



Let's get back to joined-up thinking

MY MANIFESTO

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■ **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO JOINED-UP THINKING? IT WAS A MANTRA OF** the New Labour project in the late-1990s, but appears to have fallen out of fashion.

Generally speaking, a lack of leadership at the local level and micro-managing by central Government has had the joined-up effect of making precious little happen in terms of planning. Being able to use the heat generated by local energy-from-waste facilities, for example, needs long-term, strategic decisions to be made at the local level, as does setting aside land for materials recycling facilities and reprocessing facilities that create new jobs.

Addressing the democratic deficit by encouraging local people to get more involved in shaping decisions, and supporting local leadership through commencing a national awareness campaign focused on the need for processing, treatment and disposal facilities would feature in my first 100 days in office.

Municipal building A needs heat; producers B and C generate food waste and manure; so location X needs to be reserved for a local anaerobic digestion plant providing heat and power – that's what I saw on a tour of the Netherlands.

And our experience from community liaison groups suggests that local people get this. Creating jobs, making things, using heat – all these need space and joined-up planning. The Government needs to set a course; councillors need to lead;

planners need to be bold; voters need to be involved.

Producer responsibility has ended up being looked at as a series of projects. Reducing the substantial burden placed on local authorities and businesses as the 'managers' of mixed waste materials must be the focus. The end point should be to aim for local authorities to be 'returns stewards' of the materials that have passed along the supply chain. Creating

national level, but delivered through supporting businesses at the local level.

There are huge economic development opportunities to be realised, but these cannot be controlled from the centre – they need local leadership supported by a Government with a hand on the rudder.

Plastic carrier bags are a fantastic place to start. Sauce has conducted a series of research projects for clients in three local authority areas focused on business

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demand for recycled materials in the UK has to be a key objective, and part of a co-ordinated materials and products stewardship scheme.

Closed loop systems, returnable and reusable packaging, reverse logistics and lightweighting have all been trialled, funded and lauded. Alas, they have not been joined up: a patchwork, but no quilt.

What is needed is a root and branch review of why it is that so much packaging, so many short-life products and 'consumer non-durables' end up in the bin, sometimes just a few hours from the point of sale. The action must be guided by clear strategy and financial drivers set out at the

attitudes to waste and environmental issues. The data clearly shows that local businesses, which form the backbone of every high street, overwhelmingly support a move away from the free, single-use plastic carrier bag. What local businesses want is support and leadership from their local authority. Consumers are ready for the change. The French and Irish have done it. Let's get on with it.

One final thought. Earlier this year, Conservative Party leader David Cameron said "...there will be tough choices to make for the environment and I won't shy away from them." Prove it, Dave. Tell us what you're planning. ■