

BALI AGM Chairman's Report

Monday 30th January 2012

Year Start

2011 started in good spirits following the successful Meeting of Key Stakeholders (MEEKS) in late 2010 (Oct 29th) which had been conceived by BALI, spearheaded by Nick Hollington, hosted by Rother District Council in the Council Chamber at Bexhill Town Hall and run by East Sussex County Council.

The programme included keynote addresses from both East Sussex and BALI together with Bexhill and Battle MP Greg Barker, Minister for State at the Department of Energy and Climate Control, as he was ideally placed to advise the meeting on Government policies, especially those that directly affect Waste Disposal.

From the feedback of this gathering we had been given a major boost to our estimation that there was a good deal of opposition to the current Waste and Minerals Core Strategy.

Membership

With the introduction of the new constitution and the launch of The BALI membership scheme, we set about recruiting members and the total to date is in excess of 350 people.

Key Dates

There were several key decisions awaited from both the Government and the EU regarding provisions for waste recycling and disposal, and also funding for certain local projects namely the Bexhill Hastings Link Road, which had always been a key part of the infrastructure needed to gaining access to the Ashdown Site. So for BALI, there was a period of 'wait and see'.

Suddenly in June an important announcement was made that an amateur fossil hunter had found remains at the Ashdown site that had subsequently been identified by Dr Darren Naish at University of Portsmouth as 'The World's smallest Dinosaur' and dubbed The Ashdown Maniraptoran! To our delight, it seemed that a new strategy could be employed to thwart ESCC plans to allow the use of the site for landfill.

We contacted Natural England to suggest that they might like to consider the site for an SSSI, the Natural History and Bexhill Museum, and Dr Darren Naish, to suggest that the use of this site as a landfill would be a great loss for palaeontology finds. Sadly, the only reply to date is from Dr Naish offering his support should we need it!

In August Rother District Council published their Proposed Submission Core Strategy followed by a public consultation period that although it was originally due to close on 30th September 2011, was extended to early December 2011. BALI's submission through our legal planning consultant DMH Stallard focussed on our objection to the inclusion of the proposed Country Avenue and an extension to the A269 close to the Ashdown site, along with proposed development to the West of the A269. (Details can be found on the RDC website).



Then out of the blue on 4th October 2011 came the publication of the new Draft Waste and Minerals Plan which contained the startling statement:

'Therefore the ESCC revised strategy does not include the provision of any new land disposal sites and does not retain the existing Waste Local Plan site allocation at Ashdown Brickworks. Existing landfill capacity at Pebsham will be safeguarded. In addition, the Plan does not include any provision for the disposal of London's waste.'

We attended the ESCC Cabinet Meeting on Tue 11th October 2011 and were pleased to hear the opening statement by the Chairman, Council Leader Mr. Peter Jones, he said:

'Read my lips. No new land raise and no new landfill'.

If you wish to see and hear it for yourself, the webcast of that meeting is still available to view on the ESCC website (http://www.eastsussex.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/58877)

There then followed a public consultation period from 26th October to 8th December 2011 during which time we made our submissions through our legal planning consultant DMH Stallard on 7th December 2011.

The full public consultation documents and comments are available on the ESCC Council website.

Key stakeholders were invited to a workshop held at County Hall on 17th November 2011. This was attended by Pauline & Mike Rosner on behalf of BALI together with 15 representatives from neighbouring counties, parish councils, local interest groups and the waste industry.

Key points made at the Workshop which are relevant to our submissions included:

1. This Plan will cover the period to 2026 - the current Waste Plan only covers the period to 2015.
2. After 2013, municipal waste to landfill will be exported to sites outside of the County, as the landfill sites in East Sussex will be full. There are no current proposals to extend Pebsham, which will be 'full' by 2013.
3. On-going liaison is taking place with adjoining Authorities with regard to exporting waste to landfill (mainly permitted sites with capacity in West Sussex, Surrey, Kent). Waste can also be 'exported' further afield by rail (examples elsewhere in England). East Sussex CC recognise that they will need to have strong evidence to confirm that adjoining Authorities have the capacity to accommodate the 'waste to land disposal' from East Sussex after 2013. Also, it is essential that the waste industry accepts this approach. Tony Cook / Ian Blake confirmed that this work is on-going.
4. On-going strategy to minimise the amount of waste that needs to go to landfill.
5. Confirmed that it is not appropriate for East Sussex to accommodate any of London's waste.
6. Confirmed that this Plan will not be identifying any sites or areas of search for landfill / landraising.
7. Reiterated that it is not the intention to 'save' Policy WLP 10 (b) of the adopted Waste Local Plan (Site Specific Allocation for Waste Disposal to Land - Ashdown Brickworks). By



the time the Bexhill / Hastings Link Road is constructed (and the Country Avenue plus its extension - if ever!) (mid 2020s earliest), the need for landfill will be 'at a very low ebb'.

8. The further assessment of all the potential landfill and landraise sites has resulted in the view of the Council that there are no suitable sites in the County. (The detailed assessments of each site considered are not being made public).

9. Continued clay extraction at Ashdown Brickworks is supported (Draft Policy WMP 13).

10. The need for landfill after 2015 / 2016 will be 'very small'.

11. Recognised that anyone can submit a planning application for land disposal of non-inert waste. However, it would need to comply with all the criteria in Draft Policy WMP 7a (as well as the current Policies in the adopted Waste Local Plan (Policies WLP 20, WLP 21, and WLP 35 - WLP 40).

On Thursday 26th January 2012 the ESCC Cabinet were given a report on the Proposed Submission Waste and Minerals Plan, and have agreed to move to the next stage which will be the statutory six week period seeking representations on 'Soundness'. This will run between 24th February and 10th April 2012.

So yet again, on the advice of DMH Stallard, BALI will need to make further representation.

For the Future

The next stage, following the consideration of 'Soundness' will be the submission to Government in the summer, followed by a public enquiry in the autumn, and finally acceptance by Government is expected in early 2013.

Then, and ONLY THEN, can BALI and Bexhill honestly say that this current threat to turn Ashdown Brickworks into the major South East dumping ground is finally removed from our town.

In Conclusion

BALI will continue to be at the forefront of the fight to remove any threat to develop the Ashdown Brickworks site from being used for any other than its prime purpose of quarrying clay and manufacturing bricks.

We should not forget however that there are no reasons stopping a developer coming forward with a planning application with respect to using the Ashdown Brickworks as a landfill or developing any other facility.

BALI therefore needs your continuing moral, physical and financial support into the foreseeable future. We cannot rest on our laurels and then discover that something has slipped under the radar because of our complacency.

With the retirement of Nick Hollington, we lack a person to keep fingers in all the pies. He has been continuously active in maintaining our profile at the highest level. We need people to maintain their vigilance. If you can assist in any way, please let the committee know, as no one person will be able to take on all of those tasks that Nick managed to cover.

Colin Bennett
Acting Chairman

