

Closure of Redditch Recycling Centre to Warwickshire's residents Briefing Note for Jim Graham.

1 Worcestershire CC (WoCC) consulted WCC on 10th August 2006 on the proposal to close their Redditch site to non-Worcestershire residents. The reasons for the closure were financial. Under the legislation they are only obliged to accept household waste from their own residents free of charge and they are not obliged to accept waste from anyone else. They also consulted other Councils on the proposal to close their Bromsgrove site to non-residents.

2 For the Redditch site they reckoned non-resident usage (all Warwickshire) was about 11%.

3 I consulted the local county councillor on the proposal but no reply was received. A response was sent on 30th October 2006 objecting to the proposals and raising a number of issues. The latter included whether Warwickshire's residents could pay individually to use the site. Some other councils have adopted this approach and have parking type machines at the site entrance to allow them to pay. However, WoCC did not want to adopt this approach and preferred the issue of individual permits, as they were doing with their own residents. WoCC wanted WCC to pay a lump sum for the permits. Unfortunately the price they wanted, £90,000, was almost 3 times the cost of the waste naturally being taken by the individuals to our site at Stratford. The Stratford site is about 12 miles from Studley and the Redditch site is 2-4 miles from Studley and the adjoining local Warwickshire villages.

4 Overall we were unhappy with the permit system (about 5,000 would need to be issued and they would only last a year) and the cost.

5 Redditch's local MP Jacqui Smith, the Home Secretary, has since written to WoCC, who copied us into the correspondence for comment, criticising the system. She stated "My constituent's lives would be made a lot simpler and their Council Tax contributions would not be squandered on administering useless schemes like those at the refuse tip". She suggested that WoCC negotiate with bordering councils on a number of cross border issues. In view of her comments I do not consider it appropriate to move forward with a permit system. However, we are still considering payments and a bid will be made as part of the 2008/09 budget process.

6 A meeting has been held with the Parish Council and we have also exchanged correspondence with John Maples MP. The matter became an issue at the local elections in May 07 since the restrictions came into force on 1st April 2007. We exchanged correspondence with Stratford District at the time and also some local district councillors. The local County Councillor, Cllr McCarthy, has also been kept fully informed concerning our actions. Since then we have received very few complaints and, in total, I do not believe we have received more than about 6 official complaints. We have had two meetings with WoCC officers.

7 Overall, I consider the process could have been handled somewhat better by WoCC. They could have preceded the official consultation with a meeting of interested authorities. Unfortunately, by the time the local county councillor and locals became fully aware of the implications, WoCC was not prepared to change the scheme. They had spent money on a permit system, CCTV and checkers (guards) at the gate, and they were then not prepared to consider alternatives.

8 The WoCC permit system for their own residents is a one year trial and I have asked WoCC what their intentions are for 2008/09. I expect that they will still want payment from WCC. If we make a payment then there should be no need for a permit system.

9 As far as I am aware, WoCC is the first authority in the West Midlands Region to introduce cross border controls on waste management. This has resulted in Gloucestershire CC approaching WCC on the same matter. However, in this case we could receive money from Gloucestershire CC since some of their residents use our Shipston site and Gloucestershire do not want WCC to stop this usage.

10 As far as Studley Parish is concerned, I consider we should be saying that current arrangements will stay as they are until 31st March 2008. After that it will depend on:

- a) Whether WoCC wishes to continue with the restrictions and, if they do,
- b) Whether WCC is prepared to fund the additional costs.

Ref: Closure of Redditch Recycling Centre Jim Graham Aug07
R H Burton 23.8.07.