

WEST OF ENGLAND WASTE MANAGEMENT & PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

Issues and Options - Phase Two Consultation Results

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The West of England partnership, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council, are working together to develop joint long-term strategies for dealing with waste in the West of England area. These include a Waste Strategy and a Development Plan.

2. Consultation Objectives

The Issues and Options second phase consultation process took place in January – March 2007 and built on the achievements of the first phase ‘awareness raising’ exercise which took place in June/July 2006. A Strategic Consultation Forum guided and advised on the creation of the consultation strategy for both phases of the consultation

The consultation objectives were:

1. To widely communicate key messages relating to the Issues and Options Document including the draft municipal waste strategy
2. To give stakeholders and interested parties the opportunity to fully engage in the consultation
3. To seek and obtain responses to the Issues and Options Document including the draft municipal waste strategy

3. Summary of Key Issues Raised

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

In general, the wider public, with whom we consulted, understand recycling more readily than any other aspect of waste management. They identified that this consultation did not address recycling as such, and perceived this as a shortcoming. Nonetheless the message about increasing the 3Rs is consistent and strong. There were frequently heard requests that more should be done to recycle plastics.

Waste treatment technologies

There is widespread understanding and acceptance that Thermal Treatment which produces energy is a viable and effective technology for treating residual waste. However some environmental organisations are opposed to thermal treatment technologies.

Carbon footprint information

With rapidly growing awareness of the danger posed to the planet by excessive carbon dioxide, many respondents requested more information about the climate change and the carbon emissions impact of the proposed technologies.

Reduce transportation

The need to reduce 'waste miles' i.e. the distance that waste is transported – was strongly heard from all quarters of the consultation response.

Small and local facilities

A considerable majority voiced an opinion in favour of a large network of smaller localised facilities dispersed across the area.

Complex data

Many people felt they could not make a clear choice and they recognised that a high degree of expertise is needed to make decisions about complex technologies. However, they welcomed the opportunity to comment where they were able to.

4. Methodology

- An Issues and Options survey document was produced in two versions aimed at different stakeholder groups. Stakeholders included the general public, groups with a special interest in waste and environment, parish councils, statutory organisations such as the Highways Authority and the Environment Agency, commercial waste contractors and many more.
- The first phase of consultation yielded a useful database of over 600 people who had expressed an interest in taking part again. These were all contacted either by e mail, phone or letter and invited to take part in the second (Issues and Options) phase of consultation
- Stakeholders were contacted by mail or e mail and these included a long list of organisations and individuals who had registered their interest as a result of the first phase of consultation as well as a large number of community groups, parish councils, special interest groups, councillors, MPs, local businesses etc. In total, 14,000 Issues and Options booklets were distributed.
- 4000 posters and booklets were distributed through council premises, libraries, sports centres, schools and colleges.
- A media relations campaign achieved extensive range of press articles in all the key local newspaper and radio stations and TV exposure was gained on BBC1's The Politics Show. Coverage ran for two months from the end of January to the end of March.
- Four 'Rubbish or Resource?' branded roadshows were held at major shopping centres on four Saturdays where over 650 surveys leaflets were given out. 2000 flyers were also handed out to the public with information provided about the public meetings.
- Four well attended public meetings were held on weekday evenings in each of the four areas. Attendance levels range between 25 and 60 people at each meeting.
- Eight meetings involving community groups were held, two in each Council area
- Two special interest meetings were held – one for groups with a special interest in the environment, and another for those whose interest was industrial and commercial waste.
- A day long event with presentations and workshops was attended by representatives of 11 different environment groups.

- A web site and on line consultation function enabled many people to respond electronically. In addition two live online lunch-time discussion sessions were held.

5. Response levels

This consultation captured the views of over 1000 local people and organisations.

- Over 500 people attended meetings in total.

Written surveys

- 373 people filled in one of the survey documents.
- 61 other forms of correspondence were received.
- 99 comments came through the website discussion forum.
- A total of 533 written responses.
- There was a fairly even spread of respondents across the four authorities, with slightly more from North Somerset and Bristol. The vast majority of people who responded lived within the area. The level of knowledge was high and many people wrote detailed, knowledgeable and lengthy replies.

6. Summary of comments gathered across the consultation

The Survey responses have been broadly divided into three sections:

- about waste
- about the technology options
- about planning and sites.

The following summary reflects the general views which have been gathered from the all the survey documents, e mails received, on-line discussions and comments made at the public meetings. The latter group received presentation and guidance about the options appraisal process as well as more technical detail about the technologies, and therefore these comments reflect the wider information available. The common themes and most frequently voiced views from all types of responses have been summarised here. Full details of all the comments made are available in supplementary documents.

6.1 General Waste Issues – key points raised

- A strong desire to see a greater emphasis placed on the 3Rs – Reduce – Reuse – Recycle. The vast majority who responded are keen to recycle even more, and they want the councils to make it easier for them to do this. These messages were consistent across the entire consultation.

- There was general understanding about the need for new facilities and agreement with the need to reduce the use of landfill sites.
- Many expressed a wish to see consistency about how waste and recycling is handled across the area.
- Plastics, packaging and supermarkets were frequently cited as problem areas for waste.
- There were views expressed that we should work towards reducing waste altogether and set higher targets for recycling.
- Some people criticised the Councils' assumptions that waste would rise and they challenged the Councils (and society at large) – to aim at reducing or eliminating waste at every stage.
- A large majority (84%) thought that the West of England should deal with its own waste and not export it to other areas. However, waste facilities - or the need for them – in neighbouring authorities should be taken into consideration.
- A dislike of long term contracts was expressed. Shorter, more flexible contracts were thought to be preferable in light of rapidly developing technical innovations.

6.2 Technology Options – Key Points raised

- Energy from Waste technology aroused widely contrasting opinions – with some vehemently opposed, but a clear majority of the written responses expressing this as their preferred option. Of those who objected to this technology, many did so because of concerns about emissions, health impacts, and because it could undermine future recycling activity.
- A majority of respondents felt that Option 3 (Mechanical Biological Treatment followed by outsourced thermal treatment with landfill of the stabilised output) was the least acceptable choice.
- Many people asked for clearer explanations about the carbon footprint, and challenged whether it had been given sufficient weighting in the options appraisal process.
- More information was requested about the cost impact of the technologies. Some respondents felt unable to express an opinion until this information was known.
- Many people declined to express an opinion about the technology options as they found the technologies and/or data confusing or complicated. Many felt they were unqualified to comment, while others thought that

such decisions were best left to experts. Of those with higher levels of technical understanding, some expressed doubts about the accuracy of the data used in preparation and evaluation of the documents.

6.3 Planning and Sites – Key points raised

- There was a strong desire to ensure that waste transportation was minimised. To this end many people favoured a large number of well dispersed smaller facilities.
- Small scale facilities were favoured over few large scale facilities as the former were perceived to have less impact on the immediate local environment. A significant number of people recognised the flexibility that building facilities in a combination of sizes could bring.
- A majority (71%) thought that we should plan to build facilities that could handle commercial and industrial waste as well as municipal waste.
- Some expressed views that any facilities which generate energy should be located near to where such energy can be used.
- There was general agreement that the factors identified to rule out new waste developments were suitable, although some considered that this should also include Green Belt land and areas which are at risk from flooding.
- The use of existing brownfield or derelict sites was strongly supported.
- Traffic, noise and air pollution were factors that most people felt would need to be overcome wherever waste facilities were located.

The Consultation enabled a very wide range of views to be expressed and contributed to an important part of the debate on climate change and the environment.

The results drawn from this consultation will feed into the Preferred Options stage of the Development Plan and into the emerging Joint Waste Strategy.