

GOOD FOOD SHOULD NOT BE WASTED



It has always struck me as absurd that we casually throw away things that others in our own streets and towns are so in need of. When it comes to food, estimates suggest that the UK food sector produces in excess of 17 million tonnes of waste a year, much of which comes from the manufacturers and retailers. Even if one ignores the morality of wasting good food when there are those in need, we have few landfill sites left in which to put it.

My own Southampton constituency is fortunate to benefit from an innovative scheme which is addressing this social and environmental problem, but its future is uncertain.

The scheme in Southampton is part of a social business called FareShare, which runs a national network of surplus food distribution operations. For the last ten years, FareShare has quietly been working in partnership with the food industry (including Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and Masterfoods) to safely distribute over two million meals a year to thousands of disadvantaged people through a network of local charities in the community.

FareShare's commendable work to redirect food from landfill sites has traditionally given it access to significant funding through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme (LTCS). Recently, there have been a number of changes to this Scheme, and these changes present FareShare with a funding crisis.

As of April 2003, categories C and CC, the criteria under which FareShare was eligible to receive LTCS funding, were deleted from the Scheme. These criteria were concerned with funding projects that created alternative markets for recycled waste and the encouragement of more sustainable waste practices.

The logic behind the deletion of these funding criteria is unclear, especially if one considers that the eligible projects were actually helping to meet the government targets of reducing the amount of waste being sent to landfill by 65% by 2020.

FareShare has provided input into the Treasury's review of the future use of income generated through any increase in Landfill Tax. The conclusion of that review was that this income should be deployed so that industry can reduce the volume of waste sent to landfill. Unfortunately for FareShare, although its objectives may meet the

Treasury's criteria they are constrained in applying for funding because current LTCS priorities *do not include the food industry*. Because of this exclusion, some of FareShare's activities may now have to be curtailed.

I believe that any organisation diverting food from landfill should be given careful consideration and support. Where it is seen to be effective, it should benefit from investment and support, especially if it is also committed to meeting pressing social needs of disadvantaged people.

FareShare has already demonstrated that it offers an ethical and cost effective solution to the problem of good food being wasted.

I have agreed to help FareShare by supporting its campaign to ensure that no good food is wasted and see additional FareShare programmes established. To find out more please contact me personally at Conference, write to me at the House of Commons or contact FareShare directly.




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