

HertsWOW/JW notes for NHDC's Environment Panel, 11 Sept. 2019, v.1

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Overall aim

Urgent transition to a local circular economy of materials and water, applying the principle of 'zero waste'.

About HertsWOW

Herts WithOut Waste (HertsWOW) is a tiny, unincorporated network set up 10 years ago and dedicated to reducing the wastage of materials and diverting materials from destruction and conversion to carbon dioxide (CO₂), even if energy is generated extremely inefficiently (typically 25% or so) in the process. We are a community-based group within Hertfordshire, keeping in touch with Transition-minded community groups across and around Herts., with Herts, County Council and other relevant authorities and agencies. Rather than current operations and immediately urgent issues (such as waste reduction), 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 about strategies, policies and projects for centralised waste management (at Hatfield, then at Hoddesdon in the Broxbourne district). The proceedings included public consultations, petitions, information requests, public inquiries and examinations in public.

Our function is not to campaign directly but rather to support local community groups to do so. In this manner we promoted an alternative approach to that of the Waste Disposal Authority, namely to focus plans and resources strategically at processes at the top of the Waste Hierarchy: Reduction, Re-usage, Recycling and Composting to the maximum feasible extent. This was in line with the initiatives of the Herts. Waste Partnership, which would now be called "Zero Waste" or a Circular Economy (rather than the linear economy of extract, consume and destroy).

Our requests

1. Consistent Waste Management

For each district/borough council to behave within the Herts. Waste Partnership as if it were a unitary Waste Management Authority. That means agreeing decisions that are 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 districts & boroughs and the County Council.

2. Local Circular Economy of Materials (and Water)

To exercise the powers of a Waste Collection Authority to deal with surplus and used materials arising locally by such processes as will leave hardly any materials, by weight or climate change impact, for destruction and air pollution.

We can provide a 'toolkit' for a conference/workshop event to engage community groups with technical specialists from small and large enterprises. This would focus on case studies of proven technologies and economics for keeping valuable materials (and water within waste) in circulation as locally as possible.

3. Plastics

Specifically, to encourage the setting up of a proportionately scaled, 'chemcycling' plant for plastic components of the residual waste from North & East Herts. This would aim to accept a full range of polymers - though there might have to be pre-sorting to exclude some - for processing into virgin-quality polymer oil. That would be on condition that none of the output would be used as fossil fuel.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

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

ARVI (Material Value Chains) program Thermal conversion of plastic-containing waste: a Review, Research Report No. D4.1-22 HELSINKI 2017 by Henna Punkkinen *et al.*, <https://tinyurl.com/y2jh8myk>