

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

19 DECEMBER 2007

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

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Reusable cotton bags

In September, I reported that the sales of reusable cotton bags were exceeding expectations and I can now report that 13,000 bags have been sold since July. The County Council began selling the bags as part of a drive to reduce the amount of rubbish that is sent to landfill sites. The reusable cotton shopping bags retail at £1 and are available from a number of shops, council offices and libraries across North Yorkshire.

Plastic carrier bags have been in the national press recently with many shops and supermarkets now charging for the issue of plastic bags. With our reusable bags we are once again, at the forefront of national thinking and providing real alternatives for residents keen to reduce their waste.

Christmas Recycling Campaigns

I am pleased to confirm that the County Council is again encouraging people to recycle their Christmas trees and cards locally to help the environment.

We will be providing facilities to compost real Christmas trees (minus their lights and decorations!) at all of the Household Waste Recycling Centres across the County. They will be taken to one of our composting facilities and turned into a valuable soil conditioner. Alternatively, residents can leave their trees out to be collected as part of the garden waste collection scheme if their district council operates one.

We will also be supporting the national Christmas card recycling campaign which raises funds for the Woodland Trust to help protect native woodlands – of which there are 45 in North Yorkshire. Used Christmas cards can be taken to Tesco, WHSmith, TKMaxx and M&S stores between 2nd and 31st January 2008. The cards will then be recycled and made into other cards – which will help to reduce the number of trees needed to produce similar items in the future. Last year, 1800 tonnes - or 93 million - cards were collected for recycling by the Woodland Trust which was more than in previous years of the scheme. In North Yorkshire alone, just over 15 tonnes of cards were collected for recycling by the Woodland Trust.

New Household waste Recycling Centre for Harrogate

I have previously advised Members on our proposals to secure a new household waste recycling centre for Harrogate. The Stonefall household waste recycling centre on Wetherby Road in Harrogate is by far the busiest in the County. It deals with over 20,000 tonnes of waste to the site each year.

Despite our difficulties in finding a suitable site, I remain committed to improving the service to residents of Harrogate and the surrounding area by providing a second HWRC to the west of the town. A second site will relieve the congestion in and around Stonefall, and provide a more local service to the people in the area of the new site. It will also help to improve recycling.

The most appropriate location for a new HWRC in the Penny Pot/Burley Bank area, south of the A59. The recent edition of North Yorkshire Times included an article inviting local landowners with potentially suitable sites to get in touch. We will review all sites in the new year and I look forward to reporting to future meetings that a site has been secured.

DEVELOPMENT AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES

Natural and Historic Environment Days

I have the pleasure in reporting that I gave a welcome address on Saturday 03 November 2007, the first Natural Environment Day was held at the Hambleton Forum, Northallerton with over 70 people attending. There were talks from members of staff of the County Council's Natural Environment Team and from other organisations, including Natural England, University of Durham, Lower Ure Conservation Trust and Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. There were also excellent displays by local societies and organisations.

Following this success in February 2007, the BES Directorate is organising a second event on Saturday 16 February 2008, to be held at the Hambleton Forum, Northallerton. There will be talks through the day on various topics about the historic environment of North Yorkshire from both staff and external speakers. Talks will include the Viking Age Harrogate Silver Hoard, Sheriff Hutton Castle and Park, Nidderdale Historic Parks and Gardens, Anglo-Saxon burials from Spofforth and historic building recording in North Craven. There will be book stalls and displays by local groups. To date, over 90 bookings have been received.

INTEGRATED PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Public Transport Information

Members will recall that the council has a web site dedicated to providing public transport information through the internet. Since it was first launched in April 2007 staff in IPT have worked hard to make improvements. The Citizens Panel has been used to provide feedback and I am pleased to report that this was mainly positive. The web site now offers easier access to information about forthcoming service changes; direct access to planning journeys to the main hospitals serving North Yorkshire and interactive maps for bus services and community transport services. We understand that many people still do not have access to the internet and are currently exploring ways in which we can provide a timetable postal update service to fill this gap.

Consultation with bus users.

Members will recall that consultation about changes to bus services was raised at the last council meeting. In response we reviewed and improved our consultation processes. The Department For Transport has recently issued consultation on options for strengthening bus passenger representation. The aim is to establish a formal bus passenger representative body to:

- champion improvements in bus and scheduled coach service provision founded on robust research and analysis;
- work with passengers, operators, government, local authorities and other key stakeholders to ensure that the passenger's voice is heard when key decisions are being made; and
- make suggestions about the future direction of bus provision.

The Corporate Director of Business and Environmental Services will prepare the response on behalf of the Council; if Members wish to make individual representations they should channel these through him.

County Councillor Clare Wood
19 December 2007