

DARLINGTON ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

6th March, 2006

PRESENT – Councillor Harker (in the Chair); Councillors S. Jones, Lewis, Lister, Lyonette, Newall and S. Robson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillor F.S. Robson.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Ruck and Hartley.

ABSENT – Councillors Hartley, S. Jones and Lister.

Officers Attending – The Assistant Director Public Protection, the Countryside Rights of Way Officer, the Waste Minimisation Officer, the Sustainable Development Officer and the Head of Engineering and Highways within the Development and Environment Department.

Representing Outside Organisations –

Council for the Protection of Rural England –
Mr. G. Gibson

Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists Field Club –
Mr. B. Denham

Darlington Branch of the Alzheimers Disease Society –
Mr. J.P. Rodwell,

Darlington Senior Citizens Association –
Mrs. P. Eastwood

Durham County Council – Waste Smart –
Ms. C. Charles

Durham Wildlife Trust –
Mr. C. Evans

Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre –
Ms J. Denwood

Member of the Public –
Mr. M. Dunstone

Premier Waste Management –
Mr. P. Towers

Soroptimist International Darlington –
Mrs. A. Robinson

SITA UK –
Mr. G. Ingleson

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

28. MINUTES – Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Forum held on 12h December, 2005.

IT WAS AGREED – That the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

29. MATTERS ARISING – With reference to Minute 22/Dec/05, Mr. C. Evans updated Members of this Forum on progress made towards a ‘Green Fair.

30. ENERGY SAVING TRUST SAVE YOUR 20 PER CENT CAMPAIGN – (1) Report – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of this Forum of the ‘Save Your 20 Per Cent’ Campaign which aims to encourage people to save energy by a number of methods and the Campaign is being lead in the North East by the Regional Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be noted.

(2) Presentation – Joanne Denwood, Marketing Manager, Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre gave a presentation on the national campaign, Save Your 20 Per Cent Campaign, launched October, 2005. She gave the background to research undertaken with regards to customer attitudes towards climate change; explained that the 20 Per Cent is to link in with the Kyoto agreement targets of a 20 per cent reduction in Carbon Dioxide emissions (based on the 1990 levels) by 2020; outlined the key messages of the campaign and the benefits to each individual; also action that can be taken by individuals including low or no costs measures, insulating your home, use of energy saving products, undertaking free home energy checks and providing grant information on grants that are available.

Ms. Denwood also highlighted the promotion work that is being undertaken including television advertising, direct marketing, freephone telephone numbers and websites and advised the Members of the Forum that 34,000 customers have been contacted as a result of the free phone lines numbers and the website, and over 1,000,000 visits have been made to the website.

Discussion ensued on how this Council could work better with the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre and it was agreed that this could be done by developing better links on the Council’s website, via the Town Crier and possibly via Council Tax mailings and it was agreed that these avenues could be explored with the relevant officers.

IT WAS AGREED – That the thanks of this Forum be extended to Ms. Denwood for her interesting and informative presentation.

31. WASTE SMART – (1) Report – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the Waste SMART project currently running and designed to raise waste awareness across County Durham and Darlington. The project, headed by Co-ordinator Miss Claire Charles is now coming to the end of its eighteen-month programme and a range of activities are currently being carried out in Darlington until the scheme finally concludes at the end of March, 2006. A list of these activities was included in the submitted report.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be received.

(2) Presentation – Claire Charles, Project Leader, Waste SMART gave a presentation on the work of her team in Darlington over the last twelve months. She advised Members of this Forum that households in Darlington have been targeted directly to engage the public which have included contact by telephone for primary data, canvassing of the area to include door-to-door, leaving leaflets, and telephone contact made again to see if the attitudes have changed since original contact. Over the last four weeks 12,000 households have been contacted directly and since the start of the project 18 months ago, 100,000 visits to households have been made.

A large education campaign within schools has also been undertaken aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils and 3,500 children have been educated about recycling.

Claire also advised that there had been a £7,000 underspend and this had been used to continue the advertising campaign and this has been done by placing adverts on buses and in total 72 bus backs and 62 bus sides are currently carrying advertisements; posters have also been located in 15 train stations from Darlington to Newcastle; and 130 adshel bus shelters have advertisements.

This project concludes on 31st March, 2006 and Claire confirmed that there was no further funding to continue with this scheme, although it had been very successful in Darlington with a good response and reiterated that the message needed to be constantly reinforced to keep up the momentum on recycling. Claire also confirmed that she intended to present a final report to a future meeting of this Forum.

Questions raised by the Forum Members were regarding the location of recycling facilities at corner shops, the use of dual bins at schools and targeting large centres of employment such as supermarkets, pubs and factories.

IT WAS AGREED – That the thanks of this Forum be extended to Ms. Charles for her interesting and informative presentation.

32. INTRODUCTION TO NEW WASTE TECHNOLOGIES – (1) Report – The Director of Development and Environment submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide Members of this Forum with an introduction to new waste technologies that might be considered for a future waste strategy for Darlington. Darlington's current landfill-based waste disposal contract is due to expire at the end of 2008 and the Council is making preparations to procure a new contract, which will focus on sustainable waste management and landfill diversion.

IT WAS AGREED – That the report be received.

(2) Presentation – Mr. Philip Towers, Director of Treatment and Disposal from Premier Waste Management gave a presentation on a digester process and Mr. Graham Ingleson, the General Manager from SITA Kirklees gave a presentation on incineration with energy recovery.

The representative from Premier Waste Management, Mr. Towers gave the background to the major changes and financial drivers experienced by waste management, and in particular the Landfill Directive and the reduction in Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme and referred to Biodegradable Municipal Waste, of which 68 per cent of municipal waste is biodegradable, and the implications of diversion of this waste by Darlington. Mr. Towers also outlined the In Vessel Aerobic Digestion process and how the Aerobic Digester Plant operates, gave a full description of its outputs and outlined what Premier could offer this Council, which would be a dual tower Aerobic Digester Plant and sufficient diversion capacity to meet Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme targets through to 2020.

The representative from SITA Kirklees, Mr. Ingleson gave the background to SITA Suez established in France in 1919 and now operating in 30 countries and a leading waste management company in the United Kingdom. SITA currently hold 79 local authority contracts for waste, collection, recovery and disposal and SITA Tees Valley has 80 per cent diversion from landfill. Mr. Ingleson outlined to Members how the treatment plant operates to create energy from waste (EfW) and highlighted the benefits of this energy including a fast effective waste treatment process operating 24 hours a day with no odour emissions.

IT WAS AGREED – That Mr. Towers from Premier Waste Management and Mr. Ingleson from SITA be thanked for their interesting and informative presentations.

26. QUESTIONS – Mrs. Robinson, Soroptimist International raised a question with regard to the condition of the footpath along the River Skerne at the Railway Bridge and the condition of grass verges damaged by contractors.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Officer acknowledged that the footpath, which has an unsealed surface and has been washed over time, was in need of repair and advised Mrs. Robinson that this will be scheduled for repair under the Local Transport Plan as part of the cycle network and will be given priority.

The Head of Engineering and Highways advised Mrs. Robinson of the £2.5 million funding to spend on roads and pavements as part of the ‘Let’s Get Cracking’ campaign and grass verges will be included in this scheme.