

NHDC's Environment Panel, 11th Sept. 2019 HertsWOW's briefing - FINAL

'Aim' & 'Our requests' were presented.
John Webb, 11th September 2019
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Aim

We advocate a transition to reduced wastage and a 'circular' economy of materials and water, towards an ideal of 'zero waste'. Whilst the rate of 'greenhouse' gas emissions from waste management is a tiny part of total national emissions, it is a large part of the emissions for which each Waste Collection Authority is at least indirectly responsible.

Our requests

1. Minimise residual waste

The priority here is to promote re-design, reduced consumption and diversion from waste, as guided and co-ordinated within the Herts. Waste Partnership. This would apply across the whole range of materials, with special emphasis on packaging and products containing plastics.

2. Local processing

This would exercise the powers of a Waste Collection Authority to deal with surplus and used materials arising locally by such processes as would leave hardly any materials, by weight or climate change impact, for destruction and air pollution. The aim should be that of dealing locally with the equivalent of the district's waste arisings, whilst co-operating with the adjoining authorities to use capacity in specialised agricultural and industrial facilities for these processes. For instance, arrange for sorting of otherwise 'residual' waste so as to extract everything that can technically and economically be returned as raw materials.

3. Consistent Waste Management

We're asking or each district/borough council to behave within the Herts. Waste Partnership as if the Partnership were a unitary Waste Management Authority. That means agreeing decisions that would be treated as binding on all member authorities, while seeking consistency in strategies, policies and practices. The purpose would be to raise the performance of all members to the level of the highest performers, so far as local conditions allow. This would realise the potential of the North Herts - East Herts joint contract with Urbaser and extend it to all ten of Hertfordshire's district & borough councils. This would complement the County Council's upgrading of the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

What you do will need to converge with the UK Government's forthcoming legislation and guidance to follow up the recent consultations on Consistency, Deposit Return Schemes and reform of the UK Packaging Producer Responsibility System by the target year of 2023.

Caveat

Across the Council's operations, management of waste is one of the largest causes of greenhouse gas emissions and about a third of annual expenditure. We do not suggest that transition toward a 'circular economy' and reduction in emissions of 'greenhouse' gases arising from waste are necessarily the most important issues for the Council, or the UK, to tackle.

Rather, reduced consumption and wastage are far more effective ways of avoiding increases to climate change and of improving air quality. Since these more effective ways would in large part require long-term changes in behaviour and widespread redesign of products and systems, we regard processes of waste management close to the top of the Waste Hierarchy as vital for an interim stage of such a transition.

We suggest that you start by taking stock of what is already being done here and elsewhere, and then ask Transition Town Letchworth to conduct a 'visioning' and 'back-casting' exercise with you to explore how you envisage North Hertfordshire district being served in 30, 20 and 10 years hence.

ANNEX A. About Herts WithOut Waste

Herts WithOut Waste (HertsWOW) is a small, unincorporated network set up 10 years ago and dedicated to reducing the wastage and diverting materials from destruction and conversion to carbon dioxide (CO₂), even when energy is generated inefficiently in such a process.

We provide specialist support to Transition-minded community groups across and around Hertfordshire. In dialogue with Herts, County Council and other relevant authorities and agencies, we focus on strategies and technologies for making use of otherwise 'residual' waste.

In the ten years since HertsWOW was formed, we have taken part in formal proceedings and informal discussions and events about strategies, policies and projects for centralised waste management (at Hatfield in central Herts. then at Hoddesdon on the border with Essex). The proceedings included public consultations, petitions, information requests, public inquiries and examinations in public. Our technical consultants are UKWIN and Eunomia.

Our function is not to campaign directly but rather to support local community groups to do so, with a view to promoting more sustainable practices. In this manner we have promoted an alternative approach to that of the Waste Disposal Authority, namely to focus plans and resources strategically on processes at the top of the Waste Hierarchy: Reduction, Re-usage, Recycling and Composting to the maximum feasible extent in future years and decades. This is in line with the initiatives of the Herts. Waste Partnership, which could now be described as 'Zero Waste' or a 'Circular' Economy rather than the linear economy of extract, consume and destroy.

ANNEX B. About John Webb

Please note: On this occasion I am only speaking for HertsWOW.

Qualifications

PhD in Critical Theory, applied to education & politics, at the University of Bristol
MSc in Ecology & Society at the University of the West of England
BSc in Maths/Physics with Chemistry and Geology, at the University of Aberdeen
FRGS Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers

Memberships

Member of Town & Country Planning Association (promoting Garden Cities & Suburbs)
Trustee of Transition Town Letchworth, liaising with similar groups in Hertfordshire
Director of the United Kingdom Without Incineration Network (UKWIN)
Trustee of the Circularity Foundation, a new charity for education & research
Co-ordinator of Herts. WithOut Waste (HertsWOW), a local member group of UKWIN
Life Member of Green Alliance and of the Scottish Youth Hostels Association

ANNEX C. Background information

Prof Sir Ian Boyd, Defra's Chief Scientist until 29th August 2019: *Climate change: Big lifestyle changes 'needed to cut emissions'*, BBC News interview
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-49499521>

M. De Smet & M. Linder, editors, Crippa, M., De Wilde, B., Koopmans, R., Leyssens, J., Muncke, J., Ritschkoff A-C., Van Doorselaer, K., Velis, C. & Wagner, M.; *A circular economy for plastics – Insights from research and innovation to inform policy and funding decisions*, 2019, European Commission, Brussels, Belgium.
<https://tinyurl.com/y6jyyb9m>

Eunomia, *A Circular Economy / Zero Waste Strategy for Derry City and Strabane District Council* (Eunomia, November 2017)
<https://tinyurl.com/yxppclch>

European Economic and Social Committee, *Circular economy strategies and roadmaps in Europe: Identifying synergies and the potential for cooperation and alliance building: a Study*
<https://tinyurl.com/y2gywprz>
Caveat: *We have reservations about a few of the processes cited.*

Herts. Waste Partnership (WasteAware), *Overview by Duncan Jones for the Member Group meeting on 29th July 2019*, including background, current performance, key issues and future challenges.

5.3.4. "The HWP needs to strategically react to the changing framework by taking the opportunity to equalise upwards the standard of recycling provision as well as where possible align collection methods across the county as a whole to increase the potential for better joined up service provision long term."

6.2. "Going forward the Members [*i.e. the 11 councils*] need to consider the long term purpose of the Member Group in terms of how it can influence and direct how the Partnership responds to these challenges. This will need to include whether it moves from its current passive disposition to one where it takes a more active role in directing the work of the Partnership."
<https://tinyurl.com/y2e3kq8s>

Herts WithOut Waste, Aim: "To seek more sustainable methods of dealing with surplus materials ('waste') in Hertfordshire"
<https://hertswow.webs.com>

NHDC Climate Change Policy, ca. 2012-13, page 1: "Our aim is to make sure the Council and the District as a whole rise to the stretching government targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the UK by at least 34% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 (measured against 1990 levels)."
<https://tinyurl.com/y33qwh8o>

Recycling Technologies, Swindon The RT7000: Engineering, "The RT7000 machine uses pyrolysis on waste plastics to create a wax for new products...".
<https://tinyurl.com/yxm4bddq>

Transition South East Hub Conference on Circular Economy of materials - and water, Walthamstow Wetlands, 13th June 2019 by Dr John Webb, as part of London Circularity Week 2019. Transition-minded community groups took part from across and around Greater London. Based on this, HertsWOW can provide a 'toolkit' for conference/workshop events to engage community groups with technical specialists from small and large enterprises. Such a programme would focus on case studies of proven technologies and economics for keeping valuable materials (and water within the waste) in circulation as locally as possible.
Reminder of the event: <https://tinyurl.com/y4r2xhqj>
Assessment: <https://tinyurl.com/y66owu4j>

UK Government, *Consultation outcome on "Consistency in recycling collections in England": executive summary and government response*, updated 23 July 2019.

"The government response to the recommendations sets out how we will seek to take forward the proposals from this consultation ... over the remainder of 2019 and we anticipate bringing forward more detailed proposals early next year. Subject to that changes would come into force from 2023."

<https://tinyurl.com/y37pzb9y>

UK Government *Updated Energy and Emissions Projections 2017*, Jan. 2018, page 20: "... emissions from 'Energy from Waste' (municipal waste) ... are projected to account for 2.4 MtCO₂e (0.9% of total non-traded emissions) in 2035."

<https://tinyurl.com/yalorksh>

Zero Waste Europe, *Chemical Recycling: State of play and policy challenges Study*, August 2019: "... Whilst chemical recycling can be a tool in the waste management toolbox, one should not forget that the solution to the plastic challenge is not to be found in how we manage the waste we create, but rather in how to prevent this waste from arising and preserve the value of materials in the economy."

<https://tinyurl.com/y45p5nmh>

Caveat: See *De Smet et al.* for detailed technical data and assessments.