

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 JULY 2007

STATEMENT OF THE BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNTY COUNCILLOR CLARE WOOD

WASTE MANAGEMENT

West Harrogate HWRC

A planning application has been submitted for the combined household waste recycling centre and highways depot to serve the west of Harrogate. This application was a key milestone in a project and has been carefully developed to address all of the concerns raised during the consultations carried out with those that will be most affected by the development. I hope that the application will be determined at the planning committee meeting on 7 August, and barring any unresolved objections this should be achieved. If planning permission is granted, we are still on target to open the new household waste recycling centre in April 2008.

National Waste Strategy for England

On 24 May 2007, the Government released its long awaited waste strategy for England. The strategy places an emphasis on tackling climate change by reducing waste and becoming more resource efficient. The new waste strategy is seen as being an essential part of the drive to tackle climate change - landfilled waste is a major source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, while reducing and recycling waste saves energy and raw materials.

The main points of the national waste strategy include:

- Recycling and composting targets of at least 40 per cent of household waste by 2010, 45% by 2015, and at least 50 per cent by 2020. This is a significant increase on the targets in the previous national waste strategy, published in 2000.

In 2006, the County Council adopted its waste strategy - *Let's talk less rubbish* – and we set targets to recycle as much as the government targets but to achieve 45% by 2013 - two years earlier than those set out within the national strategy.

- National targets for the recovery of municipal waste were also announced – 53% by 2010, 67% by 2015 and 75% by 2020.

The County Council has set a target to divert 75% of municipal waste away from landfill by 2013, again more challenging than the Government's recovery target.

- Waste prevention was also a key theme of the national strategy. It is expected that the amount of household waste disposed of will reduce as practical schemes such as home composting and schemes to reduce food waste disposal are expanded. Businesses will also play their part in helping consumers, for example, with less packaging. There is a new national target to reduce the amount of household waste not reused, recycled or composted from 22.2 million tonnes in 2000 to 12.2 million tonnes by 2020 - a reduction of 45 per cent.
- The Government has agreed with the Direct Marketing Association to develop a service so that people will be able to opt-out of receiving unaddressed as well as addressed direct mail. The Government is also considering moving towards an approach where people would only get direct mail if they opted in by placing their name on the direct mail register.
- The Government also raise the possibility (subject to further analysis and consultation) of banning biodegradable and recyclable waste from being put into landfill sites.
- In the March budget, the Chancellor announced an increase in the landfill tax escalator by £8 per tonne per year from 2008 until at least 2010/11. Partly as a result of this, business waste landfilled is expected to fall by 20 per cent by 2010 compared with 2004. By charging more to landfill waste, it is hoped that more waste will be diverted for recycling or composting.
- The Government also stated that it expects to increase the amount of energy produced by a variety of energy from waste schemes, by using waste that cannot be reused or recycled. It is expected that by 2020 a quarter of municipal waste - waste collected by local authorities which is mainly from households - will produce energy, compared to 10 per cent today. As set out in the County Council's waste strategy, we expect that residual waste treatment in North Yorkshire will be by thermal and/or biological processes, which is in line with the Government's target of creating energy from our waste.

I am sure you will agree that the County Council is making progress in many of these areas and that we are already carrying out many of the Government's proposals. However we recognise that we must now also respond to the new challenges, whilst continuing our good performance, and I will provide further information as new initiatives develop.

Reusable Cotton Bags

The County Council has recently produced reusable cotton bags. The reusable bag is part of a drive to reduce the amount of rubbish that is sent to landfill sites and builds on the request from residents for the County Council to take action against the amount of plastic carrier bags that are in use.

Supermarkets across North Yorkshire hand out almost 170 million plastic bags each year – the equivalent of 290 for every person within the County.

The County Council's waste management unit worked with students from Craven College of Art and Design, based in Skipton, to create a practical but environmentally friendly alternative to the plastic carrier bag. The College has said that working on this project with the County Council has helped the students think about just how much rubbish they create and how it can be reduced. They are also excited about seeing people using the bags on their shopping trips and feel that they've done something really important to help the environment.

Celebrities such as Keira Knightly and Lily Allen have been featured recently in national newspapers with reusable shopping bags and now residents of North Yorkshire can go green and look cool by adding this environmentally friendly accessory to their wardrobe.

The reusable cotton shopping bags will retail at £1 and are available from a number of shops, council offices and libraries across North Yorkshire. Take-up by retailers and purchases by the public have so far, in the first few weeks since the launch, been good and we hope to sell many hundreds of bags over the coming months. I will report further on the progress of this initiative at a later meeting.

INTEGRATED PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Local Transport Bill

The Government is consulting on a new Local Transport Bill.

The draft Bill seeks to empower local authorities to develop local solutions to the local transport challenges they face, consistent with the devolutionary principles set out in the Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*. It seeks to give local authorities strengthened powers to deliver a local transport system that is best suited to local needs by:

- giving them the mix of powers required to harness the investment and innovation of the bus industry to meet the specific needs of the local community;
- setting out proposals that would enable our major urban areas to strengthen their capacity to deliver efficient transport networks designed around local needs; and
- updating the legislative basis for those local authorities who decide to take forward local road pricing schemes as part of a package of transport improvements.

In relation to Local Transport Services, the draft bill proposes to:

- promote more effective partnership working between local authorities

and bus operators, to deliver services that are better matched to the needs of passengers in their local areas;

- make the implementation of 'quality contracts' schemes a realistic option in areas where it is in the public interest for local authorities to take greater control over bus services;
- provide a new regime to deliver better punctuality, for the first time holding local authorities as well as bus operators to account for their contribution to punctuality performance; and
- support further development of the community transport sector, by removing unnecessary restrictions and by streamlining the system for issuing permits to community transport providers.

The proposals are welcomed by local authorities and bus operators alike, and the draft Bill includes the legislative provisions that would support delivery of the policies set out in Putting Passengers First.

School/College Transport Website

Following the introduction of a website dedicated to public transport information, the Business & Environmental Services Directorate has developed a website to give people easy access to information about school transport services. The introduction of this facility replaces the school transport timetables which have previously been produced. The web site is available at www.northyorks.gov.uk/school

County Councillor Clare Wood
18 July 2007