

January 2010

# Carpet Recycling and Government Policy

## Introduction

This paper summarises five issues on which Carpet Recycling UK is lobbying.

## Background

Half a million tonnes of carpet waste goes to landfill each year. Early indications are that recycling one tonne of carpet waste gives a carbon saving of 4.2 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e. Disposal of carpet waste costs manufacturers over £1m, and the cost to businesses and local authorities is over £30m.

### 1. Waste Strategy

The Waste Strategy 2007 made no reference to carpets, although in a footnote noted that more data was needed for textiles as a whole. Carpet Recycling UK, funded by industry, has carried out significant work to gather information and develop carpet recycling over the past two years. This information should be fed into the next Waste Strategy plan and Carpet Recycling UK members recognised for their contribution.

### 2. Categorisation

Development of carpet recycling over the past 2 years has been hampered by confusion around where carpets sit from a waste policy perspective. Because carpets straddle textiles, plastics, organics, municipal, commercial and construction waste-streams, they have effectively 'fallen through the gaps' in terms of available development support. The lack of clear categorisation for carpet waste is also a regulatory barrier as waste coding prohibits applications to land, which have been demonstrated to be both beneficial and low-risk. Defra should clarify where carpets sit and the Environment Agency should reconsider its position on use of waste carpet as a resource for soil.

### 3. Govt/Industry Agreement

Back in 2002 the US government signed an agreement with industry setting out a target for reducing carpet waste to landfill. This was very successful in stimulating interest and investment in carpet recycling in the States. A similar voluntary agreement and target has been proposed as a possible outcome of the WRAP-funded Resource Efficiency Plan for

Flooring. The UK government should be a signatory to a Voluntary Agreement.

#### **4. WRAP remit**

The inclusion of carpet recycling within the remit of WRAP would greatly help market development for carpet recyclates because WRAP has a wealth of expertise in relevant end markets. Defra should ensure that carpets are included within the WRAP business plan from 2010 onwards.

#### **5. Imports**

60% of carpets are imported, mostly from Belgium. Any industry actions (e.g. levy on sales, or printing composition on backings) must apply to overseas manufacturers so that a level playing field is maintained. Defra and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, should lobby their European and international counterparts to ensure that importers comply with industry codes of practice on resource efficiency.