

# UK finally acts on recycling waste electronic equipment: EU much relieved

Collection and recycling of waste electronic and electrical equipment (WEEE) will be the responsibility of manufacturers and retailers of the equipment from June 2006 following a Government announcement recently.

The Government has postponed the implementation date for the WEEE Directive until June 2006 in the light of

that e-waste, which often contains hazardous materials, is not simply thrown away, but is collected, recycled and reused, with the remaining waste being properly treated. The actions are part of a series of environment-related infringement decisions against several Member States which the Commission is currently announcing.

address the environmental impact of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and to promote its separate collection when it becomes waste (WEEE). WEEE is a priority waste stream for the EU because of its growing volume in the municipal waste stream and its potential hazardousness following disposal.

The Directive introduces producer responsibility for waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). Producers will have to finance treatment and recycling/recovery of separately collected WEEE in the UK to specified treatment standards and recycling/recovery targets. Retailers have an obligation to offer take-back services to householders.

The Government is modifying the timetable for practical implementation of the WEEE Directive's main provisions on producer responsibility and retailer take-back obligations in

respect of WEEE from January 2006 to June 2006. The Government plans to make the WEEE Regulations to transpose the main provisions of the WEEE Directive into UK law shortly.

The Government is doing this to allow more time to establish an adequate network of facilities for separate collection of WEEE for householders to use.

Retailers and are involved in developing this collection infrastructure for household WEEE. The British Retail Consortium is developing a compliance scheme, under which participating retailers, instead of offering in-store take-back, will fund an alternative network of WEEE collection facilities. As part of this, they are offering funding to Local Authorities to upgrade civic amenity (CA) sites to facilitate separate collection of household WEEE.

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the preparations needed for this , which breaks new ground for many of those involved, and continuing concerns expressed by the business community and other stakeholders.

It's just a month since the European Commission formally asked the UK and seven other EU Member States (Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Poland) to transpose into their national laws three EU Directives tackling the environmental problems caused by the growing amount of electronic and electrical waste.

This should have been done by 13 August 2004. If the UK had continued to delay compliance with this, the Commission could have taken the UK to the European Court of Justice. The Directives in question aim to ensure

Department of Trade and Industry Minister, Malcolm Wicks said: "This Directive is about dealing effectively with electrical waste which can be damaging to the environment. It is challenging and has required a lot of planning and preparation but our priority is to get this right."

Jeff Cooper, the Environment Agency's Manager for Waste Producer Responsibility, said:

"The Environment Agency will work closely with Government Departments and the devolved administrations to implement the forthcoming WEEE Regulations. We expect to be able to announce arrangements for the registration of producers in the early autumn with registration starting in January 2006."

The WEEE Directive aims to

