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Can PAS 402 help reduce waste in building projects?

1st June 2017 Paul Cox

Paul Cox of skip hire provider [Reconomy](#) explains how construction firms and local councils can improve their waste management on building projects

Is waste from your building project recycled and re-used or is it going straight to landfill?

With landfill expenses continuously on the rise, councils and construction companies can now implement the PAS 402 scheme to help reduce the amount of waste in a building project.

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Everyone in the industry can now have confidence that the construction and demolition material that goes into a skip and leaves a site will be handled according to a strict standard. The framework helps construction firms achieve their waste management targets.

The framework was developed in conjunction with the British Standards Institution (BSI). The specification requires waste management firms to demonstrate performance in a number of key areas of waste management, including landfill diversion and materials recovery.

It means that as a construction firm you have verifiable and authoritative information to hand when you undertake a waste management audit for a new building project. This will make it easier to assess the right contractor for the job and give you a greater chance of achieving the best and most cost-effective levels of recycling and reuse.

Created in 2009 by BSI and Constructing Excellence in Wales (CEW), the successful PAS 402 has meant that the framework is now common in waste management audits throughout the UK.

The scheme helps to reduce waste within a building project. This is because each waste management company must report their recovery rates for a variety of waste streams, such as plasterboard, metals or asbestos. Their landfill tonnage is recorded, increasing the motivation for re-use. These figures are then independently verified by an inspector from the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS).

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By encouraging construction companies to recycle or re-use materials, councils and architects can aim to reduce the environmental impact of their projects.

Benefits for construction

Construction firms and local councils running building projects have a duty of care to ensure their waste is being dealt with legally and responsibly.

With PAS 402, the zero waste ambitions of each waste contractor will be there for all to see, with an annual report detailing disposal and recovery rates on every material they handle. This makes it easier to compare performances and ensure that the firm you select in your waste management audit is competent in the areas you need.

Reusing materials where possible is encouraging because of the expenses involved with waste. It is an increasingly expensive issue for the construction industry, particularly as the rate of landfill tax continues to rise.

From April, the levy went from £84.40 per tonne to £86.10, with a further rise to £88.95 next year. Data from PAS 402 will also help establish the performance of your building projects under sustainability benchmarks BREEAM and WRAP, both of which aim to encourage the efficient use of resources.

PAS 402 helps to secure work for construction firms as many local authorities now specify it as part of their procurement process.

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The scheme was originally introduced in 2009, but only as a pilot project. However, following its introduction, the PAS 402 has made a significant contribution to Wales' ambition to achieve zero waste by 2050.

In Wales alone, more than £17m has been saved as a result of diverting 148,358 tonnes of material from landfill sites. In fact, 80 waste management companies have now been independently inspected by UKAS, confirming the diversion of more than two million tonnes of waste. With less waste being taken to landfill sites, the negative impacts of waste on the environment will significantly reduce over time.

The scheme was referred to as the Green Compass from 2013 by CEW, and had the intention of tackling the lack of accurate and reliable waste reporting data it felt was hampering efforts to minimise waste. Crucially, CEW ensured that the industry was involved in writing the PAS, with 10 'pathfinder' companies invited to take part and provide their input.

The result was a document to which all users within the industry could understand and support. All 10 pathfinder companies stayed with the project through to completion, road-testing the PAS at every stage and advising on its feasibility.

These companies now have a sense of ownership of the PAS and are its strongest advocates within the Welsh waste management industry.

Implementing the scheme has meant that waste firms have secured more projects. They have increased their efficiency and are winning more work because PAS

increases the confidence of their customers, many of whom specify the standard in their waste management audit and procurement process.

The success goes to show that construction waste is now being treated as a resource to be valued rather than ignored.

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Paul Cox

Managing director, Reconomy

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