

## HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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### REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE 23 NOVEMBER 1999

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NOTE: Full copies of the report mentioned below have been sent to all members of the Environment Committee and other members who have requested it. Any queries on this report to: Joan Blake, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford. (Tel: 01992 555560)

#### **"LIMITING LANDFILL": A CONSULTATION PAPER ON MEETING THE EUROPEAN LANDFILL DIRECTIVE'S TARGETS**

The European Council Directive on the landfill of waste (better known as the Landfill Directive) was agreed in Europe in April 1999 and came into force in the European Union (EU) in July 1999. It needs to be transposed into UK law no later than 16 July 2001.

The Directive aims to harmonise controls on the landfill of waste throughout the EU, with the main focus being common standards for the design, operation and aftercare of landfill sites. It also aims to reduce the amount of methane (a powerful greenhouse gas) emitted from landfill sites and, with this in mind, sets three progressive targets for member states to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to landfill (this being the element of waste that breaks down to produce methane).

The aim is for nations to reduce the level of municipal waste going to landfill

- to 75% of their 1995 level by 2006
- to 50% of their 1995 level by 2009
- to 35% of their 1995 level by 2016.

Those member states which in 1995 put more than 80% of their municipal waste to landfill may postpone attainment of the above targets by up to four years.

A consultation paper entitled "Limiting Landfill" was issued by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions in October 1999 and considered by the Waste Task Group. The paper listed the following five options to limit the use of landfill:-

- (i) a ban on the landfill of all biodegradable municipal waste;
- (ii) a ban on the landfill of certain biodegradable municipal wastes;
- (iii) the introduction of permits restricting the amount of biodegradable municipal waste accepted at any landfill site;
- (iv) the introduction of permits restricting the amount of biodegradable municipal waste sent to any landfill site;
- (v) a review of the role of landfill tax.

The Committee agreed a response outlining the County Council's views on the principles behind the consultation paper and endorsing the Waste Task Group's recommendation in favour of Option (iv).

In the response the Committee have stressed that a clear definition of the term "municipal waste" is essential in establishing authorities' 1995 levels of waste going to landfill. They have urged the government to commit itself to a significant publicity campaign aimed at raising public awareness of the issues facing local authorities in respect of waste.

The response also recommends support of the four-year extension on the attainment of targets. Two of the three current landfill contracts held by the County Council do not expire until early 2008. Therefore, if the County Council is to honour its contractual obligations, the 2006 target would be very difficult to attain. These difficulties would not arise if the compliance period was extended to 2010.

Mary Bayes  
Vice-Chairman  
County Hall, Hertford  
23 November 1999