



**PROJECT**

Energy Recovery Facility  
at Four Ashes

**CLIENT**

Veolia Environmental Services

**BRIEF**

To deliver communications and consultation activities to support Veolia Environmental Services (VES) in their aim to submit a comprehensive and robust planning application to construct and operate an Energy Recovery Facility at Four Ashes in Staffordshire.

These current communications needed to be based on providing a seamless transition from those previous activities that Counter Context had already undertaken in the area on behalf of Staffordshire County Council's 'Project Waste to Resource' (W2R).

**OUR RESPONSE**

Counter Context designed a communications plan to support the submission of the planning application and also provide a platform for the subsequent communication activity that would be required during the construction and subsequent operation of the Energy Recovery Facility.

In particular, the communications were designed to reintroduce VES to the communities around Four Ashes, build on their track record of operating a Materials Recovery Facility in the area, and explain how community engagement will be of central importance to the company during the construction and operation of the facility.

**The communications included:**

- Personalised letters introducing VES to elected members and all those living within 1km of the Four Ashes site.
- A comprehensive briefing pack for MEPs, parliamentarians, local county, district and parish councillors providing information about VES, the proposals to construct an Energy Recovery Facility, and the communications strategy that would maintain an ongoing dialogue with local communities.
- A clear and concise update leaflet distributed with bespoke covering letters to all properties within 1km and 4km of the proposed site. The leaflet and letter also invited and encouraged residents to attend public drop-in sessions for more information.
- Two drop-in sessions took place allowing local residents and any other interested parties to meet members of the VES team and giving them the opportunity to discuss, face-to-face, any questions they had. The drop-in sessions were also advertised in various editions of the Express and Star.
- An online portal ([www.veolia-staffordshire.co.uk](http://www.veolia-staffordshire.co.uk)) supported the project and provided all the background information about Project W2R, and information with regards to the re-submission of the planning application.
- A dedicated telephone information line was available for all project enquiries.

Counter Context also contributed to the formation of a Community Liaison Group that gave local communities and groups appropriate access to advanced information regarding each stage of the construction process. This involved the drafting of Terms of Reference, letters to local councillors, and the development and management of a Community Involvement Strategy.

**SUCSESSES**

The engagement programme designed and delivered by Counter Context actively contributed to VES acquiring planning permission for the ERF in February 2011. The application was approved unanimously by members of the planning committee, some of whom referred to the comprehensive community engagement which had taken place with their constituents.

Engagement with local stakeholders, residents and businesses was defined by ensuring members of the community had accurate information about the proposals. Local people were given every opportunity to raise issues or discussions questions with members of VES's project team. Members of the public who attended the drop-in exhibition organised by Counter Context provided feedback about the session said the exhibition was either 'Very Useful' or 'Useful'.

The development of the ERF in Staffordshire is now fast moving forward and will involve close partnership working via a Community Liaison Committee which was convened and initially supported by Counter Context.

