

## DELIVERING EFFICIENCY IN WASTE PLANNING

MICK OLIVER

PLANNING MANAGER, VIRIDOR WASTE MANAGEMENT

(FOR PHOTO SEE ISSUE 17 R M & R 21/2/03)

SHORTEN AS NECESSARY BY DELETING ANY OR ALL OF THE DOUBLE BRACKETED TEXT

Last week saw the first of the ODPM's Regional Road Shows promoting new planning policy for sustainable waste management and guidance on preparing municipal waste management strategies. Their publication in July along with important changes to Waste Strategy 2000 provide the means to deliver the right facilities in the right place at the right time, ((the lack of which has been an acknowledged criticism of England's past planning system)).

The challenge to our industry and those who determine policy and planning applications is to seize this opportunity to deliver the much needed infrastructure and avoid becoming bogged down in the planning policy process ((that has failed in some authorities to deliver waste local plans nearly 15 years after they became a statutory requirement)).

The new planning policy statement (PPS10) and the move away from BPEO to a reliance on Sustainability Appraisal heralded in the changes to Waste Strategy 2000 should be welcomed by those of us inside and outside of the industry charged with delivering modern infrastructure. New flexibility in applying the Proximity Principle and moving self-sufficiency closer to the local rather than regional level will help.

The future apportionment of required waste management capacity between individual planning authorities that is a feature of the new policy will be a significant driver in delivering greater community responsibility for waste by residents, councils and business, which is the new policy's most important key planning objective. The prospect of joint working between waste planning authorities is to be welcomed but could be a challenging one, particularly when addressing the politically thorny issue of what facilities go where. ((To avoid corporate Nimbyism should good intentions fail)) the apportionments to be set out in Regional Spatial Strategies should be applied to individual authorities that of course can subsequently elect to work jointly and pool their resources, and obligations.

The lack of human resources is a continuing worry. Collectively we need to apply smart practice to allow the planning profession overall to use its expertise efficiently in helping to decide what goes where and preparing and determining the necessary applications.

The initial work undertaken on the 2004 reformed planning system does not bode well for smart practice. ((With consultations on Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) arriving like invitations to take out a bank loan)) there is already a risk of overload and consultation fatigue.

The opportunity for Government to produce a model SCI has been lost; the opportunity for producing model Waste Development Documents (WDDs) and their policies should be seized without delay. As witnessed by ODPM's 160 page Companion Guide to PPS10 that also feature in the Road Shows, resources can be made available when a need exists.

The fact is, in future Planning Inspectors' Reports on WDDs will be binding on waste planning authorities and as such they will need to be detailed and top notch. Why can't the Inspectorate be given resources to prepare model WDDs and their policies, thereby enabling individual Inspectors to focus their considerable skill on having the final word on the all important policy issue of what goes where? Rolling out such an initiative to mineral and general planning policy would really deliver some efficiency.