

News from...

16 August 2012

Proposed environmentally friendly ‘energy from waste’ facility called in by Councillors for closer inspection

The proposal to award Viridor the contract to build and operate an environmentally friendly waste facility for the city has been called in for further scrutiny by other Members of Peterborough City Council.

The announcement was made by Deputy Leader, Councillor Matthew Lee, on Monday 13 August, following which there is the obligatory three days in which the decision can be called in (challenged).

Commenting on the call-in, Councillor Lee said: “This is a big and vitally important decision for the city, so it’s absolutely right and proper that the proposals should be scrutinised in detail. I await the outcome of the additional review within the usual 10 day period, however I am absolutely convinced that this facility is the best option for both the environment and the city’s taxpayers.”

One of three scenarios will follow the additional scrutiny. It may be approved as it currently stands, in which case the decision takes effect immediately. The panel may ask the Deputy Leader to review his decision. Alternatively, it may request that the decision be reconsidered at a full council meeting.

The new ‘energy from waste’ facility in the city will offer a more environmentally friendly and lower-cost alternative to burying the city’s waste in landfills.

According to the city council, the new energy from waste plant will save over 10,000 tonnes of CO₂ every year compared to sending the city’s waste to landfill, which is equivalent to taking 2,800 Ford Mondeos off the road every year*. It will also save taxpayers millions of pounds in the process.

The energy from waste facility will be built close to the power station in Fengate, with the facility designed to meet Peterborough’s needs for the next 30 years. By industry standards it is small: Manchester has recently appointed Viridor to build a 750,000 tonne facility – around 10 times the size.

APPENDIX 4

The proposed facility will use heat to turn any waste that can't be recycled to ash. In doing so, the weight of rubbish needing to be sent to landfill will be reduced by more than 90 per cent. The remaining ash can also be recycled, for example as aggregate for building roads, diverting potentially 100 per cent from landfill.

The facility will also harness the energy released in the process to generate around 53,000 megawatt hours of electricity, which can be used locally or sold to the National Grid. This is enough electricity to power approximately 15 per cent of the homes in Peterborough for a year.

As well as being a more environmentally friendly solution, the plant will save Peterborough taxpayers many millions of pounds over its 30-year life. The city council plans to invest around £76 million transforming waste services for the city, including building the energy from waste facility.

The announcement of a preferred bidder is the latest stage in a long process that has sought to find a more environmentally friendly and cost-effective solution to the 50,000 tonnes of black bin waste the city currently sends to landfill currently. With waste due to increase to 140,000 tonnes per year by 2040 and landfill charges increasing dramatically (see notes), the council says that it is vital that action is taken now.

Peterborough's waste challenge was posed to potential bidders as part of a procurement process. As well as inviting bids for an energy from waste plant, companies were invited to recommend any other alternative technologies or solutions that could meet the council's needs, including mechanical biological treatment (or 'MBT', as used in Cambridgeshire).

For more information, please contact Adrian Smith on 07702 089713 or email adrian@emulus.co.uk

The technology

Viridor's bid proposes the use of a proven energy from waste technology that has been refined over many decades from one of the world's leading providers in the field of renewable energy production.

Food waste the key to increased recycling rates

To help increase recycling rates, the city council has announced that a new food waste collection service will be introduced in October. The service is aimed at reducing the amount of food waste being sent to landfill, which can represent as much as 40 per cent of the weight of black bin waste, and reduce the £1.8 million to dispose of food waste alone.

Rising landfill costs

Landfill costs have also risen sharply in recent years, making it an increasingly expensive option. Between 1997 and 2015 the cost of sending a tonne of waste to landfill is set to have increased 10-fold. In 2010/11 the City Council spent around £3 million sending waste to landfill at a cost of around £70 per tonne. By 2014/15 the same amount of waste will cost £100 per tonne or £4.60 million - an increase of more than 50 per cent (£1.6 million) in four years.

***Fuel calculation**

Based on 2.2-litre Ford Mondeo diesels. Landfill CO2 figures are converted from the amount of methane they produce.