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The Waste of Nations [1]

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The ASI's latest publication, *The Waste of Nations* by Gordon Hector (reported here [3] in the *Daily Telegraph*), calls for the introduction of pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) waste charges as the best way to encourage less waste and more recycling. Research from the US suggests a move to PAYT would reduce landfill by 16-17 percent, increase recycling by 50 percent, and lead to a source reduction in waste of around 16 percent. That would reduce the need for unpopular landfill sites and incinerators and could prompt emissions savings of millions of tonnes a year.

Importantly, the report stresses that PAYT must not be used as a 'bin tax' and that its introduction must be accompanied by a corresponding fall in council tax. Evidence from Holland, Ireland and Germany suggests that PAYT would not increase household bills ? rather, it would offer an opportunity to reduce them.

The report also calls for the full liberalization of the refuse collection sector, so that private companies would have to compete for customers. Such a move would keep prices down and increase customer satisfaction. It would also lead to innovation and encourage refuse collectors to recycle more waste.

The final section of the report argues that recycling should be put on a commercial footing. Recycling facilities and providers should be allowed to merge and consolidate, and the free movement and trade of recyclables should be established. This would allow economies of scale to be established, bringing down the cost of recycling and recycled goods, and ensuring a market for commercially viable businesses in the long run.

In recent days, the government has pulled back [4] from its earlier plans to hold widespread trials of PAYT. But the reason the government's proposals for variable waste charging have run into widespread opposition is that they are half-baked and ill thought out, relying on 'punishing' people who don't recycle. The proposals outlined in *The Waste of Nations* are very different: liberalizing refuse collection and introducing pay-as-you-throw charging would dramatically increase recycling and help the environment, but it would also be an opportunity to reduce taxes, save money, and increase the quality of a vital service.

Download the PDF here [5].

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