Viridor, one of the UK's largest recycling, renewable energy and waste management companies has backed a House of Commons select committee calls to transform waste policy if the UK is to avoid missed recycling targets and the loss of vital UK energy resources.

The firm is currently investing over £1bn in 'next generation' recycling and energy recovery infrastructure to help its local authority and business customers translate zero waste policy into practice.

Responding to the House of Commons Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Select Committee report 'Waste Management in England', Dan Cooke, Director of External Affairs, said:

"This important report should be a real wake-up call for the UK Government and the sector. Whilst recycling has been a real UK success story to date, the decision to ask Defra to take a back seat was a mistake. There is broad consensus that we need to keep our foot on the waste policy accelerator. Whilst it's right that innovation and investment is led by a vibrant private sector, the reality is that waste management is also a vital public service. As such it needs a balance of leadership and smart, enabling policy, particularly in relation to delivering social infrastructure, along with effective regulation."

In the report Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Miss Anne McIntosh said:

"Defra 'stepped back' from waste management at a time when we need both a more ambitious approach to recycling and waste management and stronger Government leadership to help drive up static recycling rates in England and make better use of energy recovery options such as local heating for homes and businesses. Ministers must now show that waste and resource policy remains an important priority."

Mr. Cooke welcomed the committee's confirmation of the essential role of recovering energy

from residual, post-recycling, waste. He said:

“After recycling its right to focus on the vital role of UK energy recovery as a key part of landfill diversion, including moves to address the shortfall in UK capacity. It’s also right to check the unrestrained export of UK resources, with growing concern regarding the lack of standards and enforcement. In 2013/14 UK exporters of Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) shipped over 2m tonnes of British resources overseas. The cost to the UK was up to £192m with the loss of energy resource capable of powering over 312,000 British homes or circa 1.3% of the UK population.

“If we aim truly to see waste as a resource, why or when is it sensible for UK taxpayers to pay for the privilege of powering industry in Dutch and German cities as opposed to heating homes and helping business here in our own country? It’s a Jekyll and Hyde policy of lost opportunities for UK energy security, jobs and investment.”

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The report is available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmenvfru/241/24102.htm

Committee Membership is as follows: Miss Anne McIntosh (Chair), Richard Drax, Jim Fitzpatrick, Mrs Mary Glindon, Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck, Iain McKenzie, Sheryll Murray, Neil Parish, Ms Margaret Ritchie, Mr Mark Spencer, Roger Williams