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## Press release

Embargoed until 00.01 hours, Thursday 20 September 2007

### Public recycling more than ever but landfill targets unlikely to be met

**Recycling rates have risen significantly, but further increases will be harder to achieve and will cost more. Because of slow progress in developing facilities to deal with waste that is not recycled it is unlikely that Scotland will be able to reduce landfill to the levels required by the EU. Urgent decisions now need to be made.**

Today's *Sustainable waste management* report, by the Accounts Commission for Scotland and the Auditor General for Scotland and published by Audit Scotland, says recycling rates have gone up, with around a quarter of municipal waste now being recycled (compared to 7% in 2001/02). There has been a huge increase in the number of recycling schemes, services and facilities. But to meet EU Landfill Directive and Scottish Government targets, councils will need to increase their recycling rates and achieve rapid reductions in the volumes of waste going to landfill.

Isabelle Low, Deputy Chair of the Accounts Commission for Scotland, said:

"Councils have done well so far to achieve a rapid rise in recycling rates. But we still need to recycle more and success in the next phase will be harder. The Scottish Government recycling targets will be difficult and costly to meet due to the need to recycle more types of waste, extend access to hard to reach areas such as tenements and rural communities, and because the value of additional materials collected will fall. The best way forward is for councils to standardise recycling schemes and use Best Value reviews to ensure greater consistency and value for money."

The report estimates councils' expenditure on waste management will need to reach an estimated £580 million in 2019/20. Around £351 million was spent on managing household waste in 2005/06.

New facilities need to be built for dealing with waste that is not recycled. Because of the slow speed to date in developing these facilities it is unlikely that Scotland will be able to meet the 2013 EU targets. Failure to do so may result in financial penalties.

Caroline Gardner, Deputy Auditor General for Scotland, said: "As a nation we are now far more environmentally aware. Councils and the Scottish Executive have played a key role in encouraging and enabling the public to recycle, and with considerable success. A quarter of our household waste is currently recycled, with four out of five people taking part.

"Yet the amount of waste we produce continues to grow. It is unlikely Scotland will be able to meet the EU Landfill target for 2013 as there has been slow progress in developing facilities to treat the waste we don't recycle. Decisions on how landfill volumes will be reduced need to be taken by the Scottish Government as a matter of urgency."

The report calls for publication of a detailed action plan to deliver facilities for treating waste that is not recycled and says the Scottish Government and councils need to learn from best practice and ensure they have the expertise and knowledge to deliver the change required.

The report sets out a number of further recommendations for the Scottish Government and councils and will be considered at the Scottish Parliament's audit committee on Wednesday 26 September.

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#### Notes to Editors:

1. This report is the first national overview of progress towards meeting EU landfill targets. Failure to meet targets may result in fines, which would be for the UK as a whole, not just Scotland.
2. This report is about municipal waste only. Municipal waste includes waste from households and commercial premises, civic amenity sites, street and beach cleaning, parks/gardens and collection of fly tipped waste.

3. Figures on how much is how much waste goes to landfill and the targets can be found on pages 10 and 11 of the report. Details of recycling rates and targets are on page 17. The growth in household waste is outlined on pages 12, 13 and 14.

4. Prior to September 2007 the Scottish Administration was generally referred to as the Scottish Executive. It is now called the Scottish Government. When dealing with the earlier period this press release and the report refer to the Scottish Executive. Recommendations for the future refer to the Scottish Government.

5. The Accounts Commission for Scotland was set up in 1975 and is independent of both central and local government. The Commission considers whether local authorities, fire & rescue services and police forces spend public money properly and effectively.

(The Audit Commission operates only in England.)

6. The Auditor General is responsible for securing the audit of the Scottish Government and most other public bodies in Scotland, except local authorities. He investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Auditor General is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Government or the Scottish Parliament.

7. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission for Scotland.

8. Audit Scotland reports are published at [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk). Recent reports are accompanied by podcasts of key messages.