

## **Appendix 3 – Information sheet for inclusion with questionnaire**

### **YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

#### **Why are you writing to me?**

Belfast City Council must reduce the amount of waste it sends to landfill in order to meet strict targets set by the European Union. Failure to meet these targets will result in large fines that will have to be met by increasing rates bills.

As part of a plan to meet the EU requirements, it has been decided that a number of new technology waste treatment facilities are required. We are writing to all (<of the ratepayers in Belfast> or <households in north Belfast>) to find out whether you think that we should make some of the commercial and industrial zoned land at the North Foreshore available for the development of one of these facilities.

#### **Why is a waste treatment facility needed?**

If we don't reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill, Belfast City Council will face heavy fines. These fines could be as much as £4 million in 2012 but with the prospect of increasing every year after that. In addition, the Council's annual waste bill could be £2million higher if the Energy from Waste (incinerator) facility that is needed has to be built at another suitable site outside Belfast. These costs would have to be met by increasing the rates.

To meet the targets, we must deal with our waste in a more environmentally friendly and affordable way. Belfast City Council has joined with 10 other Northern Ireland councils to form a local government waste partnership called arc21. This partnership brings down the costs of waste management for all of the councils involved.

arc21 has developed a joint Waste Plan for its member councils which will allow us to meet EU targets. This plan has been approved by Government and its main priorities are to 'reduce, re-use and recycle waste'. Every household in the city now has access to a kerbside recycling collection scheme but, although our recycling rate continues to rise, we still need to drastically reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfill. Because of this, the plan includes two other treatments to deal with the leftover waste – Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) followed by Energy from Waste (EfW), a form of incineration. To deliver the Waste Plan, arc21 needs a number of facilities – potentially two MBT plants and one EfW incinerator.

#### **What is mechanical biological treatment?**

Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) is a process of sorting typical landfill waste to recover any more materials that can be recycled and treating the remaining waste so that it can either be landfilled or used as a fuel in an

energy from waste process. But if we put the MBT output in landfill we will not meet the EU targets in the longer term and will incur fines.

### **What is energy from waste?**

Energy from Waste (EfW) is the process of using waste as a fuel to generate energy. The first step in this process is burning (or incineration). In the past incinerators pumped out smoke and polluted the air. But now legislation and modern technology prevents any pollution.

In previous years, incinerators simply burned the waste and the energy was lost. Current best practice is that almost two thirds of the energy produced is used to make electricity and provide local heating.

### **Where would they be built?**

A number of suitable sites have been identified in the arc21 area. One of these sites is 17 acres of land on Belfast's 340 acre North Foreshore site. The Council has plans to develop a large part of this site for a range of recreation and business activities. The Council now wishes to hear the views of the public on the possible use of the remaining land - the 17 acres – before deciding on the way forward.

The North Foreshore is the old landfill site at Dargan Road and the proposed location is more than half a mile away from the nearest house. See the map provided (*<To be inserted>*)

### **Giving you more information – Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Is it not better to recycle the waste?**

Yes. We need to reduce, reuse and recycle as much of our household waste as we can and you can do your bit by using your kerbside recycling service. But not all waste is suitable for recycling and we know that recycling alone will not enable us to meet our targets. These facilities will only be used for waste which we have been unable to recycle.

#### **Are there facilities like these in other places?**

Currently there are more than 400 Energy from Waste plants across Europe, including 22 in the UK. Some of the countries with more of these facilities also have the highest recycling rates. MBT is also common throughout Europe.

#### **Do these facilities cause health problems?**

No. UK Health Protection Agency research and other research indicates that there are no adverse health effects for people living or working nearby.

### **Do these facilities cause pollution problems?**

No. These facilities have to comply with stringent regulatory requirements so they will have minimal effect on local air quality. Potential pollutants are captured within the plant to meet the strict emissions limits. EfW incinerators do not emit smoke, though you may see water vapour or steam

### **Do these facilities cause any other kind of nuisance? For example flies or smells?**

No. The facilities are all enclosed and designed to prevent any of these happening.

### **What concerns do environmentalists have about these kinds of plants?**

Some environmental campaigners are concerned that use of these facilities will discourage reducing, re-using and recycling waste. We agree with this concern, which is why we have introduced as many of these schemes as possible before starting to use MBT or EfW. But not all waste is suitable for recycling and these facilities will only be used for waste which we have been unable to recycle.

### **How will the energy produced be used?**

If an EfW facility is developed on the North Foreshore site, it could provide enough electricity to power 40,000, or around one third, of the homes in Belfast. Over two thirds of the energy produced is considered to be renewable thus helping improve both the local and global environment.

### **Are there any other Benefits or Drawbacks?**

An Energy from Waste facility built at the North Foreshore would cost less to operate as cooling water could be sourced from Belfast Lough. Therefore our annual waste bill could be £2million higher if the required EfW facility has to be built at another suitable site.

If an EfW facility were to be built at the North Foreshore, it could provide hot water to heat nearby homes or for use by industry. There would also be potential to create a “community Gain Fund” to channel money into local community projects.

### **When would the plant be finished?**

From the date a decision is made, it will probably take 5 years to build an Energy from Waste facility or approximately 3 years to build an MBT facility, The decision needs to be made soon if we are to have the facility ready in time to avoid EU fines.

### **What would the facilities look like?**

Any facility will have a high quality design which will be decided only after consultation with the local community. You can see photos of similar facilities on our website ([< www Link To be inserted >](#))

### **What happens next if the Council makes the land available?**

If the Council agrees to make this land available for one of these facilities arc21 will assess the site to see if it is the best available. If it is, then full public consultation would be undertaken by arc21. The development will then have to go through the normal planning permission process which will also involve consultation and environmental impact assessments.

### **Can I get more information?**

More information is available at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk). You can also drop in to any of our information sessions at the following locations, where you can find out more, see photographs of similar facilities and give us your opinion:

#### **Central Belfast**

- Venue and dates / times to be finalised and inserted,

#### **East Belfast**

- Venue and dates / times to be finalised and inserted,

#### **South Belfast**

- Venue and dates / times to be finalised and inserted,

#### **West Belfast**

- Venue and dates / times to be finalised and inserted,

#### **North Belfast**

- Venue and dates / times to be finalised and inserted,

### **Tell us your views**

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to us using the freepost envelope (no need for a stamp)