

COUNCIL 14 JANUARY 2021 - AGENDA ITEM 11 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr P Tuthill asked Tony Miller:

“It has now been confirmed that the overall thermal efficiency of converting waste to electricity is approximately 30%. At the time of writing work is being done to determine the split of the other 70%- such flue gas, residues and particularly the lower grade heat from the cooling fans [the equivalent of cooling towers on a large power station].

I am aware there have been discussions with a nearby brick maker- clearly there cannot be district heating given the location- but some power stations supply local greenhouses. Could the Cabinet Member with Responsibility confirm what progress has been made and what is planned for this site to further contribute to WCC energy saving?”

Answer

Thank you for your question regarding EnviRecover the County Councils Energy Recovery Facility at Hartlebury.

You will no doubt be pleased to hear that due to the increased availability of the facility in 2020 it produced 10% more electricity than was originally modelled.

In addition to the electricity produced as you rightly say the Council and operator have explored the possibility of steam from the facility being utilised by the local brickworks. There have also been discussions with a number of other companies about utilising the steam, but unfortunately to date no agreement has been reached. Both the Council and operator are keen to find a use for the heat and are working together to try and deliver this; this requires a local user and investment.

Finally, I pointed out to members two years ago that this facility would not be static, it would evolve with technology and that is still the case. We are evolving with technology and that is why the facility has had modifications, has been improved and has efficiencies. It is worth pointing out that the Council and operator are in the early stages of discussing the possible use of battery storage and carbon capture technology at the facility.

Supplementary question

Was there a target date to draw these measures together? The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment responded that it was an ongoing task for the operator of the plant and Council officers to find a solution for the future use of steam and heat from this facility.

QUESTION 2 – Mr R C Lunn asked John Smith:

“Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility inform Council as to how many Covid vaccination sites there are currently in Worcestershire, and how many will be added across the County?”

Answer

Thank you, Councillor Lunn, for your question.

The Covid-19 vaccination delivery programme is being led by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Public Health at Worcestershire County Council are working very closely with the CCG on this. There are currently 16 vaccination sites planned for the county. I am pleased to say that 13 of these sites are now already live and vaccinating residents. This is a rolling programme and we expect more sites to go live in the coming weeks.

The sites that are live are:

Kidderminster Medical Centre, Kidderminster
Hume Street Medical Centre, Kidderminster
BHI Parkside, Bromsgrove
Stourport Health Centre, Stourport
Winyates Health Centre, Redditch
New Road Surgery, Bromsgrove
Ombersley Medical Centre, Ombersley
Alexandra Hospital, Redditch
Droitwich Health Centre, Droitwich Spa
Malvern Health Centre, Malvern
Turnpike House Medical Centre, Worcester
Upton Surgery, Upton upon Severn
Riverside Surgery, Evesham

The Covid-19 vaccine programme will be the largest programme of its kind delivered. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated staff who are working to deliver this in Worcestershire.

I will arrange for the list of Covid-19 vaccination centres to be circulated to all councillors.

QUESTION 3 – Mr R M Udall asked Lucy Hodgson:

"Will the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Countryside Centres and Country Parks confirm what action she has taken to raise awareness and improve education about the risks of Lyme Disease in the county. Lyme Disease can have serious long-term effects on individuals and is present in the county. Would she consider working with the charity Lyme Disease UK to ensure information is available to the public and notices are placed at Countryside Centre's and Country Parks to advise residents of the dangers, risks and precautions they could take to minimise the risks?"

Answer

Richard thank you for this question.

It is a subject very close to my heart and the impact that it can have on a whole family. Around 20 years ago my niece caught the disease whilst walking in a Park where there were deer. She was bitten by a tick and came down with a mystery disease which for a number of years was thought to be ME. After much lobbying from my sister my niece was finally offered a test which identified she did have Lyme Disease but there was no real treatment and, in the end she was treated at a private hospital where they were able to treat the disease with strong antibiotics over a number of months. The disease is from the same family as Syphilis and can leave people bed ridden. In the case of my niece, she had to be home educated and was in a very lonely place as there was little understanding of the disease.

So, what is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is a tick-borne bacterial infection that can be transmitted to humans when they are bitten by an infected tick. Lyme disease most commonly presents as a spreading rash around the bite area. In the UK, about a third of cases do not notice a rash and may present with fever, headache, or neurological symptoms.

Lyme disease is endemic in many parts of the United Kingdom, particularly in woodland or heathland areas but disease carrying ticks can also be found in cities and gardens. The ticks often come from Deer.

The key time to focus on activity will be spring onwards when the weather gets better, and people tend to wear shorts and short sleeves and sit on the ground for picnicking.

The national trust did an awareness campaign advertising the harm that can be caused by ticks and how to recognise what a tick looks like, how it can be removed and what are the symptoms to look out for.

The countryside service has agreed to display a public health England poster on all their sites in the spring and will also work with public health England comms team to help promote the posters.

A few years ago, Lyme Disease Action worked with St Johns Ambulance and the Duke of Edinburgh awards to produce appropriate information as to what you should look for. One of the outcomes was to encourage risk assessments to include the risks of catching the disease whilst doing certain outdoor activities. I would like to see that all schools are made aware of this work.

You mention working Lyme Disease UK and there is also the Caudwell Lymeco charity who are looking at ways of highlighting the disease across the county. I have asked officers to contact both to see how we can work together.

To conclude this answer, I would like to say that my niece Elizabeth did make a recovery. She lost over 10 years of her life growing up because of this disease and the impact affected the whole family. I am glad to say she is now a mother of 2 living with her husband in the Alps in France and is a successful accountant.

Supplementary question

In response to a request, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities undertook to meet with Mr R M Udall and local representatives of Lyme Disease UK to discuss the issue and consider any suggestions to improve education and alert residents to the risks associated with Lyme Disease.

QUESTION 4 – Mr R C Lunn asked John Smith:

"Based on the most recent data, can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility inform Council as to what is the ratio of people being contacted by national Test and Trace compared to our local Public Health teams?"

Answer

Thank you, Councillor Lunn, for this question.

From 28th May 2020 to 30th December 2020, the national Test & Trace Service statistics show that 86% of Worcestershire residents who entered the system were contacted. This is slightly above the national average of 85%. The remaining 14% of people who national Test and Trace Service were unable to reach are known as 'lost to follow up'.

In Worcestershire, any lost to follow up cases are referred to our Local Contact Tracing Team. The Local Contact Tracing Team then attempt to contact these individuals. In addition to this, the Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) also directly contact trace cases reported to them through outbreak reporting. Since October 2,500 people with COVID-19 have been contacted through the LORT, helping to gain insight into outbreaks and ensuring that people are adhering to self-isolation guidance. The LORT also carry out backward contact tracing which is a strategy used to identify where a person may have contracted Covid-19 to identify any common points of infection.

Given the current surge in Covid-19 infections within the county these local teams are under considerable pressure and are prioritising adult social care staff and staff from other high-risk settings.