

South West Devon Waste Partnership Roadshow and Community Engagement Report – January 2010

This report provides a summary of project related communication events held, written queries and responses made between October 2009 and January 2010.

1. Summary of Public Exhibition Roadshow held between 9th – 14th November & 9th December 2009

1.1 Introduction

A series of roadshow exhibitions were held at various strategic locations across the Partnership area in early November and December with varying number of attendees (as listed in table 1 below). The aim was two fold – to communicate latest information about the project and partnership and to gather comment and opinion from local residents and the community. The exhibition presented information centred on various topics: the partnership background and objectives; project scope and timescales; the waste management issues under consideration; an overview of the three companies currently bidding for the contract; site locations under consideration; and the potential solutions being proposed. The Environment Agency also had a presentation stand relating to energy from waste, regulatory controls and permitting.

Table 1 Roadshow locations and approximate attendees:

Date	Location	Public Attendees (approx)
9 th November	Ernesettle Community School	31
10 th November	Torbay Town Hall	4
11 th November	City College Devonport	11
12 th November	Ashtorre Rock, Saltash	33
13 th November	Watermark Ivybridge	61
14 th November	Guildhall Plymouth	52
9 th December	Weston Mill Primary School	32

The exhibitions were attended by a number of officers from Plymouth, Devon and Torbay Councils as well as representatives from the [Environment Agency](#), who will ultimately be permitting and regulating the facility.

Several of the exhibitions, including those at Ernesettle and Ivybridge, were also attended by local opposition groups. The South West Devon Waste Partnership allowed the groups into the exhibition halls to set up their opposition stands. This concession has helped to ensure more informed debate, and has allowed for a greater understanding of opposition issues.

1.2 General reasons for public attending

Visitors to the exhibition had a range of interests including:

- General interest in waste management
- General interest in the technology options
- Personal interest in the potential site (usually as a nearby resident)

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1.3 General issues and concerns raised by attendees

- Potential sites for solutions
- Increased traffic – congestion, pollution and danger
- Perceived health impact
- Recycling rates – current targets too low
- Recycling rates – impact of facility on recycling
- Visual impact of a facility
- Stack height
- Proximity to housing
- Carbon footprint for waste travelling from Torbay / Devon
- Length of PFI contract
- Alternative technologies considered
- Lack of detailed information on the proposals
- Heat and power generation and potential customers
- Employment potential
- Emission levels and safeguarding in place for emergency situations
- The allocation of waste management sites
- The planning and permitting process
- Clarification of the procurement and selection process
- Where waste will come from

1.4 Specific issues raised:

- Congestion at the junction at the top of Ernesettle Lane, parking on the hill, traffic volumes and concern about heavy vehicles taking a short cut through the Ernesettle housing estate.
- Increasing fog in the Tamar valley
- Access arrangements through Lee Mill village
- Railway and water transport opportunities
- Langage power station as a potential site
- Viability of Sherford new town (as recipient of energy)
- Financial incentives for recycling
- Access to HM Naval Base South Yard
- Understanding Viridor's planning application and proposals in relation to the Partnership

1.5 Conclusions from Roadshow

The level of interest and engagement shown from those attending the roadshows was constructive and thoughtful with many residents asking detailed and well informed questions. Most residents were receptive to the responses and information they received, stating they felt better informed and more aware of the wider issues as a result. However the lack of information, visual images and specific detail on the four proposals (at that time) was raised by several attendees and is an area that will need to be addressed as soon as possible.

The procurement, planning and environmental permitting processes are not well understood by the general public although the presence of planning officers from Devon

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County and Plymouth City Councils and staff from the Environment Agency at the events helped to clarify and demonstrate the independence of these processes. The Partnership will consider further how it can improve communications and inform the public about these complex formal processes.

The majority of attendees acknowledged the need for an alternative to disposing of waste in landfill but some queried whether energy from waste was the right technology, often thinking that recycling alone could provide the solution. With the exception of the Torbay event, many of the attendees were concerned about that the solution being near to their community, suggesting it should be sited away from residential areas.

A significant proportion of the visitors to the exhibition left comments. We have responded directly to those who left their email address/contact details on their comments form. Many of the points raised are already addressed on our website www.swdwp.co.uk.

The roadshow events were extensively covered by local media throughout with BBC and ITV attending two events. Media coverage over the course of the roadshows was balanced, although there was some confusion over dates and venues due to some incorrect detail featured on online / teletext schedules. This was questioned with the media; they later corrected their text where possible and apologised. An incorrect media story in early November led to some confusion, suggesting that the Ernesettle site had been completely withdrawn from consideration whereas only Sita had withdrawn their bid for this site. Again, this was challenged with the media; online agreed to give a correction, but whilst broadcast apologised, there was no further clarification.

The attendance levels at some venues were disappointing although the weather was particularly inclement during the November roadshows. Higher attendance levels at Ivybridge may have been as a result of Viridor's targeted communication events in undertaken between August and October in advance of their planning application submission. A number of local residents also suggested that other members of the public were not aware of the roadshows and queried the advertising. The partnership confirmed that all roadshows were advertised in the local media before and on the day of each event, featured in news bulletins and articles, and information was displayed in local libraries, on the partnership's website and at the venues themselves. However, this is something the partnership will review to consider if this can be improved for future events.

2. Summary of written queries received

Over the last three months, the partnership has received 17 written queries relating to the partnership's project centred around various common topics. Below is some general information we have provided in response to these queries:

2.1 Emissions

Many of the figures quoted by research and reports opposing energy from waste refer to EfW emissions and data from before the year 2000. Opposition reports also refer to data and statistics that are not ratified or verified independently. In 2000, new European legislation was introduced that drastically cut emissions from incineration and other industrial processes. As a result, research prior to 2000 is not generally considered relevant (or valid in this case), as it is based on levels of emissions that far exceed the current allowable limits.

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Dioxins are often quoted as being a significant health concern, however, over the last twenty years, the levels of dioxins from industrial combustion processes including energy from waste have reduced significantly, with a 90% reduction since the introduction of the Waste Incineration Directive in 2000. In 2003, the [National Society for Clean Air](#) looked at where dioxins come from. They concluded that only 1% of the UK's annual dioxins are from energy from waste incineration. A later study by [DEFRA in 2004](#) suggested that in fact 0.5% of the annual dioxin total is from incineration, with 0.5% coming from landfill.

The recent Health Protection Agency report (September 2009) states that modern incinerators do not pose a significant threat to public health. A Health Protection Agency spokesman said: "The evidence suggests that air pollution from incinerators makes up a fraction of one percent of the country's particulate emissions. Industry and traffic account for more than fifty per cent... The evidence suggests that any potential damage to health of those living close to incinerators is likely to be very small, if detectable. The Agency therefore does not believe that studies of public health around individual incinerators are scientifically justifiable."

The facility procured by the partnership will be designed and permitted to latest modern standards and emission levels will be closely monitored by the Environment Agency during operation.

2.2 Waste minimisation

The proposed energy from waste plant should be seen in the context of the waste hierarchy i.e. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover Energy, Dispose and the partnership have already allowed for increased waste minimisation efforts alongside significantly improved recycling as part of their modeled future waste projections. These modeled projections have also been refreshed by the partner authorities in October 2009 to take account latest waste and population growth trends.

It has been stressed that local authorities have little control over waste production although the partner authorities through the [Devon Authorities Waste Reduction and Recycling Committee](#) has been promoting waste minimisation through a variety of channels including multi media advertising and meeting the public at road shows. Re-use is being promoted through re-sale of items from recycling centres and support for furniture re-use charities.

2.3 Impact on recycling

There will always be a proportion of our waste which cannot be recycled that will need other solutions such as waste contaminated by food or other organic matter (e.g. nappies). There are also waste elements that cannot be recycled as it is not sustainable or economic to do so e.g. composite materials, carpet, mattresses etc. A modern, appropriately sized and regulated facility provides an appropriate treatment arrangement to divert as much of this waste as possible from more harmful landfill.

The partnership has carefully sized the facility (i.e. limiting the capacity of the plant) for projected future needs such that there will be scope to increase recycling to latest national target levels set by the government and beyond. Our new facility will be part of an integrated waste management solution sized to meet the needs of South West Devon, so as not to 'crowd out' recycling. The partnership, along with the District Councils, are making strenuous efforts to further increase the level of materials recycled in the area and this has been allowed for in forecasting our future needs.

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Energy from waste plants generally rely on a relatively poor quality waste stream. The plants do not work so efficiently if fed materials with high energy content, such as a lot of plastics. So rather than discourage recycling, it is important that items of high energy content are extracted and recycled leaving a 'lower calorie' waste stream for the plant to incinerate.

The system cannot be viewed in isolation – it relies on a fully integrated process where reduce, reuse, and recycling are the first elements of the waste treatment. This type of integrated scheme is fully in line with UK Government policy and EU legislation. It reflects the move away from landfill towards increased recycling and recovering some value from waste, such as generating energy.

2.4 Stack height

The height of the chimney for a waste to energy plant will be calculated to ensure adequate dispersal of any flue gasses regardless of weather conditions and must be calculated for each specific site according to topography and weather conditions. Contractors will undertake extensive air quality investigations and dispersion modelling as part of their proposals, which will determine the exact chimney height. This exercise has yet to be completed by the bidders but it is usual for a facility of this capacity to have a chimney in the region of 90 metres tall. This structure would be designed to complement the facility architecture and minimise adverse visual impact as far as possible.

2.5 Sustainability

The impact of transportation to and from the proposed sites will be assessed as part of the procurement and also as part of the planning application process. Some consideration has already been given to transportation issues as part of the site identification and this will be further reviewed through the bid evaluation process used by the South West Devon Waste Partnership to select the preferred bidder.

In terms of location, the largest proportion of residual waste (by Council) going to the energy from waste facility will be generated in Plymouth and hence locating the facility in or near to Plymouth will reduce the miles that waste has to travel overall.

2.6 Traffic

As part of the planning process contractors will be required to produce detailed studies of the projected traffic flows and ensure they will have no unacceptable adverse impacts on existing transport network. If road improvements are deemed to be required these will be undertaken as part of the project works.

The waste which will be delivered to the new facility is currently being delivered to one of two landfill sites. Refuse collection vehicles currently collect waste from Plymouth and parts of South Hams and take it to Chelson Meadow from where it is loaded onto bulk tipping vehicles for onward transport via the A38 to a landfill in Cornwall. Similar bulk tippers carry waste from West Devon to the same landfill. Waste from Torbay, parts of South Hams and Teignbridge is currently taken to a landfill near to Newton Abbot. Depending on the final site location chosen it maybe possible to reduce the amount of waste miles traveled and potential increased use of bulk tipping vehicles to transport waste may make it possible to plan deliveries to avoid times of day when the traffic is particularly heavy.

2.7 PFI

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The partnership has also received a number of queries relating to PFI funding and the length of contract required.

The Government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) programme has been used widely for building schools and hospitals around the UK. It is a way of funding major capital projects such as large scale building, construction or infrastructure projects with an appropriate risk transfer to the private sector without having to use money directly from the 'local public purse' – i.e. the council. If the partnership's project were unable to attract central government PFI support, alternative funding mechanisms would result in an associated rise in council tax for residents.

PFI contracts are long term; the partnership is looking for a contract over the next 30 years. This is because it is a major investment: the costs of building the facility and operating it are borne by the contractor, so there needs to be some long-term security and certainty. The contractor needs to know that they are guaranteed to get our waste for a definite amount of time – assuming they meet all the performance and agreed standards.

PFI contracts are designed around an 'output specification', so that if the contractor does not meet our high-level specific requirements or there are performance issues, the partnership can withhold payment or even terminate the agreement. Flexibility can also be built into the contract to recognise and manage future changes.