

SWDWP
Communications report July 2010



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

This report provides a summary of project related communication activities, written queries and responses made between April 2010 and July 2010.

1. Communication activities

i. Exhibitions

Dates:

- 14 June - 4pm to 8pm, Weston Mill Community Primary School
- 15 June - 4pm to 8pm St Budeaux Community Centre
- 17 June - 4pm to 8pm, The Watermark, Ivybridge
- 3 July - 10am to 2pm, Plymouth Guildhall

The purpose of the roadshow was to provide an update on the project and enable residents to speak with partnership officers and technical experts.

The Health Protection Agency and the Environment Agency attended the exhibitions to provide impartial advice and explain their roles in the development. MVV Umwelt and Viridor also attended the exhibitions in the vicinity of their proposal.

The main concerns were:

- Traffic and increased congestion
- Health implications
- Height of the stack
- Light and noise pollution
- Recycling figures

Number of attendees:

- Weston Mill Community Primary School – 48 people
- St Budeaux Community Centre – 46 people
- The Watermark, Ivybridge – 54 people
- Guildhall Plymouth – 31 people

Advertising the event:

- Opposition groups informed via email on 28th May
- Press release sent out to the local media on 15th June (appendix 1).
- Posters given to the following locations to display:
 - St Budeaux: Community Centre, Lidl, St Budeaux Library, Riverside Primary School Co-op, Wolseley Road, Weston Mill Primary school
 - Ernesettle: Ernesettle Primary School, Social Club
 - Devonport : College of Further Education,
 - Ivybridge: The Watermark

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- Lee Mill : Tesco

Adverts in:

- Western Morning News – 10th, 11th, 12th, 14th June and 1st July
- Plymouth Evening Herald – 10th, 11th, 12th, 14th June and 1st July
- South Hams Gazette (w) – 11th June

ii. 24 June – Environment Agency / SWDWP communications meeting

To share information and provide updates on the project and procedures.

iii. 2 July: CAVIL – attendance at opposition meeting for briefing in Ivybridge

Mark Turner, Ben Jennings and Liz Waugh attended a meeting chaired by Gary Streeter of the Ivybridge taskforce opposed to the Energy from waste proposals. This was a helpful session and a chance to explore local residents' concerns, and provide information regarding the proposals and waste management strategies.

iv. 16th July – Briefing to Oliver Colville (MP for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport)

To provide a briefing on the project and answer any questions.

iv. 16th July – MP briefing

To provide a briefing on the project and answer any questions. All local Devon and SE Cornwall MPs invited - MPs who have confirmed attendance Oliver Colwill, Gary Streeter and Alison Seabeck.

vi. 19th July – Marchwood visit

To provide members and project officers the opportunity to view an operational Energy from Waste facility.

2. Summary of written queries received

Over the last three months, the partnership has been asked to respond to 5 letters and two Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

FOI

The FOI requests concerned the planning process and amounts spent on consultancy fees. The partnership's role as the procuring organisation has been explained including the distinction between the partnership's remit and the statutory planning process. It was explained that the partnership has not commissioned any external consultancy to assist with planning process although the project delivery team does include planning officers seconded from the partner councils to provide advice to the partnership, but remain independent from the statutory planning process.

It was also explained that the partnership is encouraging the companies bidding for the contract to engage with the relevant planning authorities, as it will be their responsibility to submit a planning application for any solution.

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Letters

Members and officers have passed letters onto the partnership for a response. The general topics and information that the partnership has communicated are outlined below.

2.1 Health

The partnership has invited specialist waste management contractors to propose solutions to meet our future needs and all the proposals being presented include energy from waste facilities. Energy from waste is a clean, proven and reliable process. Energy from waste has been studied for many years and it has been proved that modern facilities have no measurable effect on human health and do not increase pollution significantly above that which already exists from normal human activities. These conclusions are supported by government agencies such as the Health Protection Agency and other independent qualified organisations. More information is available on our website www.swdwp.co.uk and also on www.hpa.org.uk

Energy from waste facilities are the most highly regulated industrial plants in the UK in terms of their emissions to the atmosphere. Companies are required by law to continually monitor emission levels. Once in operation, an energy from waste facility must conform to the Waste Incineration Directive, which was incorporated into English law through the Waste Incineration (England and Wales) Regulations 2002. This sets strict limits on the quantities of any pollutants a thermal waste treatment plant may produce. Also, a thorough Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out for any site and facility as part of the planning application and permitting process which will be independently assessed.

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. The partnership has already factored in increased waste minimisation efforts alongside significantly improved recycling as part of their future waste projections. These modelled projections were revised by the partner authorities in October 2009 to take account of the latest waste and population trends.

It has been stressed that local authorities have little control over waste production. However through the Devon Authorities Waste Reduction and Recycling Committee the councils have been promoting waste minimisation using a variety of ways, including roadshows, radio, press and tv advertising. Reuse is being promoted through the resale of items from recycling centres and support for furniture reuse 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 so that there will be scope to increase recycling to latest national

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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 and the associated district councils are making strenuous efforts to increase the level of materials recycled in the area and this has been factored into forecasting our future needs.

Energy from waste plants generally rely on a relatively low 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 Effects on the local community

Potential light and noise impacts will be assessed and any issues dealt with as part of the planning and Environmental Permitting process. Normally, a facility of this type would only require lighting needed for vehicle movements to and from the facility. Noise levels from the process can be controlled and usually this would not be audible outside the main building.

Facilities of this type generally create 200 jobs during construction and approximately 30-40 jobs for the general day-to-day running of the facility.

2.5 Stack height

The height of the chimney for a waste to energy plant will be calculated to ensure adequate dispersal of any flue gases 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 stack height. This exercise has yet to be completed by the bidders but it is usual for a facility of this capacity to have a stack 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.

2.6 Sustainability

The impact of transportation to and from the proposed sites will be considered as part of the procurement and also formally assessed 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 within 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.

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2.7 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 the potential for increased use of bulk tipping vehicles to transport waste may reduce the overall amount of waste miles travelled and may make it possible to plan deliveries times to reduce congestion.

2.8 PFI

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 secure central government PFI support, alternative funding mechanisms would have to be found but 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 will need to know that they are guaranteed to get our residual waste for a definite amount of time. 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 reduce payments or even terminate the agreement. Flexibility will also be built into the contract to recognise and manage potential future changes from either legislation or the partnership.

2.9 Need for a solution

Each partner council considered a range of alternative waste treatment options as part of their respective Municipal Waste Management Strategy development. Options were considered again when developing the partnership's outline business case. On each occasion, it was concluded that a thermal process recovering energy from waste was a preferable option for treating our residual waste combined with increased recycling and waste minimisation.

Our potential solution intends to only treat the residual waste which has not been removed by waste minimisation and recycling initiatives. The partnership has calculated its future residual waste tonnage need on the basis that the partnership authorities will continue to improve recycling rates until they are over 50%. In addition, our future needs have also considered future local population trends which are predicted to rise.

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The overall strategy and justification for engaging in this procurement can be found in the Outline Business Case which is available within Documents section of our partnership website.

By way of background to the project, like most authorities, the partnership councils currently rely on landfill for the disposal of the majority of their waste that cannot be reused, recycled or composted. Landfills produce harmful methane gas which contributes to global warming and also toxic liquid leachate which can be extremely damaging to the environment. To reduce the reliance on landfill the Government has increased landfill tax so that everyone will be paying £80 per tonne tax by 2014, having risen from £7 per tonne when it was first introduced in 1996.

In addition, the Government has given all councils an annual decreasing allowance of biodegradable municipal waste that we can landfill every year, or risk fines at £150 for each tonne over our allowance. The cost of not finding an alternative solution will therefore result in significant council tax increases. Over the expected life of the contract, an energy from waste solution is estimated to be at least £150m lower than continuing with landfill (including government PFI support) with other alternative waste treatment solutions estimated to be currently more expensive than landfill.

Our evaluation has also estimated that an energy from waste solution would save approximately 38,000 tonnes of carbon equivalent per year compared to landfill disposal. This is the equivalent of removing approximately 14,000 medium sized cars from the road per year within the partnership area. In addition, if the heat generated from the process can be used productively this could increase the figure by up to a further 40,000 tonnes saved, the equivalent of removing a further 15,000 medium sized cars.

3. Media Enquiries

General media enquiries have covered the progress of the project and provided updates as needed. Journalists attended all four of the recent roadshow events, speaking with residents and experts; a factual and balanced view resulted in the main.

The recent publication of an air quality report by Defra in April (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/airquality/strategy/>) has resulted in a BBC enquiry and substantial coverage. The BBC had been alerted by Save our South Hams to the report and the partnership provided a technical briefing and interview, resulting in a useful and informative piece. Although this coverage featured objectors from Eco-Ivy and Friends of the Earth, the report was helpful and fair in its tone.

Finally, recycling related media stories have been a subject of both controversy and acclaim for the individual partner authorities over the last few months. As a result, in some cases, there has been a need to support partner councils in dealing with the more difficult and complex issues. There is a need to consider how the partnership officers can support the partner authorities in the most effective manner should incidents of this nature reoccur.

Appendix 1



ON BEHALF OF SOUTH WEST DEVON WASTE PARTNERSHIP

PRESS RELEASE

15 June 2010

For immediate release

THE South West Devon Waste Partnership is holding a series of exhibitions in June to provide an update on the project to develop a new waste treatment facility in the region.

The events are open to all and will take place on the following dates:

- 14 June - 4pm to 8pm: Weston Mill Community Primary School
- 15 June - 4pm to 8pm : St Budeaux Community Centre
- 17 June - 4pm to 8pm: The Watermark, Ivybridge
- 3 July - 10am to 2pm: Plymouth Guildhall

Councillor Roger Croad, chairman of the South West Devon Waste Partnership, said: “As the project progresses, it’s important that we keep people informed. These roadshows are a regular event to enable people to come along and ask questions and gain a better understanding of the issues.”

There will be experts on hand to provide more information about how we will manage our waste in the future, and answer any queries.

He added: “We are making great strides in terms of recycling, reusing and reducing waste in the first place, but we still need to raise public awareness, to encourage greater recycling rates.”

More information on the work of the partnership can be found at www.swdwp.co.uk

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The South West Devon Waste Partnership is a collaboration between Plymouth City Council, Devon County Council and Torbay Council. The main objective is to deliver a sustainable long-term waste management solution for the communities of Plymouth, South and West Devon, the South Hams, Teignbridge and Torbay.

For more information, please contact Liz Waugh on 01752 847135 or Jane Slavin on 01752 304049.