

## Response to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee stakeholder survey

25 November 2024

### 1. What major unresolved policy challenges are you or your stakeholders facing?

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) considers the approach to decision-making in waste management inadequate, while the approaches to recycling and climate adaptation need to be more joined up across government. These issues are discussed more in questions two and three below.

### 2. What issues should the EFRA Committee prioritise in 2025 and why?

The Waste Hierarchy, adopted in the 1990s by the UK Government as a tool to assist decision-making in waste management, is inadequate and not fit-for-purpose.<sup>1</sup> The IMechE recommends replacing the Waste Hierarchy to simplify the tool and prevent waste at source, mitigate climate change and recover energy and materials. The new approach should move away from waste as a problem towards thinking of waste as a valuable resource; prioritising reducing and preventing waste over recycling, which has been the focus in recent years. Not producing the waste in the first place has by far the most beneficial effect on the environment. More effective strategies for dealing with all waste streams are needed, particularly for commercial, industrial, construction, demolition and agricultural waste. A long-term, cross-government approach is needed with a zero-to-landfill goal. Independently audited, transparent data will be essential to this.

Attention should also be given to a more joined up approach across government to recycling, particularly in the automotive sector. The UK is a global leader in innovation and has the opportunity to develop new ways of reusing and recycling materials from road vehicles, as well as designing vehicles to be more readily recyclable. Promoting a circular economy within the auto industry would help to reduce reliance on critical materials and reduce the environmental footprint of the sector. The IMechE recommends expansion of oversight of end-of-life recycling beyond the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, alongside initiatives to encourage innovation.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Are there longer term or emerging issues that would benefit from Committee scrutiny over the next five years? For example, issues relating to climate change or new technologies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Institution of Mechanical Engineers. (2022). *Waste as a resource: A sustainable way forward*. [https://www.imeche.org/docs/default-source/1-oscar/reports-policy-statements-and-documents/imeche-waste-as-a-resource-report.pdf?sfvrsn=66546911\\_2](https://www.imeche.org/docs/default-source/1-oscar/reports-policy-statements-and-documents/imeche-waste-as-a-resource-report.pdf?sfvrsn=66546911_2)

<sup>2</sup> Institution of Mechanical Engineers. (2023). *UK automotive sector: Surviving the Net Zero transition*. <https://www.imeche.org/docs/default-source/1-oscar/reports-policy-statements-and-documents/imeche-uk-automotive-sector-surviving-the-net-zero-transition-online.pdf>

The climate emergency is evident now more than ever. 2023 was the warmest year on record globally and 2024 is tracking to beat it.<sup>3,4</sup> Globally more extreme temperatures, increased precipitation and flooding, rising sea levels, and increasing populations are putting pressure on our infrastructure, industrial processes and assets, as well as poorer health outcomes for people. This has implications for both productivity and local, national and international economic wellbeing. The IMechE's report, 'Adapting industry to withstand rising temperatures and future heatwaves', outlines the challenges of adapting industry to climate change and makes several recommendations that are underpinned by a joined-up approach across government, in collaboration with industry and academia.<sup>5</sup>

**4. How could the Committee better gather and represent both your concerns and the views of those in your sector?**

The Committee should form strategic partnerships with national academies and Professional Engineering Institutions (PEIs) with global footprints, such as the IMechE, to convene both domestic and global science and engineering expertise. These organisations bring valuable sector-specific expertise and can help test and refine policy incentives to ensure they are viable in practice and align with industry needs. Continuous updates from collaboration with PEIs on industry shifts enable more accurate forecasting of emerging fields, particularly as PEIs have significant representation within universities and research institutions.

**5. Do you have any examples of good practice where you have shared your concerns with Parliamentary or public bodies?**

No response.

**6. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about?**

No response.

**7. Are you representing an organisation? If so which one? Please leave your name and contact details**

The IMechE represents 110,000 engineering professionals and students in the UK and across the world. The Engineering Policy Unit of the IMechE informs and responds to UK policy developments by drawing on the expertise of our members and partners. Please feel free to contact [redacted].

---

<sup>3</sup> Met Office. (2024). *2023: The warmest year on record globally*. <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2024/2023-the-warmest-year-on-record-globally>

<sup>4</sup> European Commission. (2024). *Surface air temperature for July 2024*. <https://climate.copernicus.eu/surface-air-temperature-july-2024>

<sup>5</sup> Institution of Mechanical Engineers. (2023). *Adapting industry to withstand rising temperatures and future heatwaves*. [https://www.imeche.org/docs/default-source/1-oscar/reports-policy-statements-and-documents/imeche-heat-adaptation-report-digital-110723\\_2.pdf](https://www.imeche.org/docs/default-source/1-oscar/reports-policy-statements-and-documents/imeche-heat-adaptation-report-digital-110723_2.pdf)