

# A JUST TRANSITION: **PUBLIC WASTE MANAGEMENT**



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Sinn Féin is committed to putting waste collection back under the control of local authorities.

The current privatised system is expensive, bad for the environment and severely lacking controls and regulations.

We cannot have profit supersede the environment.

We are only state in Europe with a completely privatised waste collection service, and the only EU state persisting with 'side by side' competition for waste collection.

This has led to multiple companies driving through residential communities adding to pollution and traffic jams.

At this time the costs, timeframe and legal issues involved in taking the service back into public control are unknown.

Earlier this year, South Dublin County Council passed a re-municipalisation motion tabled by our Sinn Féin mayor Mark Ward.

This was followed by a similar motion passed by Dublin City Council to kick-start a process aimed at taking waste collection back into public ownership.

This will include the creation of a working group to consider how the re-municipalisation of waste management might be advanced.

Yet this cannot be a Dublin-only initiative. We need to look at this across every local authority in the state.

We believe the best course of action is for these issues to be teased out in a public forum such as the Oireachtas.

This is why I will be asking the Joint Committee on Communication, Climate Action and Change to undertake a series of hearings that will look at a policy of remunicipalisation across the state.

These hearings, leading to a report, should examine:

- **designated alternatives to the current privatised and 'side-by-side' models;**
- **the legal issues raised by a pathway to alternatives;**
- **the environmental benefits of each alternative model;**
- **the benefits of each alternative from a workers' rights perspective;**
- **the benefits to communities and households.**



Possible alternatives to the current model include the introduction of the successful franchising model, already operating in several countries across Europe and the elimination of the 'side by side' model.

This would be an important first step towards a return to waste collection directly by local authorities.

This model would give power to local authorities to contract a single waste collection service for their area.

The council could insist on operating standards including affordable prices for householders and waiver schemes, and the company would be accountable to the local authority on whose behalf it is operating.

This would be the first step in returning the operation of waste collection services wholly into the hands of the local authorities.

The model would also enable local authorities to better take advantage of the renewable energy potential offered by organic waste.

The re-municipalisation of waste management is desperately needed. Household bills are crippling hundreds of thousands of ordinary people and adding to the financial insecurity of countless more. The actions and failings of government parties, both past and present, have driven up these costs.

The percentage of recycled waste has not improved under privatisation – in fact it has stagnated at 41 percent according to the most recent figures, while just over a quarter (26%) of municipal waste was landfilled.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.epa.ie/nationalwastestatistics/municipal/> (accessed 15.7.19)



As predicted by Sinn Féin councillors and activists who campaigned against charges from the outset, the introduction of bin charges was followed by local authorities exiting the service.

This has led to an upsurge in illegal dumping. A recent report by the Consumer Protection Commission in September 2018 showed that 23% of householders do not avail of a domestic waste collection service.

Local authorities are having to foot the bill for cleaning up the illegal dumping. Once upon a time bin collection was a core service provided by your local Council - now it is a lucrative industry, with the cost being borne by the householder.

Beauparc Utilities Ltd, operators of Panda Waste and Greenstar enjoyed a 49% jump in pre-tax profits in 2017. This resulted in a profit of €18.4m. Meanwhile the average cost per householder has increased by 11%, to €228 since 2012. Private companies have also disregarded the waiver system that was in place, forcing vulnerable households and those on low income to pay the full charge for waste collection.

Privatisation also undermines worker's rights and facilitates a face to the bottom in terms of working conditions, as shown by the Greyhound Strike of 2014. Sinn Féin will continue to work with SIPTU, Fórsa, and Connect trade unions to successfully take waste collection in to public ownership.

Re-municipalisation lowers costs. According to a recent survey the return to





municipalisation since 2007 in Germany has seen prices stagnate. On top of this, it also led to improved working conditions especially for those struggling with low wages and temporary contracts.<sup>2</sup>

As well as backing the motion on re-municipalisation, Sinn Féin has also produced the Waste Reduction (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. Its purpose is to minimise waste, further promote recycling, and provide for greater penalties for littering.

In the absence of this necessary government action, more can be done by local authorities to tackle fly-tipping, illegal dumping (on a private and industrial scale) and dog fouling.

Finally, an independent regulator to oversee domestic waste collection industry is desperately needed. Sinn Féin will create legislation to establish this office.

### **SINN FÉIN PROPOSALS:**

- **Putting waste collection back under the control of local authorities**
- **The Joint Committee on Communication, Climate Action and Change to undertake a series of hearings that will look at pathways to remunicipalisation**
- **Greater employment and contract protections for waste disposal workers**
- **Introduction of a franchise model of waste collection as a first step, so that councils can insist on standards of delivery including affordable prices for households and waiver schemes**
- **End the 'side by side' waste collection system**
- **Increasing the number of recycling centres and the range of items accepted**
- **More public and recycling bins including dog litter bins**
- **legislation to establish an independent regulator to oversee the domestic waste collection industry.**

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2 EPSU, *Waste Management in Europe: Good Jobs in the Circular Economy?* EPSU: Brussels, 2017: 12.





**Working towards a just and fair transition for climate change and environmental protection**

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