

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCIL'S IN THE THREDLING DIVISION OF SUFFOLK

OFFICIAL OPENING OF ORBISENERGY CENTRE

It was my pleasure to join Lord Hunt, Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Richard Howitt, MEP for the East of England and local MP, Bob Blizzard to officially open OrbisEnergy, the ground-breaking renewable enterprise centre in Lowestoft.

As chairman of the OrbisEnergy board, I have been involved in the project through the planning and construction stages so it was great to see the building open and occupied.

OrbisEnergy is much more than just a building; it will be the flagship for local and national businesses keen to capture the economic benefits from offshore wind, wave and tidal technologies emerging from the East Coast. Located at the most easterly point of Great Britain, OrbisEnergy will be at the heart of the estimated £10 billion that is to be invested around the East of England over the next 10 years.

OrbisEnergy is owned by Suffolk County Council and managed by business support specialists NWES, the project has received funding from East of England Development Agency and is part-financed by the European Union, with additional contributions from Waveney District Council. The centre is also supported by Renewables East.

The process of filling the units has already begun, with wind farm operators Airtricity signed up as tenants. The centre's conference facilities have also been heavily utilised since it opened its doors in September, and have included a RICS Sustainable Conference, the launch of the East of England Coastal Initiative and a UKTI International Business Exchange.

WASTE PROCUREMENT CONTRACT

Interest in Suffolk County Council's waste procurement contract has exceeded expectations.

Officers involved in the procurement project worked hard to shape the procurement contract to make it attractive to the market, and their hard work has paid off. Following initial enquiries from over 40 organisations, 13 pre-qualification responses were returned and these companies have been whittled down to four experienced and robust companies, Shanks Group (consortium bid with Wheelabrator Inc), Sita UK Ltd (consortium bid with Royal Bank Investments Ltd), Veolia ES Aurora Ltd and Waste Recycling Group Ltd, who will go forward to the next stage of the procurement process.

I am delighted that this contract has been so enthusiastically received by the private sector. I believe this interest reflects the excellent reputation of the county council within the waste industry. This confidence in Suffolk echoes the confidence of central government, which has agreed a subsidy of £102m towards its waste treatment facility. The subsidy will be used to pay half the cost of building the new facility.

The contract will be expected to be confirmed by August 2010 and the facility built by 2014.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES CONTRACT

We are now in the final stages of discussions with potential operators for our Household Waste Recycling Centre contract.

Following the issue of over 70 pre-qualification questionnaires, responses were returned by nine waste management companies and these have been whittled down to two experienced and robust companies, Veolia and WRG, who will go forward to the next stage of the procurement process.

It is expected that the contract will be awarded early next year with full operation taking place from mid May.

UPDATE ON RECYCLING ACTIVITY

Cooking oil recycling

The first six months of recycling used cooking oil at all the HWRCs in the county has been a real success. Over 5,500 litres have been collected, a quantity capable of generating electricity to power 4.29 average homes for a year. Living Fuels, a company based in Brandon, collects the oil and produces a fuel used to drive an engine to generate electricity from it. The process means we will rely less on fossil fuels and solves the problem of safely disposing of used cooking oil.

Household Hazardous Waste guidance

New guidance has been issued to help residents reduce the amount of hazardous waste they have in their homes. A leaflet has been produced which also explains how to safely dispose of hazardous waste so as not to cause harm to the environment. This is available online at www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk, at HWRCs or through district councils.

Carton recycling

As extra bring sites in Suffolk are made available for the public to recycle paper based drinks and liquid cartons, Suffolk County Council has been further promoting the facilities available at all HWRCs to recycle the cartons at the 18 locations it manages. This public promotion has included an advert in the EADT earlier in November and a number of roadshows in towns and libraries, working with our district partners to spread the word.

Christmas activities

On weekends throughout November and December the waste communications team plan to give out reusable bags to Park and Ride users to reduce the number of plastic bags shoppers pick up in Ipswich as they do their Christmas shopping. This was launched at the Copdock Park & Ride on 16th November at the Ipswich Christmas light switch on.

Schools across Suffolk have been invited to join in the Creative Christmas competition - there are four categories for groups of children to enter between key stage 1 to 4 and they are asked to create Christmas trees and decorations from waste materials.

There is also a planned programme of green grotto roadshows with the recycling bus visiting towns across the county in the new year asking residents to donate their unwanted Christmas gifts for distribution to local charities to ensure they don't end up in landfill but are re-used and raise funds for worthwhile charities.

We also have an SGR advert campaign to reduce food waste in the run up to Christmas together with some ideas of how to use up any leftovers to try and encourage residents to throw away less food over the festive period.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AUDIT

Last month, auditors from BSI visited us to audit the county council for our accreditation to ISO 14001, the international environmental management scheme. I am pleased to report that we have retained the accreditation.

The auditors were very complimentary in their report about the county's environmental performance and stated that *"the inclusion of environmental objectives at the very top level of the organisation has demonstrated the importance given to the subject"*. The auditors found no non-conformities with the management system during the audit. The audit included visits to various locations during the three days including Lowestoft household waste recycling centre, OrbisEnergy, Wade House Residential Care Home, Melton highways depot, Newmarket fire station and Shire Hall.

The audit report is very positive and reflects all the hard work which is being undertaken across the council.

GREEN BIKE PROJECT

Leading local charity Orwell Mencap Genesis' Green Bike Project is through to the final of the Peoples Millions Lottery competition.

The Green Bike Project aims to benefit all of us by preventing cycles going to landfill by teaching people with learning difficulties to refurbish them and using them in a variety of innovative ways, such as putting hire points in Ipswich parks.

The Big Lottery Peoples Millions programme gives the public the chance to vote for the project that they think is most deserving of the funds. I will update you on their progress in my next report.

This Charity is based in Cobham Road, Ipswich and its principal activity is making Garden Furniture and Park Benches etc in their fully equipped workshops. Any Parish Council looking to buy any benches for their Parishes would do well to look at these products as the quality is really superb and to buy from them is to help a really worthwhile charity. Genesis can be contacted on 01473 723888, they would be delighted to show you round.

PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT

Suffolk has achieved an extremely high value Planning Delivery Grant, which I believe reflects the speed and precision with which our officers have assembled our Minerals and Waste Development Framework (M&WDF).

We have received £111,000 in grant this year, other waste planning authorities in the region such as Norfolk and Essex, received £10,000 each. The grant reflects our progress in the preparation of the M&WDF and in particular the submission of the Minerals Core Strategy and progress on the Minerals Site Specific Development Plan document.

UPDATE ON GREENEST COUNTY ACTIVITIES

Creating the Greenest County Awards

The second year of the *Creating the Greenest County Awards* was launched at the newly opened OrbisEnergy building in October.

The development of best practice standards in sustainable development underlie the Creating the Greenest County Awards, which include categories for communities, businesses and schools. The awards are significantly supported by the business community with sponsorship from Carillion, BT, MLM Consulting Engineers, Ransomes Jacobsen, Greene King, British Energy and the Environment Agency. The closing date for entries is 12th December with the winners to be announced in the spring.

Suffolk Promotes Best Practice

In October we attended the Local Authority Carbon Management Alumni Event in London. At the event Gary Battell, Woodlands Advisory Officer, held a workshop describing the county council's success at installing woodfuelled boilers in its estate and how it has developed the local woodfuel supply chain. The workshop ran well and a number of other authorities enquired about our success with a view to visiting us to learn more.

ANSWER Project

The ANSWER Project (A North Sea Way to Energy-Efficient Regions) was launched in September. This is an exciting new project bringing together European leaders to build a low-carbon, sustainable future for the region. The proposal was successful in securing 1.8 million euros of EU funding. The project involves partners in the UK, Belgium, Norway, Germany, and is led by Suffolk County Council.

Energy Monitors

A bid has been successful to the AONB Sustainable Development Fund to run a pilot project with Libraries, Heritage and Information, loaning out domestic Energy Saving Monitors through mobile libraries. This innovative scheme will enable households to cut both fuel costs and CO₂ emissions. It is intended that this will act as a pilot project, further external funding will be sought to extend the scheme across the county.

Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival

Creating the Greenest County supported this year's Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival and is working closely with producers to promote environmental excellence and the important economic role of this sector for the local economy.

Creating the Greenest Communities

Staff have supported a range of recent community initiatives including a Greener Framlingham event, two Big Green Days in Lowestoft, three Suffolk Association of Local Council seminars for parish councils and the community art installation "Beach Hut" in Felixstowe.