

Improved relations with Local Authorities could possibly assist in the development of this service through facilities like local collection centres.

Relationships with refurbishment companies is an area that is underdeveloped. It is often not financially viable for a refurbisher to reuse low-end equipment, so unless the refurbisher recycles themselves, the precious metal products that can be recovered from this equipment goes to waste. An area of suggestion would be for recycling companies to form relationships with refurbishers for the purchase and / or collection of this low-end equipment.

Responses suggest that the supply of WEEE and the capacity to recycle WEEE is likely to increase over the next twelve months, mainly due to increased awareness through the WEEE Directive. However, opinions on how the Directive will affect the industry varied. There was an element of uncertainty in the responses, with one organisation saying that it is difficult to predict even for experts.

### Recommendations for further research

#### 1. Location studies

A study into the collection infrastructure of the industry could be used to help prepare for the collection challenges of the WEEE Directive.

#### 2. Industry impact of WEEE Directive

Clear supply chain audit trails of the amounts collected and amounts recycled will be needed to monitor the value of recovery. Research is needed to determine appropriate data collection methods. Research could also be used to gain an understanding of producer / retailer intentions to date.

#### 3. Changing barriers and support needs

As the industry grows, barriers to increasing recycling and the support needs of recycling companies are likely to change. Research to determine how support needs and barriers differ between different sized recyclers will help prepare the industry in meeting these needs.

#### 4. Relevance of accreditation

There needs to be a greater understanding of the importance of licensing and performance standards and of meeting accreditation standards such as ICER. Do accredited recyclers do more business? If so, why aren't more recyclers applying for accreditation?

### Implications for REALISE

There is much scope to link the results of this research study into the REALISE project. It is hoped that the project will significantly reduce the amount of electronic waste currently being sent to landfill, hence the implications for REALISE from this research range from the role for marketing available recycling services to the provision of data on WEEE to relevant parties.

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# Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE) Recycling

## Research Report

## Executive Summary

September 2003



## Foreword

This guide has been researched and written by the REALISE IT Network.

This guide is intended as a source of information on WEEE recycling activity in the United Kingdom (UK). In light of the EU WEEE Directive, it addresses key issues such as changes to the supply of WEEE versus the UK's current capacity to recycle WEEE. It also identifies market opportunities for those involved in recycling WEEE.

REALISE accepts no legal responsibility for any errors or misleading statements.

## Executive Summary

This research study has been undertaken by the REALISE Project. The project is a partnership between the London boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, Westminster and the Corporation of London, with financial support from the European Union's LIFE Environment Fund and the UK Government's Single Regeneration Budget. REALISE has both environmental and social objectives. It is hoped that the project will significantly reduce the amount of electronic waste currently being sent to landfill and at the same time provide serviceable inexpensive equipment to those in greatest need. This report aims to provide a status update on WEEE recycling activity in the UK. Information gained will also be used to assist in the development of our referral service.

### Introduction

This report surveys WEEE recyclers throughout the UK through a questionnaire study. The report shows evidence of current supply of WEEE and capacity to recycle as well as predicted changes to supply and demand due to factors such as the WEEE Directive.

### The WEEE Directive

The WEEE Directive, which has to become law in the UK by August 2004, calls for the separate collection and recycling of electrical equipment. It requires producers / manufacturers to take responsibility for the take back and environmentally-friendly disposal of electrical and electronic equipment.

The WEEE Directive may increase supply of WEEE to recyclers. This depends on the intentions of manufacturers, as was suggested in the survey.

### Methodologies

A questionnaire study was undertaken with a range of recyclers throughout the UK. This provided information about demographics, recycling activity, methods of obtaining and disposing of equipment, perceptions on the WEEE Directive, predictions of change in the market and future supply and demand, quality standards, barriers and support required and business relationships.

### Results

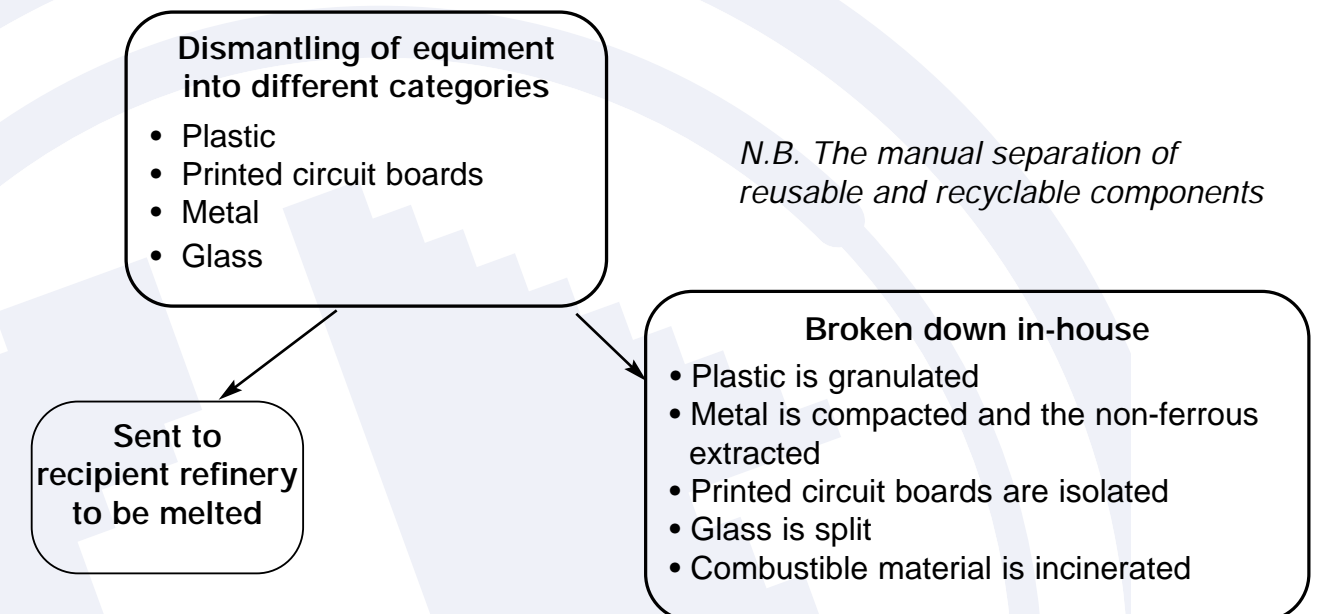
The questionnaire was distributed to recyclers who varied from start-ups to multinationals. The questionnaire had a response rate of 32.7%. The majority of the responses were from private, often large-scale recycling companies.

The results indicate that the bulk of WEEE processed is handled by only a few key players. However, only a small proportion of companies provided tonnage figures and reasons for the low response rate were not explored.

Perceptions on how the WEEE Directive is likely to affect the industry vary considerably among recyclers. There was an element of uncertainty in the responses, however the majority agreed that the supply of WEEE is likely to increase over the next twelve months.

Types of equipment recycled were broken down into nine categories of WEEE (Printers, peripherals, PCs, Networking Equipment, Laptops, Faxes, Mobile phones, Brown goods and White goods). Quantities of equipment recycled were hard to estimate from this survey, as most of the recyclers gave no weight data. However, of the recyclers who responded the total amount of WEEE processed last year was approximately 27,552,780 KGs. The majority of organisations said that all components could either be recycled or reused.

Recycling processes were generally consistent and included;



Methods of obtaining equipment varied between private sector recyclers and not-for-profit. Sale by organisation was the most common method for private companies, and donation by organisation for non-profit making companies. Lack of capital was a major issue for both business types. Many would like more money to market their services better or rent more storage space.

It emerged that the small business, home office and home user section of the market is possibly not being tapped at present. This is supported with the knowledge that the majority of private companies receive their equipment from organisations, and also that transportation was a problem for not-for-profit companies.

The majority are not accredited by industry specific standards like ICER.

### Conclusions

Evidence from the demographics suggests that the WEEE recycling industry is still in the early growth stages, as a large proportion of WEEE that is being processed is being handled by only a few key players.

In order to increase recycling rates, awareness needs to be raised amongst businesses and the general public about recycling services available and forthcoming legislation. Recyclers also need to extend their services to cover the small business, home office and home sector section of the market, which is at present not being reached.