



# Solid Waste Market Opportunities in the United Kingdom

## The Solid Waste Market

The United Kingdom (U.K.) solid waste market is large (approximately \$9 billion), but highly fragmented in comparison with other European countries. There are some 3,500 companies in this sector, covering waste collection, transport, treatment and disposal. The top three waste management companies control only 15 per cent of the market, compared with 51 per cent in France, 36 per cent in the Netherlands, and 32 per cent in Belgium. There is also a strong international presence — the two largest operators being French — and several joint ventures between foreign and U.K. companies.

## Market drivers

About 520 million tonnes of waste were generated in the U.K. last year. Over 80 per cent went to landfill, with less than 10 per cent recycled, and the remainder incinerated. Although the government has set, and continues to set, ambitious targets for increasing recycling and composting rates and creating energy from waste, its targets are far from being realized.

Recent growth in the solid waste market has resulted largely from European Union (EU) legislation. Landfilling, traditionally the principal means of waste disposal in the U.K., is becoming a less attractive option. A move by the U.K. government to encourage alternatives to landfilling has raised the landfill tax from £3/t (approximately \$7) to £10/t (\$23.50), which will be increased by £1/year until the year 2004.

The EU Landfill Directive will ban the dumping of whole tires within two years of its implementation and the dumping of shredded tires within three years. As a result, new disposal solutions will have to be found for up to 9 million tires each year.

A forthcoming directive covering waste incineration has serious implications as the proposed limit for NOx emissions (200 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) is beyond the capabilities of the mass burn municipal waste incineration technology commonly used in the United Kingdom. Clearly, more efficient incineration technologies or alternatives are urgently required.

By the year 2001, half of all packaging material used (8.5-11 million tonnes per year) must be recycled or adapted to generate power. With the U.K. currently at only 8 per cent, there is real opportunity for companies with recycling technology expertise to enter this sector.

## Canadian successes

Eco Waste Solutions has generated a great deal of interest in the U.K. with its thermal waste oxidizer, which can handle both solid and liquid wastes and achieves a volume reduction of 90 per cent. The non-toxic ash can be safely landfilled or refused, metal/glass can be recovered for recycling and the system can also be used to generate electricity. Through a partnership agreement, the Canadian firm Global Waste Solutions just announced its first U.K. contract, with Devon Waste Management. (See [www.eco-waste.com](http://www.eco-waste.com))

Wright Environmental Management recently won a \$3.7-million contract to supply a 15,000-tonne-per-year in-vessel composting system to Biffa Waste Services, a major U.K. waste management company. The plant is the largest of its kind in the country. This is Wright's first large-scale system sale in Europe and provides a strong foundation for the future. (See [www.compost.wem.ca](http://www.compost.wem.ca))

Shred-Tech Limited has been active in the U.K. for several years, and in 1998 sold a second industrial shredder to N.E.C.P. Computers Ltd, which will be used to recover metals from electronic scrap. (See [www.shred-tech.com](http://www.shred-tech.com))

Can-Ross Environmental has been supplying the U.K. market with spill response-related items for over 10 years. In addition to its oil spill response organization, based in Scotland, it has also set up an extensive distribution network, with a centre in the West Midlands and 18 branches throughout the country. (See [www.canross.com](http://www.canross.com))

## Your contact in the U.K.

For more information, or assistance in finding a U.K. business partner, contact Patrick Stratton, Commercial Officer, Canadian High Commission, 1 Grosvenor Square, London, United Kingdom W1X 0AB, tel.: (011-44-171) 258 6654, fax: (011-44-171) 258 6384, e-mail: [patrick.stratton@dfait-maeci.gc.ca](mailto:patrick.stratton@dfait-maeci.gc.ca), Internet: [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/london](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/london)