure planning to identify priority investment areas and ensure that future facilities and assets are capable of meeting the demands of Simpler Recycling, EPR, DRS, and the Circular Economy Strategy. This includes assessing the capacity and adaptability of existing infrastructure and exploring opportunities for regional collaboration through the North East Combined Authority.

Stakeholder engagement will be central to our approach. We will work closely with residents, businesses, schools, elected members, and government bodies to ensure that local perspectives inform strategic planning and that communities are prepared for upcoming changes. This engagement will also support the co-design of the next Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

Finally, we will deploy targeted communications, using the Waste Partnership's Forward Plan and campaign assets to educate and inform residents about what can and can't be recycled, the reasons behind service changes, and the environmental and financial benefits of reducing, reusing and recycling. Clear, consistent messaging is essential to maintaining public confidence and reducing contamination during this transition period.

Over the next three years, the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership will take a measured and strategic approach to preparing for forthcoming legislative changes and developing the next Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy. A key priority will be to align future strategy with these changes, local needs, and the waste hierarchy. This means ensuring that our long-term planning reflects legislative requirements, keeps local authorities compliant, and responds to the operational realities and service models across South Tyneside, Gateshead, and Sunderland.

The waste hierarchy will remain central to our approach which will help ensure that future services are not only compliant but also environmentally and economically sustainable.

We will also ensure transparency and inclusivity in the decision-making and consultation processes, particularly where legislative changes require adjustments to service delivery or infrastructure. While engagement will be proportionate and targeted, we will ensure that key stakeholders — including elected members, service teams, and strategic partners — are involved in shaping the direction of the next strategy. This will support informed decision-making, build consensus, and ensure that the strategy reflects both national policy and local priorities.

Next Steps

Over the next three years, the South Tyne and Wear Waste Management Partnership will focus on maintaining momentum while preparing for long-term strategic change. The following actions will guide our transition:

- Await publication of the Circular Economy Strategy (expected in 2026) - This will provide critical national direction on resource efficiency, waste prevention, and sector-specific priorities. The partnership will use this as a foundation for aligning future service design and investment planning.
- Continue to develop and deliver a strong communication campaign - We will maintain a consistent and targeted approach to resident engagement, focusing on recycling behaviours, contamination reduction and service awareness. This will be guided by data and evidence.

- Engage stakeholders across South Tyneside, Gateshead, and Sunderland to shape the next phase of strategy development, particularly where legislative changes require operational adjustments.
- Prepare for a full strategic refresh by 2028, aligned with environmental growth and climate resilience priorities, to ensure the next Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy is future-proof, locally responsive, and compliant with national requirements.