press release

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SESA REPORT QUANTIFIES SCOTTISH RECYCLING AND WASTE SECTOR CARBON EMISSIONS

The Scottish Environmental Services Association (SESA) has today published a report by independent environmental consultants Ricardo, which quantifies greenhouse gas emissions from recycling and waste management activities in Scotland.

This report builds on the UK-wide sectoral greenhouse gas emissions assessment conducted by Ricardo for the ESA, published in 2021, which underpins the ESA’s Net Zero Strategy and its objective to decarbonise the sector by 2040.

The Ricardo modelling for the UK as a whole (conducted for the baseline year of 2018) suggested that the sector was responsible for generating 35.7 million tonnes of CO2-equivalent (mt CO2e) while avoiding 49.9mt CO2e through its recycling and waste recovery activities.

Since recycling and waste management is a devolved matter in Scotland, SESA commissioned Ricardo to conduct this new research to quantify sectoral greenhouse gas emissions for Scotland alone, using broadly the same approach it deployed for the ESA Strategy. It is hoped that this more granular analysis will aid decision-making in Scotland.

The Ricardo report for SESA calculated emissions for 2018 (the same baseline year as the ESA Net Zero Strategy) and found that the waste sector in Scotland was responsible for generating 4.5mt CO2e. This was equivalent to 11% of Scotland’s total greenhouse gas emissions for the same year (and 13% of the waste sector’s total UK-wide emissions). At the same time, a saving of 3mt CO2e could be attributed to the sector through its recycling and recovery activities, which was found to be equivalent to 6% of the UK waste sector’s total avoided emissions.

Comparing the data from both models shows that, in contrast to the UK-wide waste sector, the sector in Scotland was responsible for generating more emissions than avoided through its recycling and waste recovery activities and with direct, indirect and avoided emissions all found to be disproportionately low compared to the UK-wide picture.

While some of this difference might be attributed to variation in the reporting of waste data (and the reported composition of the recycling waste stream) across the home nations, the report found that other factors such as a lower proportion of Scotland’s waste going to EfW and recycling were also likely in play.

The full report is available to view [here](https://www.esauk.org/application/files/6316/7586/7361/QUANTIFICATION_OF_GREENHOUSE_GAS_EMISSIONS_FROM_RECYCLING_AND_WASTE_MANAGEMENT_IN_SCOTLAND.pdf)

**SESA Coordinator and Policy Advisor, Stephen Freeland, said:** “Regardless of any variation in the findings between the modelling, there is no getting away from the fact that the waste sector in Scotland, and across the UK, is a major direct contributor of emissions. Our sector is therefore determined to embrace the challenge and play its part in ensuring Scotland hits net zero and, through the ESA Net Zero Strategy, we have a plan in place to decarbonise our sector.

While our members are willing to invest in the services and infrastructure necessary for the sector’s transition to net zero, constructive partnership and positive engagement with the Scottish Government and partners is essential to helpput in place the framework needed to realise our net zero objectives.”

**ENDS**

Notes to editors:

1. The [Environmental Services Association](http://www.esauk.org/) (ESA) is the trade association representing the UK’s resource and waste management industry. Our members are directly transforming the way the UK’s waste is managed in pursuit of a circular economy and are leading the sector in an effort to decarbonise recycling and waste management operations. As resources and waste management is a devolved matter, SESA represents our members’ operations and interests in Scotland with all relevant policy-makers, regulators and stakeholders.

For further details please visit [www.esauk.org](http://www.esauk.org/)

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