



PRESS RELEASE

Release date: Wednesday 18th March 2009

HILLS WELCOMES GO AHEAD FOR WASTE TO FUEL PLANT

The Marlborough-based Hills Group has welcomed today's (18th March) Wiltshire County Council decision to give permission for the company's planned £15 million plant in Westbury that will transform local rubbish into a valuable fuel.

As the county's waste and recycling contractor, the Marlborough-based company will now give detailed consideration to the construction programme for the mechanical biological treatment (MBT) plant in Stephenson Road, Westbury but hopes that it could be operational by 2011.

The operation is set to remove more than 45,000 tonnes of west Wiltshire rubbish from landfill every year and, in doing so, help the county's taxpayers avoid potential £150-a-tonne fines. It has been estimated that, without the plant, those fines could add up to as much as £75 million by 2021. It also means an estimated saving of around 100,000 lorry miles as a result of waste from west Wiltshire no longer needing to be transported to a landfill site near Calne.

In addition to the mechanical biological treatment plant, the proposals for *Northacre Resource Recovery Centre* include a long-awaited £1 million household recycling centre (HRC) for Westbury. The facility will join the successful network of 10 HRCs across Wiltshire which are recycling over 70 per cent of the 70,000 tonnes of material brought to them each year by householders.

Hills Group Chairman, Alan Pardoe, said: "We are delighted by today's decision. This plant is a key element of Wiltshire's overall war on waste and means that we can look forward to the day when at least 85 per cent of the county's waste can be diverted from landfill. It adds up to a much more sustainable future."

MBT is a process that is relatively new to the UK but is already widely used across Europe where it works successfully to complement recycling. It employs natural microbes within the waste to accelerate the decomposition process. The whole process takes up to 14 days and is carried out in a sealed building with a filtration system to control odours. As the material dries, it loses over 30 per cent of its original weight.

Once dried, it is further processed to remove metals for recycling. It is from the remaining material that a solid recovered fuel, often referred to as SRF, is manufactured to a tight specification. The final fuel is a dry and sanitised material that can be safely handled.

The original plan was for the refuse-derived fuel to be used at the Westbury cement works. While the recent decision by Lafarge Cement to mothball the works during the recession means that the fuel will now need to be transported elsewhere, that element of the operation will involve just six lorries a day.

"Fuels of this type that reduce both waste and CO₂ have a big future in the UK. We are already in discussions with other end-users and are confident that other outlets will be found for this fuel," said Mr Pardoe.

Hills has put a major effort into demonstrating that the plant poses no air quality threat to its neighbours in the community or to other businesses and is pleased that, with today's decision, this has now been confirmed by the Environment Agency and environmental health experts.

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