

COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR WASTE STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Essex County Council (ECC) in a support role for the Waste Management Advisory Board (WMAB) will produce a communication plan and media protocol document for the multi-authority partnership that will be commissioning new recycling and waste management facilities in the near future.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

ECC's Media and Marketing team will work with the communication teams of partner authorities to develop compatible local messages. This will require a comprehensive partnership effort to establish and agree key messages with partners which they endorse and promote, e.g. non- incineration policy of Essex Authorities.

We also need to have an agreed protocol with partner authorities for dealing with the media at a countywide level, at the three Area Group levels and at an individual local authority level. There will be some issues that are sensitive locally, e.g. use of sites identified in Waste Local Plan.

SPECIFIC AIMS OF THE WASTE STRATEGY COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

- support of Essex waste strategy targets
- positioning of Essex authorities as leading the way on waste management
- encourage the people of Essex to support waste minimisation and high recycling targets
- raise awareness of what the key drivers for change are in waste management
- ensure that the people of Essex are supportive of the development of bio treatment in the medium to long term
- establish a productive working relationship with partner authorities
- develop a public understanding of a policy of high recycling and bio treatment.

PRINCIPLE ASSUMPTIONS

- the people of Essex believe the councils largely provide an efficient service on waste although there is still confusion over roles and responsibilities
- the people of Essex are supportive of more recycling, but that support doesn't necessarily translate into behaviour and action

- the population of the county are nervous of anything that looks or sounds like incineration. There is confusion, often deliberate, over ECC's role as the Waste Planning Authority and the different role of Waste Disposal Authority.

GOALS

- the delivery of new waste management facilities, including bio treatment plants.
- increasing levels of personal and corporate recycling.
- widespread endorsement of the Essex Authorities' solution by the public and waste industry
- Essex Authorities positioned as market leader on waste
- Essex established nationally as a 'Green County'.

KEY MESSAGES

The following items are suggested topics for initial discussion around joint communication of waste issues over the coming years through the WMAB.

Current levels of household waste in Essex are not sustainable on either a global or local level and the way we manage waste must become more sustainable, treating waste material as a valuable resource.

Non-incineration – it is important that we communicate the issue of the Essex Authorities non-incineration policy head on; however it would be sensible to put this in positive terms – i.e. to communicate what we are going to do rather than what we are not doing. Dealing with the incineration debate in the form of constant rebuttal amounts to fighting a battle on a critic's territory.

We will emphasise the narrative of our selection of high recycling and bio treatment as a preferred option to deal with the incineration debate thus:

- through the War on Waste public consultation, the people of Essex made clear their opposition to incineration as a method of waste management, but supported high levels of recycling
- the WMAB took on board that view and developed a policy of high recycling and bio treatment (which places responsibilities on the people of Essex to actively support high recycling levels)
- the partner authorities of the WMAB are taking this policy forward

One key element to this is the development of a language that is as easily understood by the public as the language that our critics use. Incineration is an easy concept to grasp – bio treatment is not, but is accurate and permissible during the procurement process. ECC will be using the phrase high recycling and bio treatment as our preferred policy statement.

The tone of communication must also be considered, and every piece of communication on the waste strategy must be clear, open and honest.

KEY MEETINGS

Date	WMAB Meeting	Factors to consider	Communication
13 th Sept	WMAB meeting to consider: draft Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS) for Essex; Joint communication plan to support the strategy; Inter-authority working and joint arrangements for each area, e.g. development of area joint committees		
11 th Oct	WMAB meeting to consider: Amended draft JMWMS for Essex, agree final version; agree communications strategy; consider the funding options and arrangements available to authorities, e.g. private finance initiative (PFI) option; what 'integrated' working means in practice, review of all issues.		
8 th Nov	WMAB meeting to consider: Agreement on inter-authority working for each area with final recommendations.		
13 th Dec	WMAB meeting: Confirmation from each authority on key decisions they have made on whether they are part of joint procurement arrangements.		

COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

The War on Waste consultation exercise developed a clear protocol for all public communications by linked messages and public statements, and by identifying key spokespeople and ensuring that they stay close to the identified message. This needs to be repeated now and during the procurement process (which will present confidentiality issues). This will require close liaison between waste managers, communications officers and elected members. This protocol will need to be in place for Essex wide communications (potentially including Southend and Thurrock), the Area Groups to deal with area-specific issues and local matters.

This protocol will run until key decisions are completed early in the new year. At that point we will revisit the relationship between the WMAB and area spokespeople and the ECC media team.

Consistency in the key messages and the language that partners use is key to the success of the waste communications plan. The intention is to develop a toolkit that will comprise detailed guidance on key areas such as terminology and a process for dealing with media enquiries and will identify relevant spokespeople. An outline for toolkit is set out below:

Terminology

Many of the terms used in relation to the waste strategy project and for bio treatment plants are technical and will mean very little to the general public. In order to ensure the key messages are understood, the language used must be jargon free and explained in plain English. To maximise the impact of the key messages and to avoid confusion, a degree of consistency across the board needs to be achieved so that partners refer to key elements of the project in the same way. This guidance will be developed with partners, but in the interim a number of key terms have been identified:

- we should use the generic term of **bio treatment** to describe mechanical biological treatment and anaerobic digestion - General claims and assumptions about technology should be avoided.
- **bio treatment should always be referred to in the context of high levels of recycling**, i.e. “a policy of high recycling and bio treatment”

- the by- products of the bio treatment should be referred to as **refuse derived products (RDPs)** rather than refuse derived fuel (RDF) – as any terms that could be linked to “burning” may cause confusion, deliberate obfuscation and encourage thoughts of incineration. There could be a number of products from the process including compost and biogas.
- **mechanical biological treatment** – MBT systems combine mechanical sorting of materials for recycling and the bio treatment of the remaining waste that will have a high organic content. The bio treatment rapidly composts the waste, in an enclosed facility
- **anaerobic digestion** – (AD is part of the family of MBT technologies) after recyclable materials have been extracted, the organic waste is ground up and mixed with water to produce a pulp. This pulp is then digested by naturally occurring micro-organisms which thrive in the enclosed, anaerobic (absence of oxygen) conditions created within the AD facility. A biogas is produced as a result of the digestion process, which can be used to generate heat and electricity.
- **integration** – depending on the key decisions made by each authority, there can be either full system integration and/or full contractual integration between authorities: a) **full system integration** – a coherent approach to the total waste management system in an area, to ensure that there is alignment of collection schemes, interim processing systems and bio treatment systems; b) **full contractual integration** – building on system integration, this is the delivery of a defined range of waste management services under one detailed contract for an area
- **horizontal integration** –the full contractual and/or full system integration between waste collection authorities in an area; and/or between the unitary authorities in the Thames Gateway Area
- **vertical integration** –the full contractual and/or full system integration between waste collection authorities and the waste disposal authorities in an area.

Media Protocol – WMAB and Area Groups

The Chair of the WMAB will be the key spokesperson on behalf of the Waste Management Advisory Board (WMAB).

ECC press office will support the Chair of the WMAB in producing press releases, managing press events and managing media enquiries.

Three spokespeople from the WMAB will be identified to provide comment for any issues specific to the area they represent. These spokespeople will normally

be the Chair of each Area Groups. The ECC press office will provide support for each area spokesperson. This arrangement will be reviewed in the new year (2005) after key decisions are complete.

All media enquiries regarding the WMAB and decisions made should be handled initially through the ECC press office. Media teams in the relevant authorities will be informed by an e-mail exchange.

There is likely to be some confusion among the media enquiries about specific site locations. Enquiries are likely to be directed to the the district press office with ECC press office supporting and co-ordinating responses.

District/Unitary offices will be responsible for keeping appropriate members informed.