



Mr Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

recycling and recovery UK

Sent via email: secretary.state@defra.gov.uk

2nd August 2024

Dear Secretary of State,

On behalf of SUEZ recycling and recovery UK and over 50 of our UK local authority partners, we are writing to you today to outline our vision for a zero-waste economy, and urge the Government to take urgent action to get the UK on track to achieve this aim.

The waste service industry is an essential front-line service, delivering weekly collections and daily processing, as well as playing a crucial role in energy generation and materials recycling. It is critical that these important services are not forgotten in decision making, and remain at the heart of environmental policy, so our industry can help unlock more sustainable outcomes.

As a waste management company handling over 11 million tonnes of waste materials per year right across the UK, we are keen to partner with the new Government to drive regional growth and infrastructure investment, develop a resource management system that works for consumers, local authorities, and industry, and help meet the UK's ambitious environmental targets, including those for decarbonisation, biodiversity and resource security.

To make these ambitions a reality the waste and resource sector needs a clear policy pathway which the previous administration failed to deliver on. SUEZ and our local authority partners are calling on the Government to:

- 1. Provide clarity and simplicity in policy.** The provision of clear timelines and targets for Government waste reforms will be crucial for effective and timely decision-making by local authorities and service providers so they can execute their plans over the next five years. For example, the implementation plan for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requires urgent clarification. The sector has waited too long to receive certainty on timelines and thresholds for fee modulation. We also need the Government to prioritise a review of existing Simpler Recycling proposals – providing a definitive plan, defined timelines, and open communication to support the schemes rollout which has already begun at a local level. Momentum on these and other policies is key, and we urge the Government to provide the necessary clarity at pace so that policies can be implemented and adjusted to ensure they are successful. But we must not rush policy reform implementation if the reforms are incomplete or the sector has insufficient time for transition and investment as is the case with the planned Digital Waste Tracking roll-out which we strongly advise should be delayed until 1st April 2026 to enable new IT systems to be fully tested and rolled out.



- 2. Effective funding and support.** Funding is essential for the implementation of any new policies so that existing and new infrastructure can be updated or deployed to manage our volumes of waste and invest in innovative recycling methods. Confirmed funding support (both direct and indirect) from Government for waste management, including via EPR (from brands), will be key to ensuring quality local services can continue to be delivered consistently across the UK. We would also urge the Government to prioritise investment in green skills, ensuring that workforces are equipped and upskilled to meet the demands of new waste management technologies. Investment in green jobs will in turn support a zero waste, low carbon economy – providing the skillsets required to operate greener technologies and invest in reuse and repair, so that all resources can find new value to our economy and environment.

- 3. Drive behaviour change.** We need a national campaign and consistent communications to promote greater consumer and business understanding of the circular economy, and improve consumer participation in local recycling schemes. We must focus minds away from overconsumption and towards prevention, reuse, and repair, whilst also maximising the potential of the recycling reforms by getting everyone doing their bit effectively at home, when at work and when in transit. In our view a ‘top-down’ approach is necessary to outline and explain the need to enhance local changes that will impact the way we all recycle at home and ultimately how we consume (encouraging leasing models and repair solutions etc.).

As you will be aware we are at critical juncture in the development of a more sustainable, lower waste, economy. For too long, policymaking has been subject to competing demands and asks from different departments, and we urgently need a joined-up approach right across Government. Our sector and local authority partners are calling for greater alignment and coordination in policymaking to ensure that we, together, can meet the UK’s waste and resource targets – and go beyond that to build a world-leading waste management system that prioritises UK self-sufficiency, and investment in new green jobs and technological innovation that can then be exported world-wide.

Our industry, alongside our local authority partners and customers, are keen to play our part in supporting the development of policies; the delivery of communications campaigns; and securing the capital and investment that will be crucial in transforming the UK’s management of waste towards a more sustainable future.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we can best work together to meet these shared goals. We stand ready to assist and support policies that drive us towards a more resource efficient, circular economy, and we look forward to seeing tangible progress in the months ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Adam Read MBE

Chief Sustainability Officer & Director of Communications and External Affairs,
SUEZ UK