



ZERO WASTE TO LANDFILL.

WHAT YOUR
WASTE
MANAGEMENT
PROVIDER ISN'T
TELLING YOU.





“Zero waste to landfill” has become a common commitment in sustainability strategies. But what does it really mean? And how close are most organisations to achieving it?

In our experience, not very.

Here’s why:

- Most companies have limited visibility into what actually happens to their waste once it’s collected.
- Service providers often have no financial incentive to help clients reach zero landfill.
- And procurement processes frequently fail to deliver like-for-like comparisons—leaving room for hidden fees and overpromises.

Waste is complex. That complexity is often exploited. It’s time to lift the lid on this pervasive issue.





DEFINE WHAT 'ZERO WASTE TO LANDFILL' MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS.

Before you commit to a target, define what it actually means. Too often, “zero” is used as shorthand for something vague or aspirational.

Ask yourself:

- Are you pursuing absolute zero—with no landfill use at all?
- Are you aiming for a high diversion rate (e.g., 90%+) with documented exceptions?
- Are you aligning with a third-party certification framework, like GBCSA Net Zero Waste?

Your definition needs to be:

- Operational – something you can implement and measure
- Credible – recognised by stakeholders and regulators
- Auditable – able to be independently verified

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Without this clarity, your reporting may look good—but your impact may be hollow.
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Most waste strategies are built on guesswork.

A comprehensive audit helps you understand:

- What waste you're generating (by material type, source, and volume)
- Where valuable or recyclable material is being lost to landfill
- How current collection and processing methods are influencing outcomes

A proper audit looks at:

- Weighbridge data
- Site-level practices (e.g., segregation, contamination, bin placement)
- Contractor claims vs. actual performance

“Once you know what you're dealing with, you can target high-value improvements—from redesigning processes to renegotiating supplier agreements.”

No organisation goes from 50% landfill to zero overnight. The transition requires structure, milestones, and sustained engagement.

We recommend the following phased approach:

Phase 1: Optimise the basics

- Eliminate obvious recyclables from general waste
- Improve bin placement and signage
- Train staff on sorting and contamination

Phase 2: Address hard-to-manage streams

- Tackle food-contaminated packaging, textiles, and mixed waste
- Implement separation-at-source programs
- Explore specialised recovery partners

Phase 3: Design for zero

- Work with procurement to reduce incoming waste
- Implement reuse or closed-loop systems
- Explore on-site treatment or beneficiation technologies

“Track progress quarterly. Share updates internally. And refine your plan as conditions evolve.”

This is where most strategies fall apart—and where service providers can take advantage of the system.

The problem:

Traditional tender processes often:

- Use generic scopes of work
- Evaluate based on cost alone
- Allow bidders to bundle or obscure critical services
- Provide little-to-no room for innovation or performance-based models

The solution:

Take control of your procurement process by:

- Auditing current contracts and performance
 - Know what you're actually paying for and receiving
- Creating a specific, detailed scope of work – Define what success looks like: data reporting requirements, diversion targets, service transparency
- Evaluating providers based on value, not just price – Look at past diversion performance, reporting detail, technology use, and client feedback

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Procurement must be a tool for transformation— a strategic, insight-led approach can unlock major cost savings and environmental gains.

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Waste reduction is often left to Facilities, EHS, or a lone sustainability champion. That's a recipe for stagnation.

To move the needle, zero waste must become an organisational goal.

Key departments and their roles:

- Procurement: Selects packaging, materials, and service providers—must prioritise low-waste and circular solutions
- Operations: Handles on-site sorting, bin logistics, and compliance—must be trained and engaged
- Finance: Tracks costs and ROI—must understand how landfill diversion affects budgets
- Leadership: Sets culture and accountability—must own and sponsor targets

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Break silos. Build shared KPIs. And embed waste goals in everyday decision-making.
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Credibility is built on honesty. Don't be afraid to share the full picture:

- What's working
- What's not
- What you're learning along the way

Avoid vague language like “zero waste ambition” or “diversion wherever possible.” Instead, use specific metrics, defined baselines, and third-party verification where appropriate.

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*Your employees,
customers, and
investors don't
expect perfection—
they expect
transparency.*
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