

Waste Procurement

Dealing with Hertfordshire's waste

Residents in Hertfordshire are doing an excellent job recycling and composting around 36 per cent of their waste. However, there is still around 600,000 tonnes of rubbish that gets thrown away each year, the majority of which ends up in landfill sites.

Tackling waste together

The Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (a partnership between the county council and 10 district councils) published its Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy last year, which sets out how Hertfordshire's household waste will be dealt with over the coming years.

Publication of the Strategy followed an extensive public consultation where 11,000 people registered their views. Some of the key findings were:

- Almost 98 percent of respondents felt it is important to reduce the amount of waste produced
- 83 percent felt recycling should be compulsory and 72 percent wanted a 50 percent recycling target by 2012
- When planning new waste facilities:
86 percent agreed minimising transportation to the facility is important or essential; 90 percent agreed it should be cost effective and affordable; 95 percent felt considering the environmental impact is important or essential; and 94 percent felt that turning unrecycled waste into energy is important or essential.

At the heart of the strategy is the principle Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. We are committed to increase recycling to at least 50 percent by 2012 by improving take-up of existing services and introducing new schemes to make recycling and composting easier. We are also aiming to construct new facilities to allow all authorities to compost kitchen waste and cardboard and will continue to raise awareness of initiatives through the WasteAware campaign.

The problem with landfill

However, even by hitting a recycling rate of 50 percent there will be a large amount of waste that needs to be disposed of - and we can't continue to bury it all in holes in the ground. Most of Hertfordshire's landfill contracts run out by the end of 2010 and there is a lack of suitable space to create further sites. Landfill is the least environmentally friendly option for disposing of waste as it produces a liquid which has to be controlled to prevent polluting groundwater, and methane, a potent greenhouse gas which contributes to climate change.

In order to reduce the impact of waste disposal on the environment, the government and European Union have introduced new laws that mean local authorities will face financial penalties unless they find alternatives to landfill. With landfill tax escalating from £24 per tonne in 2007 to £48 by 2010 (doubling in just 3 years) as well as fines on biodegradable waste going to landfill, this would mean Hertfordshire County Council facing millions of pounds in extra costs, which would divert money away from front line services.

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Many authorities in England, including Hertfordshire County Council, are considering how to deal with the left-over household waste that can't be composted or recycled and will have to take difficult long-term decisions to find a suitable solution. There are already plenty of examples of modern waste treatment technologies operating in this country to explore, and in fact, our European neighbours have been developing similar solutions for around a decade.

How much will it cost?

New waste facilities are expensive and a new site/s could cost up to £200 million. A cost effective way for local authorities to fund large developments is through a grant known as a Private Finance Initiative (PFI), where government contributes half the capital cost. This year is the last chance local authorities have to apply for PFI funding for waste facilities, so in order to give the county council the option of using this funding route, the council joined the application process in April. There is intense competition for this grant, ten authorities are competing for the same pot of money and not all are likely to be successful.

We are currently carrying out technical and financial assessment work in order to develop a detailed proposal and submit an Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) at the end of October. The OBC will include a "reference project" which is likely to identify a possible site/s, as well as the type/s of waste treatment technology that would be suitable to deal with Hertfordshire's waste. A decision on whether the PFI application has been successful is expected from the Treasury by Spring 2009.

Next steps

Once funding is agreed, the council then invites suppliers to tender for the contract. During this, bidders can come forward with their own ideas for dealing with the county's waste. This may be different from the reference project identified by the county council.

Proposals for a new waste facility from the appointed contractor will go through the normal town planning process, including extensive public consultation.

Estimated timescales at this stage are:

Sep 22	Waste Management Panel papers published on www.hertsdirect.org (including draft OBC)
Oct 3	Industry briefing to gauge interest in OBC proposals
Oct 7	Waste Management Panel (assesses the draft OBC and makes a recommendation to Cabinet)
Oct 20	Cabinet (approval of OBC)
End Oct 2008	Submission of OBC to Defra
Spring 2009	Decision from Treasury on OBC
May 2009-2011	Procurement of facilities
2011-2012	Likely submission of planning application (including consultation)
2012-2014	Construction
2015 onwards	Plant operational

You can keep up to date on progress via our website: www.hertsdirect.org/envroads/environment/waste

If you have any queries, or if you would like to discuss this in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact the project team on: **Email: waste.procurement@hertscc.gov.uk** - **Tel: 01438 737321**

For more information about recycling and composting schemes in Hertfordshire, visit www.wasteaware.org.uk