



Environment & Ecology Forum. July 2020

Attendance

Richard Trelfa (chair)

Andrew Harley (vice chair)

Cllr Richard Cook Leader/Cabinet Member Environment Gloucester City Council

Cllr David Brown: Gloucester City Council

Cllr Usman Bhaimia: Gloucester City Council

Cllr Isobel Brazil: Gloucester City Council

Jonathan Whittaker Frack Free Cotswolds

Barry Leach Local resident

Gerand Lenagan: Friends of Alney Island

Fran Griffiths: Local resident

Catlin Day: Graduate Trainee Gloucester City Council

Jon McGinty: MD Gloucester City Council

Luke Crisford: Andigestion

1. Election of Chair Vice Chair

Richard Trelfa and Andrew Harley were elected as Chair and Vice Chair respectively un-opposed.

2. Apologies

Cllr Kevin Stevens

Cllr Gordon Taylor

Pete Wiggins

3. Declarations of Interest None

4. Public Question time/Petitions and Deputations None

5. Minutes Agreed

6. Matters Arising

Barry Leach asked if we could get an update on the latest state of play with the Amey contract so that we are starting from a correct position for future meetings. Cllr Cook said that the contract with Amey has had substantial changes with the introduction of KPIs. The relationship with Amey has improved at the same time so the quality of work they are doing is being followed very carefully. Amey will suffer penalties if they fail to achieve the KPIs. There is now a much better relationship and the quality of work is better. There were some difficulties during the lockdown period, primarily because a lot of employees were self-isolating, shielding etc. Amey were good at reorganizing shifts to ensure that priorities e.g.,

waste collection always took place. The only issues were green waste collection that didn't happen for a few weeks – we are now beyond this and everything is being collected as usual.

Barry Leach said that it is important to note that the contract with Amey is under discussion and that alternatives are being looked at. Barry Leach asked if we could record what the alternatives are. Cllr Cook said that we have to prepare for a contract that is due to end in 2022. If it goes to full procurement it will take a lengthy amount of work. We are already looking at the options e.g., bringing the whole contract in house, or parts of the contract in house, continuing to work with Amey or work with a different company. Analysis should be completed around September or October this year. It is important to look at what is best value for money and that is not always the cheapest option. If none of the immediate options provide an acceptable solution, then we may have to go out to the market and there are companies that are interested in some or all the work.

7. Andigestion

Luke Crisford from Andigestion gave a presentation on anaerobic digestion (AD). Andigestion processes the food waste under contract from Gloucestershire County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority. They were the first food-waste-only anaerobic digestion site to operate in the UK and won the contract in 2013 from Gloucestershire County Council to process the food waste from all 6 districts. The key part of AD is that it takes food waste and turns it into a resource in this case electricity and soil improver. 1.3 billion tonnes of food waste are generated annually (globally). The value is around \$1 trillion, and 400kWh/ tonne of energy can be generated from this waste.

Jon McGinty asked whether there was any reference to the role of AD in the Government's Waste Strategy consultation document. Luke said that there is talk of a new subsidy system for green gas and it is only a matter of time before the legislation comes into play to force people to recycle their food waste. Luke had not personally read the government's strategy so could not comment further.

Cllr Brown asked for more detail on the de-packaging stage, Luke explained the de-packaging equipment was made by a company in Cheltenham. Waste is loaded by an excavator. There are multiple screens throughout the process to prevent anything getting through (for example plastic). Where the waste from de-packaging is dry enough it is sent to incineration, but this is often not always possible as it can often be quite wet so in this case the waste gets sent to landfill.

It was also questioned by Barry Leach that the current county council target is to process 23,000 tonnes of food waste a year via AD, so what is the capacity of Andigestion. Luke said that they had seen a big increase during the Covid lockdown – around a 20% increase in what they had coming in from the council. Gloucester has picked up a lot in the last 6 months. In terms of capacity, Andigestion are governed by various legislation e.g., planning permission. They can currently take 34,000 tons of food waste each year. Raw food waste can also be exported to other plants if they have more than they need e.g., to the Forest of Dean or the other side of Bristol.

Further to this, Barry Leach asked if there were any discussions going on to ramp up the AD capacity within the county as 25% of what we currently find in black bins is also food waste. Luke said that there is more than enough capacity in the UK as there is a lot of AD plants running at 20% capacity. Within Gloucestershire there is also the capacity as Andigestion would rather take waste from the county than from businesses. If more household waste was being brought to Andigestion then they would make capacity for that and excess waste can be sent elsewhere. Andigestion have capacity for another 11,000 tons.

Jon McGinty questioned whether the AD process can theoretically work on non-food items e.g., clothes. Luke said that it does work on other things such as crops (maize), but the government do not provide subsidy for this anymore. In terms of clothes, it is doubtful as it needs to be organic waste – it could potentially be done with cotton although doubtful that it would have much of an energy yield.

Jon McGinty then asked a further question about the difference between and pros & cons of aerobic and anaerobic digestion. With aerobic composting all of the energy produced gets lost whereas with anaerobic it happens within tanks and so all the energy produced is captured and then used.

It was then asked by Jonathan Whittaker why animal waste does not work. Luke said that as every waste stream must be reported separately it keeps it simple to just focus on food. Also, with animal waste the gas yield is very low. Jonathan also asked why there is a lot of packaging with the food that comes in as people should not be putting packaging in the food bins. Luke said that the business waste is mostly packaging free, but people typically line their caddy's with plastic bags or throw away whole packages of food. How to encourage people to take their food out of the packaging was then discussed as ideally the plastic would be recycled separately, but it was also acknowledged that convenience also needs to be considered.

Jonathan then asked how the mixer food is kept constant with seasonal variations. Luke said there is some storage capacity in the domes which allow them to play with the balance. Jonathan pointed out that about 35% of gas is CO₂ that goes out and is wasted as it has no use, he asked if anyone had thought of using the gas for example to grow plants near to the plant. Luke said that other plants have looked at building greenhouses adjacent. In terms of bottling, it for industry the amount of CO₂ that is produced here is relatively small and there are also other contaminants in there so to clean it up would cost around £1million.

Luke was thanked for his presentation.

8.Climate Change Current Position

Meyrick Brentnall (City Climate Change & Environment Manager) provided the climate change update for Gloucester City Council. Meyrick pointed out that his job title has now changed and is no longer involved with waste, parks and licensing, however, the rangers, trees and flood management are still within his team. A report went to cabinet back in March – the climate change roadmap,

which broadly mapped out how we were going to move towards carbon neutrality and included £100,000 to be dedicated to climate change issues. Currently looking at a consultant to investigate at all of the council operated sites and come to some conclusion as to what is our 'carbon budget and how we can reduce it to Zero. Stated that Gloucester City Council has, and will continue to do climate change work.

With regards to food waste the council is encouraging places like cafés or the market to send their food waste to AD plants. For transport, more electric cars and electric bikes are proposed as part of our pool fleets. Gloucester City Council is also working with the County Council on more electric vehicle charging points. The council is also focussing on natural flood management for example small ponds, dams etc. Council buildings need to remain as carbon neutral as possible so we are also looking at how we can modify buildings e.g., solar panels to make them less carbon heavy.

The council is currently updating the green travel plan and asking employees how they get to work. This piece of work came at an interesting point of time as many people are not travelling to work and this highlights the benefits of working from home and reducing congestion.

The council has adopted some policies e.g., a 10-year pay back for carbon projects. The council have been looking into purchasing green gas and have adopted carbon friendly procurement policies.

Recovery plans for Covid-19 are in place. With regards to the environment there have been some positive aspects of the pandemic for example impacts on air quality. There is a county and a city recovery plan. The climate change recovery plan is due to be scrutinized later this year.

Projects not necessarily city council led but we are involved with include a Regional park for the Severn Vale, and an energy park at Hempstead landfill site.

Jonathan Whittaker asked what percentage of lighting under city council control is LED and whether that includes road lighting. Meyrick said that streetlights are all LEDs but there is still a lot more to do with regards to city council LED lighting – that will be one of the jobs the consultants will be involved in.

Jonathan then asked for clarification on flood mitigation – how will this be affected if it is not within the city? Meyrick said that we are working with Gloucestershire wildlife trust on a project outside of Gloucester where we talk to and work with landowners educating them on how to manage their own land to slow the flow of water into the city. In the Cotswolds you will see a lot of small dams that have been put in place to hold the back water high up in the catchment before it reaches urban areas like Gloucester. Robinswood Hill has several flooding issues and there is a lot of scope for similar projects there.

Jonathan also asked what the provision of allotments currently is and if it had decreased. Meyrick said that the occupancy is high. Enquiries went up

significantly during the pandemic so as part of the recovery plan the council would like to create new allotment sites.

With regards to cycling, Jonathan asked if there are means of improving the roads for cyclists as it became very popular during the lockdown but once traffic returns to normal for many it will not feel safe. Meyrick said that this is a county council function, but the city council does have a say in it. There is a project going forward which will provide improvements to the London Road area up to Oxstalls Campus so that the safety for cyclists is increased. This will be a slow process and can be expensive so it will take time. Andrew Harley asked a follow up question to this – the existing cycleway on London road is for cyclists going out of town and it is very narrow and several cars park along the road. Meyrick said that he had not seen the proposals but was aware that it would be both ways and parked cars have been taken into consideration as it is meant to be quite a comprehensive scheme.

Cllr Brazil asked a question about projects for solar power and wind – Scotland previously were giving grants for wind turbines that you could put to your property. Could this be researched? Meyrick said that small scale wind turbines, especially in urban areas, are very difficult to make worthwhile due to turbulence etc. All previous grants have currently gone. Wind is one of the cheapest forms of electricity out there, but big wind turbines can for some be an eyesore and there are also issues with bats and birds etc. The local authority would need to identify sites to put forward a proposal. There is nothing to stop individual households from doing it but there are no grants.

Richard Trelfa asked if there are any powers associated with climate change work or is it just about pointing people in the right directions. Meyrick said that most of it will be signposting and pointing people in the right direction. Richard then asked if the council could put a monetary value for comparing tenders. Meyrick said that it was wrapped up in the social value procurement process which does involve climate change impacts.

9. Information Exchange/AOB

Barry Leach also asked about traffic levels during the Covid-19 lockdown. At a county council meeting it was stated that it dropped to 20% of pre-Covid-19 levels and rose to 60% 3 or 4 weeks ago and then was back to 80% in the first weeks of July. Barry asked if we have any indication of how much the air pollution declined during the 20% period and do we now see it rising again back to pre-Covid-19 levels? It would be interesting to see the impact on air pollution. Cllr Cook said that he did notice the air pollution levels had fallen substantially although wasn't sure traffic levels fell as low as 20% but saw levels of 50%. Inevitably there is a bit of a lag from collecting data. Cllr Cook said that he has asked the team that collect the data to provide regular updates so hopefully at some stage we will be able to publish that data. Meyrick Brentnall said that CO2 levels did reduce significantly, and they have gone back up. There was a meeting to discuss this and a model is currently in development that should be ready by early autumn which could be discussed at a future meeting.

Richard Trelfa discussed problems with the quality of water in the rivers and highlighted that the forum had never referred to water quality before and asked if this is something that should be addressed in the future. Meyrick said he was happy to look into this and noted that brooks and streams vary in water quality across Gloucester.

Richard Trelfa also asked if there is any account of medical problems as a result of air pollution in the city. Meyrick said he was not aware of it. There is a national indicator – not sure how that is done locally but this could also be looked into.

10. Date of next meeting

To be confirmed.