



Smarter regulation of waste in Europe

LIFE SMART Waste project

An EU LIFE+ project for 2014-2019

Background information and progress to date

22 September 2015





What is the LIFE SMART Waste project?

The LIFE SMART Waste project (LIFE13-ENV/UK/000549) is an innovative pan-European partnership between key bodies involved with addressing waste crime.

The overarching goal of the project is to demonstrate innovative ways of understanding, tackling and reducing waste-related crime. To achieve this, we will develop, test and apply new and modern ways of working, and demonstrate direct interventions to assess and target illegality in waste streams.

The challenges

Waste streams that are of low quality and value, or are difficult to treat, persistently attract criminal activities that profit at the expense of the environment and legitimate operators in Europe's waste industry. These illegal practises are ever-changing and are not easily visible.

For environmental and partner bodies, there are big gaps in understanding how such illegal markets behave and how to tackle criminal behaviour. This poses major challenges, but also opportunities for innovation.

“ Environmental crime is not restricted by borders, and can affect a nation's economy, and security ... [It] often occurs hand in hand with other offences such as passport fraud, corruption, money laundering and murder. ”

[\(Interpol website\)](#)



Working together

The project is led by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency ([SEPA](#)) working with three partner agencies who will also contribute resources:

- ◆ Natural Resources Wales ([NRW](#)), United Kingdom;
- ◆ Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and sustainable Resource management ([ACR+](#)), Belgium;
- ◆ Brussels Institute for Environmental Management ([IBGE-BIM](#)), Belgium.

Adopting a collaborative approach, we will encourage environmental bodies to set intelligence and investigatory objectives using common tools around shared areas of concern, before collectively identifying and tackling illegality. For certain interventions, collaborations are likely to involve non-environmental bodies, such as the police, customs or financial authorities.



How the project is funded

The LIFE SMART Waste project will run for five years, from June 2014 to May 2019, and has been made possible with the support of EU LIFE+ funding. The total cost of the project over this period is £3.6m (€4.3m), with 50% co-financing by LIFE.





Project objectives

The LIFE SMART Waste project's objectives are to:

Understand waste crime

To develop and demonstrate innovative intelligence gathering and analytical approaches to identify and understand waste crime issues associated with 'challenging' waste streams, problem waste operators and illegal waste activities.



Evaluate, tackle and reduce waste crime

To design innovative intelligence-led interventions and demonstrate how these can be used to tackle waste crime issues and reduce their impacts in targeted areas.



Dissemination, learning and legacy

To communicate the project results and learning to others, selling the benefits of the approach in tackling waste crime, and to influence European policy and legislative changes.





What will the project deliver?

To achieve the LIFE SMART Waste project's objectives, a range of outputs are expected as summarised below.

- ◆ New practices and technologies will be tested and made available for use by interested enforcement agencies throughout Europe.
- ◆ An intelligence hub will be developed to enable participating enforcement agencies to share and analyse intelligence that will ultimately help to identify waste crime.
- ◆ Coalitions, resource and information sharing between regulatory or enforcement bodies, with at least four agency partnerships sustained or created after the project is finished.
- ◆ Reports will be submitted in the latter stages of the project to relevant EU bodies recommending policy or legislative interventions to disrupt or mitigate illegal behaviours in certain waste markets.
- ◆ Case studies will be developed to detail the application of smart, intelligence-led regulation and its benefits, and raise awareness.
- ◆ Training packages and courses will be developed and delivered to enforcement organisations involved with the environment and/or waste management markets.
- ◆ Agencies (not participating in the project) will adopt intelligence-led and/or novel tools as a result of the project's learning and dissemination activity.
- ◆ Illegal waste practise interventions will be applied within Member States to disrupt or mitigate illegal behaviours, with at least three illegal operations detected and disrupted during the lifetime of the project.



Where are we now?

Good progress has been made in the initial stage of the LIFE SMART Waste project, following the establishment of the project's governance, structure and delivery team.

Primarily, we have focused on engaging with partners and stakeholders, whilst scoping and testing concepts for the key technical deliverables that will ultimately help to evaluate, tackle and reduce waste crime.

Collaboration is at the heart of the project

The LIFE SMART Waste project has already attracted considerable, and growing, levels of interest from across Europe, clearly demonstrating the importance and relevance of the project's objectives.

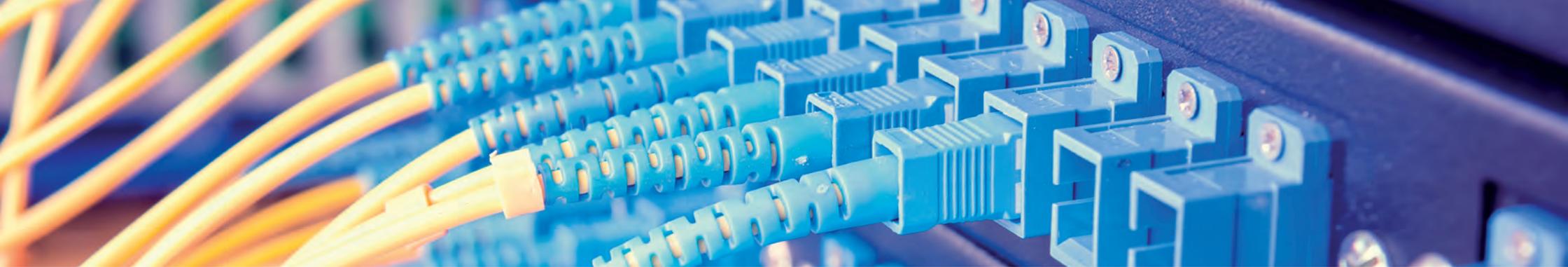
A number of organisations and experts have agreed to be part of a wider External Steering Group to provide expert guidance, information and support for the LIFE SMART Waste project. Several External Steering Group meetings and workshops have already taken place and this work will continue throughout the life of the project.



Calum MacDonald (Executive Director of SEPA) launched the LIFE SMART Waste project in November 2014 at the Scottish Environmental Crime Taskforce conference in Edinburgh.

External steering group members

<p><u>ACR+</u></p> 	<p><u>IBGE-BIM</u></p> 	<p><u>Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency</u></p> 	<p><u>Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)</u></p> 	<p><u>Natural Resources Wales (NRW)</u></p> 	<p><u>Police Scotland</u></p> 	<p><u>Scotland Europa</u></p> 	<p><u>Scottish Environment Protection Agency</u></p> 	<p><u>Scottish Environmental Crime Task Force</u></p> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME TASKFORCE</p>
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Where are we now? (continued)

There are already a growing number of stakeholders involved in the project and committed to undertaking complementary work through the External Steering Group, and many more are expressing an interest in getting involved. We are currently working with representatives from:

- ◆ [Environment Agency \(England\);](#)
- ◆ [Europol;](#)
- ◆ [Federal Office of the Environment \(Switzerland\);](#)
- ◆ [Interpol Pollution Crime Working Group;](#)

Innovation has been a guiding principle

We have been working with our partners to design an innovative *intelligence communications hub*. Our vision is to provide a collaborative, on-line problem-solving platform where all stakeholders share and cooperatively evaluate information to produce new insights, understanding and responses to waste crime. In addition to providing an on-line toolkit, the hub will also help to establish personal networks, partnerships and facilitate workshops to drive international communication and collaboration in tackling waste crime.

We are continuing to engage with project partners on the design, protocols and operational arrangements required to turn our vision for the hub into reality. We also want to reach out further to other potential stakeholders – including industry representatives - to identify their essential and desirable requirements for such a toolkit.

Closely associated with the design of the hub, we have initiated the development of our *intelligence gathering strategy* which will outline the information needs of the project. Information and intelligence is the project's most valuable asset and ensuring that we generate, handle and use our information effectively will be critical to drive the successful development and delivery of the project. Again, we are seeking the input of as many stakeholders and potential participants as possible to develop the strategy.



Next steps

As the LIFE SMART Waste project gathers momentum, there will be a continued focus on raising awareness of the project and engaging with a broadening range of European enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders, as potential partners.

Examples of the next steps to be taken in developing innovative ways of understanding, tackling and reducing waste-related crime include the development of the following:

- **Intelligence gathering strategy** – Concluding our development of this strategy will provide a high level plan for the identification, capture, processing, management and presentation of all information and intelligence required to develop and deliver the agreed objectives.

- **Intelligence communication hub** – Continuing our work on this will provide the means for increased collaboration and co-operation between international environmental regulators engaged in identifying and tackling serious waste crime.

- **Competitive behaviour analytical tool** – This tool will enable regulators to identify those opportunities or vulnerabilities which could provide opportunities for competitive advantage and criminal behaviour.

- **Remote sensing techniques** - This will involve the investigation and assessment of more cost-effective and easier-to-use remote sensing technology approaches and design of analysis techniques to gain intelligence on illegal activities associated with 'challenging' waste streams such as illegal stockpiling, land application and land-fill.

- **Waste flow audits** – These will help to identify leakages in waste movements from the point of production. Innovative approaches and tools for undertaking waste flow audits 'on-site' and at sector level for 'challenging' waste streams will be designed and developed to be less complex and less time and labour intensive for environmental authorities to undertake.

- **Waste tracking devices** - The team will work to investigate the types of waste tracking devices available and assess their suitability for tracking the movements of different types of waste and the implications of such an approach, particularly within and between countries.

The development of such practical tools will enable environmental regulators to identify and tackle the issues which facilitate either criminal behaviours or the criminalisation of the market itself. The participation, support and input of professional knowledge by industry participants and market experts will be essential to help drive this work.

Acknowledging that the issue of waste crime is ultimately linked to questions of resource management and the circular economy, we will also seek engagement with innovators driving the transition to the circular economy within industry, regulatory and government bodies throughout Europe.



How to get involved

We are actively seeking new partners and interested stakeholders to **get involved with the LIFE SMART Waste project** and **help us to achieve *smarter regulation of waste in Europe***.

We would particularly welcome the support of enforcement agencies, industry representatives, policymakers, legislators and those offering expertise in waste management or waste crime to expand the pool of stakeholders participating in the project.

Contact us

Please do not hesitate to contact us with specific queries, initial expressions of interest or to register for the project newsletter by emailing lifesmartwaste@sepa.org.uk

For general information or updates, visit www.lifesmartwaste.com.