



## **NHHWF 2011-12**

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On 10 March 2011, the National Household Hazardous Waste Forum (NHHWF) held an Extraordinary General Meeting in London to discuss the future of the NHHWF.

The NHHWF has existed since 1993, initially filling a gap in the market, it has delivered significant practical guidance and numerous seminars have been organised on a wide variety of topics from paint to plasters (healthcare waste) with a distinctive on-line presence. In the intervening years the balance of the membership has altered, leaning more towards the public sector. Over time development of legislation has elevated many niche areas covered by the NHHWF to mainstream waste management practice, for example the WEEE Regulations and battery collection safety. Further changes, such as increasing involvement by other organisations interested in this area and the general impact of the economic climate have occurred. All this undoubtedly has put pressure on our Members to justify continuing support for the NHHWF through subscription and event attendance.

The Executive Committee has frequently considered how the Forum can continue to be interactive, interesting and relevant to the Members and the Committee has kept the future of the business under close review. To an extent this has worked, as shown by the active and lively involvement of members at seminars and use of the website albeit with lower overall membership. In response we have become more efficient but while having reduced costs, there has been a growing disparity between income and expenditure. Therefore in a letter sent to Members on 24 February 2011, the Executive Committee informed Members of the predicament and invited them to respond with their preferred option for 2011/12 and beyond.

Approximately 12% of Members responded. No clear way forward was identified from these responses, however. Of the options examined continuing with the status quo was deemed not to be viable, because of the low likelihood of securing sufficient members (several responses indicated current members would be unlikely to renew their subscriptions). Similarly, a seminar-only option was not thought to be workable as the Executive Committee believed many Members struggle to justify and secure the resource requirement to travel to an event.

Therefore the Executive Committee meeting following the EGM, considered the remaining options, whether to transfer or amalgamate with another organisation or to manage the NHHWF as an online only Forum. This would affect the governance and organisation of the Forum as the NHHWF is run as a limited company and so the entity either needed to be wound down or preserved in a way that permits future activity, while not creating unfunded liabilities. A shortlist of those interested organisations which might become involved was drawn up to be approached.

The solution that emerged following the Executive Committee's decision was that Resource Futures, which has been integral to the management of the NHHWF (from its predecessor Save Waste and Prosper), has offered to take ownership of the NHHWF by purchasing the company from the Directors of the NHHWF, or other arrangements with equivalent effect, [for a nominal sum] while securing certain safeguards for future activity on HHW.

On 31 March 2011, all existing Membership expires and the NHHWF has no future commitments to them. The following arrangements are being put in place: the website, including the HazGuide and the Virtual House is to remain available for all consumers and professionals to browse for the time being. The useful presentations and documents on the "members-only" area of the website will be transferred to a free to join and use online network, whereby professionals can access the

information, network and share experiences with others in the industry. Details of how to join will be sent to all previous Members. Indications from Resource Futures are that it does not expect to organise any seminars itself in the immediate future, but will keep this option open. They also plan to maintain communication with other interested organisations such as the Resource Recovery Forum, Residua, CIWM and LARAC, should the drivers and interest in HHW change in the future.

Chief Executive of Resource Futures, Jane Stephenson, has commented that "the involvement with the NHHWF illustrates Resource Futures' ambitions to be at the forefront of this area of waste management. The company recognises that hazardous household waste is still a 'live' issue, particularly as more materials are being diverted from landfill into material recovery systems, and therefore the hazardous nature of the remaining residual waste stream becomes more concentrated."

The Directors and the Executive Committee of the NHHWF consider this is the best outcome that can be achieved in the circumstances. They wish to thank the past and current Members and many sponsors who have been so supportive of the NHHWF and look forward to future (online) exchanges on HHW with many of them.