

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

21 MAY 2008

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

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Initial indications show that during 2007/08 the quantity of household waste sent to landfill by the County Council was 200,000 tonnes. This represents a decrease of 6% on the previous year.

Waste minimization remains a real focus of the Council's work, examples of recent campaigns include:-

Real Nappy Week

The last week in April was real nappy week, with a number of events held around the county to raise awareness of the benefits of not using disposable nappies, and to dispel the myths that still surround using real nappies. Real nappies are now as convenient as disposables, and an incentive scheme managed by the County Council on behalf of the York and North Yorkshire Waste Management Partnership has resulted in 4% of all babies born in the County using real nappies. We have a target to do even better this year, and have a number of volunteers working with us to help achieve this aim.

Love Food, Hate Waste

The "Love Food, Hate Waste" campaign has been launched locally, tagging on to a national campaign launched by WRAP, the Waste Resources Action Programme. The campaign aims to raise awareness that, on average, one third of the food we buy is thrown away. This has enormous implications not only on the amount of waste we produced, but, amongst a long list of things, on the number of lorry journeys delivering food to supermarkets. Roadshows will be held at supermarkets and county and district council staff will be on hand to advise residents how to reduce food waste, and how this benefits their pocket and the environment. The campaign also featured on the front page of the May edition of NY Times.

Compost Awareness Week

The second week in May was National Compost Awareness week. Events were carried out across the County to raise awareness of the benefits of composting garden and kitchen waste at home. The York and North Yorkshire Waste Management Partnership is again providing a subsidy for residents to purchase home composting equipment, but will this year extend the range of equipment from compost bins to also include wormeries, Green Cones, Bokashi Bins and Green Johannas. All of these are tried and tested ways to reduce the amount of food and garden waste we send to landfill, and produce products that can be used in the garden instead of buying compost. This campaign is also supported by the North Yorkshire Rotters, a volunteer

network of community composting champions who promote home composting and its benefits to people in their locality.

INTEGRATED PASSENGER TRANSPORT

Community Transport

The first phase of a major investment in community transport in Craven was introduced at the end of April. The Council and Yorkshire Forward have committed over £400k of capital to provide eight accessible community minibuses and introduce infrastructure improvements at Bentham and Settle Stations. The vehicles will undertake contracts on behalf of the Council and at other times provide a range of demand responsive services throughout the Craven area. The revenue earned from the contract makes a significant contribution to the ongoing financial viability of the project. The project known as “Craven Hubs” is being delivered through a partnership of existing CT operators in Craven – Bentham CT, Craven Voluntary Transport and Little Red Bus Consortium. This is being seen as a pilot initiative to demonstrate the benefits of co-operative working between different sections of the voluntary sector and the Council.

TRADING STANDARDS AND REGULATORY SERVICES

Anti social behaviour/underage sales of alcohol

Officers from Trading Standards & Regulatory Services have been working closely with North Yorkshire Police and local Community safety Partnerships to stem the anti social behaviour caused by underage drinking. The service has a duty to enforce section 146 of the Licensing Act 2003, which makes it a criminal offence to sell alcohol to a minor. Trading Standards officers have responded to complaints from the public, in relation to traders thought to be breaching the law, by carrying out test purchases using young volunteers. In addition, officers have visited a variety of alcohol retailers across the county to make them aware of the legitimate proof of age cards available to young people and to expose the use of fake ID cards being sold on the internet. The Service is also encouraging independent retailers, to adopt the ‘Challenge 21’ policy, used by major outlets, to provide sales staff with a reason for seeking proof of age from young looking customers.

The service has identified certain hotspots across the county for alcohol fuelled anti social behaviour and intends over the coming months to step up its campaign to tackle this issue. Working with local businesses and communities it intends to trial new initiatives to tackle the growing problem of ‘proxy sales’, whereby minors solicit adults to purchase alcoholic drinks on their behalf. Although an offence, this is a particularly difficult issue to tackle, but by working with the retailer affected and providing them with the support and training needed, the service is confident that at least this source of alcohol to minors can be stemmed.

Working with the Agricultural Community

One of the main objectives of North Yorkshire County Council Trading Standards & Regulatory Services is to work with the agricultural community. Although our officers have a regulatory function they have a far wider remit in terms of supporting the agricultural community. The primary role of our officers is to provide advice and assistance to North Yorkshire farmers, food and other agricultural businesses. The Service has a proactive approach in providing advice to farmers through a number of different approaches, e.g. a dedicated helpline number for farmers, advisory visits by appointments, business advice leaflets, a quarterly animal health and welfare newsletter and also regular disease updates during the recent animal disease outbreaks. The Service also undertakes advice surgeries at livestock markets and provides a number of seminars to individual groups of farmers and at National Farmers Union regional meetings. The Service sees this support being an integral part of ensuring that North Yorkshire farmers have a sustainable future so that they can deliver to the highest standards allowing them to compete in the market place.

The Service works very closely with the National Farmers Union and also works in partnership with the farming support network groups in providing a “listening ear” for the rural farming community. The Service signposts farmers who are experiencing difficulties to the support network groups such as the Churches Regional Commission, Farm Crisis Network and The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution.

In this role the Service has worked with the farming community during the latest economic crisis that faces our livestock keepers. In January, 2008 the Service presented a report on the economic crisis facing the livestock farmers to the Economic Development and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Following on from that in April, 2008 the National Farmers Union, the Tenant Farmers Association and the farming support network groups gave presentations to the scrutiny committee on the issues facing the farming community. The County Council is now looking into ways that it can support the farming community during this latest economic crisis.

DEVELOPMENT AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES

Public Rights of Way Agency Agreement with the National Parks

Over the past 10 years the County Council has operated an Agency Agreement with the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors concerning the management of its public rights of way (PROW) network. This network is huge, totalling over 10,000km. However, approximately 40% of the network lies within the two National Parks with 2,178km in the North York Moors and 1,869km in the Yorkshire Dales. Following an approach from the National Parks, an Agency Agreement was drawn up in 1997 effectively delegating the management of the network to these two bodies. As well as benefiting the County Council, this also helped the National Parks deliver one of their

statutory purposes, to provide opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of their areas by the public.

The Agency Agreement has worked very well. However, it is over 10 years old and for this reason does not take account of new legislation over the intervening period. For example, both the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 place new duties and responsibilities on the Highway Authority in relation to PROW. For this reason discussions have been held with the National Parks to update the Agreement and it has now been decided what changes need to be made to roll it forward. I am pleased to say that as part of this process it has also been possible to make a financial contribution of £50k to each National Park in recognition of the valuable work which they undertake on our behalf.

County Councillor Clare Wood
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