

## **7e. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **Country Parks**

Comprehensive events' programme for the Country Parks has just been published and circulated in the local community. Full details of the events can be found on the website at <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/3032150/WEB-2015-Event-Prog.pdf> Highlights of the new programme include the Lakeside Fair on 27 May, Fun in the Park in July and August and Outdoor Theatre (Twelfth Night) and Cinema (Stardust and The Blair Witch Project) in August, plus much more.

Following another excellent year for the Country Parks, visitor numbers have increased by 11% on last year's figures and now exceed 850,000 per annum. This has been reflected in the income generated on site, with the Country Parks and their partners, San Remo Catering and GoApe (Black Park), generating a combined turnover of £2.45m in 2014/15. It is also worth noting that these three business units also employ in excess of 70 people from the local community.

### **Greatmoor Energy from Waste Programme Update**

I am pleased to be able to continue to say that Construction of the Energy from Waste (EFW) facility at Greatmoor is proceeding well. The month of March marked one year to go until the facility is fully operational (March 2016). There is a slight delay (29 days) reported against the original construction plan, however this delay is small and not expected to have any significant financial implications.. Furthermore it is hoped that at least some of this delay can be caught up over the next year.

The construction phase of the main facility is due to be completed by late May this year, following which sees a 9-10 month commissioning phase. Commissioning is divided into two main stages; Cold Commissioning which is essentially about ensuring the facility is fully working in terms of all processes except the burning of waste, and then Hot Commissioning which is about testing the facility with actual residual waste. The first testing with Buckinghamshire's waste is anticipated for October this year.

For further information on progress, there are regular updates on the County Council website and on FCC's website, which also includes a live webcam (see following links).

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/environment/waste,-recycling-and-treatment/energy-from-waste/>

<http://fccenvironment.reachtimelapse.co.uk/greatmoor/ie8.php>

Whilst the construction of the Greatmoor facility continues, critical to supporting the facility is the development of two waste transfer stations (WTS) for the bulking up of waste from the south of the county. A WTS at High Heavens, near High Wycombe is already under construction and it is expected that this will be available for the Hot Commissioning phase of the main EFW facility.

For the second WTS, proposed to be at London Road Depot near Amersham, FCC submitted a planning application which was validated at the end of August last year. Since then County Council planning officers have requested a number of additional areas of information from FCC and this process has delayed the initial anticipated date that the Development Control Committee (DCC) would have considered the

application. The date of determination following the submission of this additional information is yet to be decided.

Speaking for the Waste Disposal Authority, whilst it is FCC's application, a second WTS is a clear benefit to BCC's contract with FCC and ultimately to the council tax payer. In addition, I would expect there to be a clear benefit to Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils with a local tipping point; and increased efficiency for their collection services due to a reduction in mileage driven by their refuse collection vehicles. However as would be expected of any waste planning application of this type there is some local opposition, led in this case by a group calling themselves "The Wasters". On behalf of the Waste Disposal Authority I have been in regular correspondence with representatives of The Wasters group and will continue to openly communicate with them and others who have concerns about the WTS proposal.

### **Funding Secured for Feasibility for Potential Heat Network**

The Resource Strategy team has secured £30,150 in grant funding from the Heat Network Delivery Unit (HNDU – part of the Department for Energy and Climate Change) to fund an initial feasibility study on the potential for a heat network to be created in central Aylesbury. A heat network (also known as district heating scheme) comprises a network of insulated pipes used to deliver heat, in the form of hot water or steam, from the point of generation to an end user (e.g. business or home). The study will show what basic configuration a heat network might take and the diversity of heat demand present (how much heat required and at what time of day) from which the technical and financial viability of a heat network can be determined. Should a heat network be viable and be brought through to completion, it would allow BCC to reduce the operating costs of its premises in central Aylesbury, whilst generating additional revenue from the sale of heat to connected users.

### **Collective Energy Switching**

In February, Buckinghamshire County Council teamed up with iChooser to join one of their 3 annual collective energy switching auctions that are promoted to local residents. Approximately 60 Local Authorities took part in the February iChooser auction. The good news is that almost 800 Buckinghamshire residents registered to take part in this auction, which was the 4<sup>th</sup> highest across all the Local Authorities who took part. Of those Buckinghamshire residents who signed up, collective switching has been a great success, with 83% making a saving and the average saving being £292. The actual switching rate in Buckinghamshire was confirmed as 40%. The project was coordinated by the Resource Strategy team.

### **RMWLP Consultation Spring 2015**

A first consultation as part of the work to prepare a 'Replacement Minerals and Waste Local Plan' was undertaken between 19 February and 02 April 2015. All District and Parish Councils were notified, as were neighbouring authorities (County, District, Unitary and Parish), as well as many statutory and non-statutory parties. This consultation was primarily to 'scope' the contents and direction of the Plan, and included a 'Call for Sites' for possible later allocation for either mineral extraction or waste recovery uses.

212 representations have been received from 53 parties. The representations received will be reviewed, and will inform the development of new policies for the draft Plan and will help to identify issues to be taken on board. The environmental

implications of different options for policies will be assessed, before specific detailed policies are recommended to the Cabinet Member. In addition, the potential sites resulting from the 'Call for Sites' will be subject to Sustainability Appraisal by consultants before officers review them and then recommend Preferred Areas. It is estimated that developing policies, site allocations, and a comprehensive draft Plan for the next consultation, may take a further 18 months.

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