

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 9 DECEMBER 2011

Statement from: Councillor C L Strange, Executive Councillor for Waste Services and Green Issues

Amid the doom and gloom of national and international finance and concerns for the future, we at Waste Services feel confident that we can look forward to continuing the delivery of a waste disposal service as good as anywhere in the country.

Currently, the county's recycling rates are already over 52%, which exceeds the 2015 DEFRA target of 50%. The fly in the ointment is some 165,000 tonnes of non recyclables waste, with a present landfill tax of £56 per tonne, rising to £80 per tonne over the next three years - and that is exactly why we have invested such time and effort in building our new Energy from Waste facility in North Hykeham. When it is fully operational in December 2013, it will immediately begin to save our rate payers considerable sums indeed, and well into the future at that.

Of course, the big win for our County and City's environment is the reduction of the Council's carbon footprint due to the end of landfilling with its methane consequences - a win for ourselves and the generations to follow.

The team are working full time on the Energy from Waste site at Station Road, North Hykeham, and everything is on schedule, and to budget. Progress can be followed in the monthly reports that come to the Executive, and shortly the facility will start to be visible from the western A46.

To ensure the Energy from Waste facility operates efficiently and effectively, we need to build five waste transfer stations around our county. The first at Louth is already in operation, Grantham commenced construction in November, and Sleaford will start construction in January. The land for the Gainsborough site has now been secured, and will be placed before the county's planning committee very shortly, whilst negotiations are advanced on the procurement of the land for Boston's Waste Transfer Station. A Waste Transfer Station service in the south of East Lindsey is also being investigated, to assist East Lindsey District Council when the Middlemarsh landfill closes.

The first four sites have been secured within budget, and are planned to be fully operational for the commissioning of the Energy from Waste facility. In these hard times we recognise the real positive benefits that spending our budgets can have on our local communities and, with that in mind, am pleased to tell you that we are using as many local companies as possible to construct these facilities. This ensures that we continue to support the local economy wherever we can.

Obviously, all our Districts and the City have been fully involved in the planning of their re-routing, with changes involved from running into their traditional landfill sites to their new routings into the appropriate transfer station.

I have visited each of our sister authorities with senior waste services officer, Sean Kent and, whilst the welcome has always been pleasant, we have been made aware of problems that those authorities might face with the new system. By talking and working with them, we have been able to smooth away rough edges and general matters of concern that each of them had. Now each district will have direct access to its own transfer station and we are now confident that the District or City authorities will not be adversely affected.

It proves once again the strength that comes from having quarterly meetings of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership. I constantly make the point to the team at Witham Park, and the importance of working constantly across the county with the other authorities.

The budget limitations that are mirrored across the whole County Council are reflected in our loss of staff, and this has been a very sad time. We also have to reconsider how we manage to operate our 13 household waste recycling centres with a reduced budget – unfortunately, this will mean changes to this service.

The average family usage of any of our sites is only two or three times a year. We have conducted surveys of usage at all our sites, and find that they are used mainly between Friday and Monday. Therefore, after next March, when our recycling centre operator contracts are up for renewal, we do not intend to open them in the middle of the week, with only Lincoln and Spalding remaining open for the entire week. We expect that this will save in the region of £1.25M per year.

The squeeze is on and, in fairness, whilst we expect to still retain 11 household sites, we believe that our ratepayers desire us to spend their money only where it is needed!

Whilst finance has not afforded us the opportunity to provide Stamford and Mablethorpe with a Household Waste Recycling Centre, we will continue to give financial assistance to both South Kesteven and East Lindsey to help provide a supplementary service.