

Time to rethink North Yorkshire's Waste Strategy

In October, the Councils of North Yorkshire and York will vote on a proposal for a huge waste management plan that is meant to dispose of all of the household waste in North Yorkshire.

The deal will lock the County into a contract with a single provider for the next 25 years.

It will be the single biggest contract ever issued by NYCC.

In this presentation, which lasts about 10 minutes, we outline the concerns we have about the plan.

Concerns that, given the cost and duration of the contract, we believe are directly relevant to every single rate payer in North Yorkshire.

Why now?



HM TREASURY

Landfill Tax



Greenhouse emissions

OK, so why are we even discussing this issue now?

Well, there are three reasons.

First, we are presently burying a lot of our household waste in landfill. This is expensive because we are taxed for every tonne of landfill and the tax level is rising quickly.

Second, landfill is bad for the environment.

This is because when we landfill we are actually burying a lot of organic material.

This material decays slowly for decades to come and releases greenhouse gasses like carbon dioxide and methane, contributing to global warming.

There is a third reason too – that we should, quite simply, not be so wasteful. We should produce less waste and that waste that we do make, we should recycle.



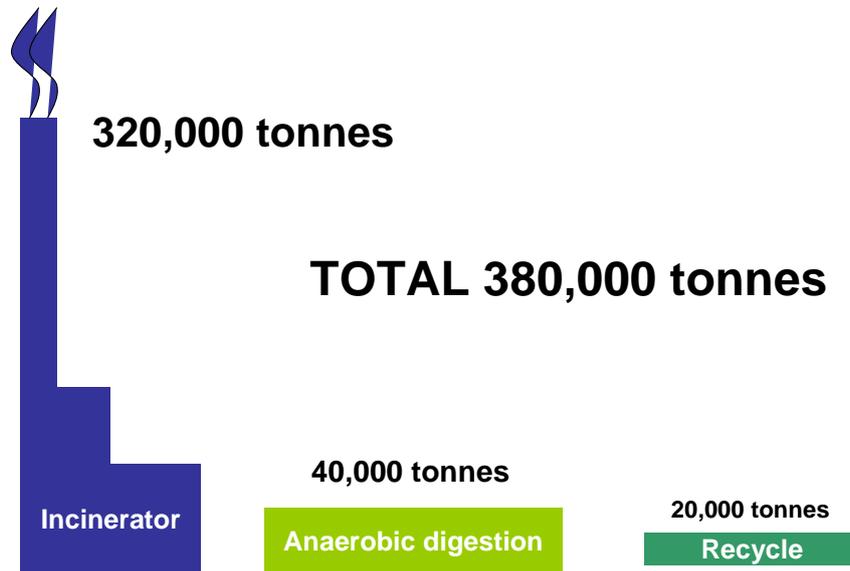
North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York have a plan to try and address these issues.

In late June they announced the company that they want to pay to manage our waste. It is called AmeyCespa.

They want to develop what they call a Waste Recovery Park at Allerton Quarry, between Harrogate and York.

Because of the money involved, all County Councillors from North Yorkshire and the City of York will get to vote on this in October. So time is of the essence if we are to influence them in this matter.

North Yorkshire's solution



So what is the solution that they have come up with?

Well, their plan is to build a very large waste facility that will have a capacity to handle 380,000 tonnes of waste per year when it is up and running. It is planned to open in 2014.

It will manage the waste in following ways:

First, it will extract some of the easily recyclable material – about 20,000 tonnes per year.

Next, it will use a process known as Anaerobic Digestion to convert about 40,000 tonnes of organic waste – food and organic waste – into a fuel than is fed into the incinerator and also to generate some power from methane gas that is generated as a by-product in the process.

The third, and by far the largest component of the scheme is an incinerator, the heat from which will drive a steam turbine and generate electricity.

This is not called an incinerator as such in the AmeyCespa PR material – they prefer to use the term an “energy from waste facility” – but it is an incinerator.

AmeyCespa will sell this electricity to the National Grid as part of their side of the deal.

So, what are our concerns about this proposal?

You are probably expecting us to be up in arms about the very large incinerator that is proposed and this does cause us concern.

But for now, we are much more concerned about the excessive scale of the facility and the incredibly low commitment to recycling that is part of this proposal.

We'll explain why in the next few slides.

“Households in York and North Yorkshire produce around 470,000 tonnes of rubbish each year”

AmeyCespa



“Allerton Waste Recovery Park will treat York and North Yorkshire’s domestic “black bag” waste which is left after kerbside recycling”

AmeyCespa

It's worth at this point just recalling what the initial driver is behind this facility.

It is the need to reduce landfill arising from the production of household waste.

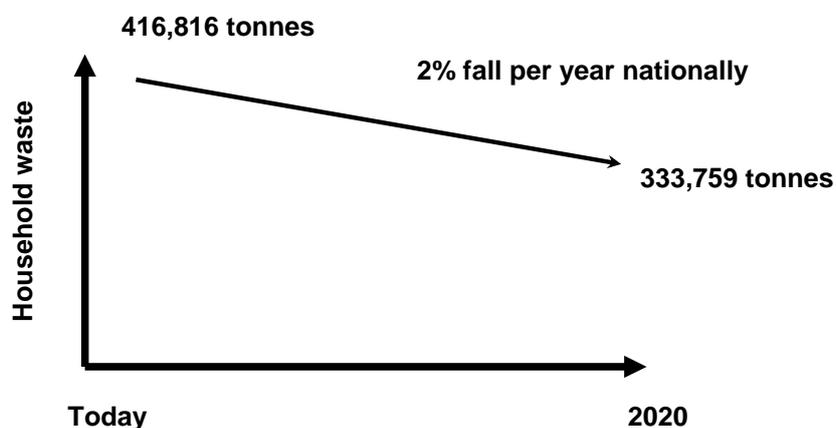
This is stressed repeatedly in the AmeyCespa PR and also in NYCC strategies on which this scheme is based.

The argument being made is that we need a facility of this size to deal with the waste that we are producing as households.

This is the basis for the government funding under the PFI contract – household waste (or more technically, residual municipal waste) is what is cited.

We'll come back to this point later when it becomes clear that this scheme is NOT about household waste alone – but in fact is designed from day 1 with commercial waste in mind.

We are already producing less waste



"We will work towards a 'zero waste' economy, encourage councils to pay people to recycle, and work to reduce littering." The Coalition government, May 2010

Well, we think that North Yorkshire are proposing to build a facility that is far too big.

We also think there is a better way to reduce landfill.

After all, if household waste is the problem, then why not reduce the amount of municipal waste we produce and increase the amount we recycle?

On this graph we show the amount of waste that households in North Yorkshire create per year in 2008/09. The figure is based on the amount of municipal waste produced by NYCC today, plus the amount that City of York has contracted to deliver to NYCC as part of this facility in 2014. The slight difference in dates used does not alter the argument here.

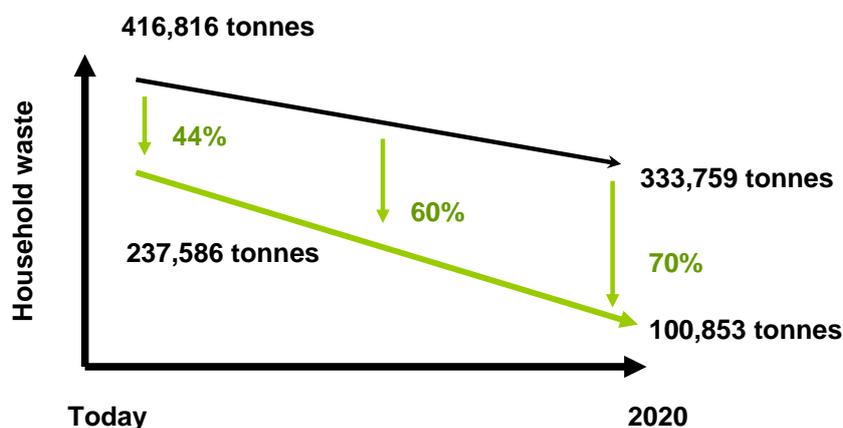
Now, the amount of waste we produce is falling over time. This is because manufacturers are being made to reduce their packaging.

And it is also because we are being more careful – think of all those plastic shopping bags we used to throw away and now don't.

And government is also committed to reducing waste produced, talking recently about moving towards a "Zero Waste Economy" in which as a nation we really drive waste levels down.

Based on recent trends, we expect that rates of waste production will fall at about 2% per year. This means that by 2020, our current figure of 416,816 tonnes will have fallen to 333,759 tonnes. Remember that the planned capacity for the new waste facility is 380,000 tonnes.

We are already producing less waste and recycling more



"We will work towards a 'zero waste' economy, encourage councils to pay people to recycle, and work to reduce littering." The Coalition government, May 2010

Now, in addition to producing less waste, we are going to recycle more. This is great news and means that we will be throwing less waste into landfill.

Our current recycling rate in North Yorkshire is about 44%.

In their plans, the county has assumed that this rate will rise to 48% by 2012/13 and then will rise ever so slowly to reach 50% by 2020. By the way, 50% is the legal minimum set by government.

But we think that this target is far too low and in fact we can achieve much more. Within the county, some areas, such as Ryedale, are already recycling 53% of their waste.

In Craven, the introduction of alternate weekly collections earlier this week saw recycling rates jump forward, whilst elsewhere in the country recycling rates are also rocketing.

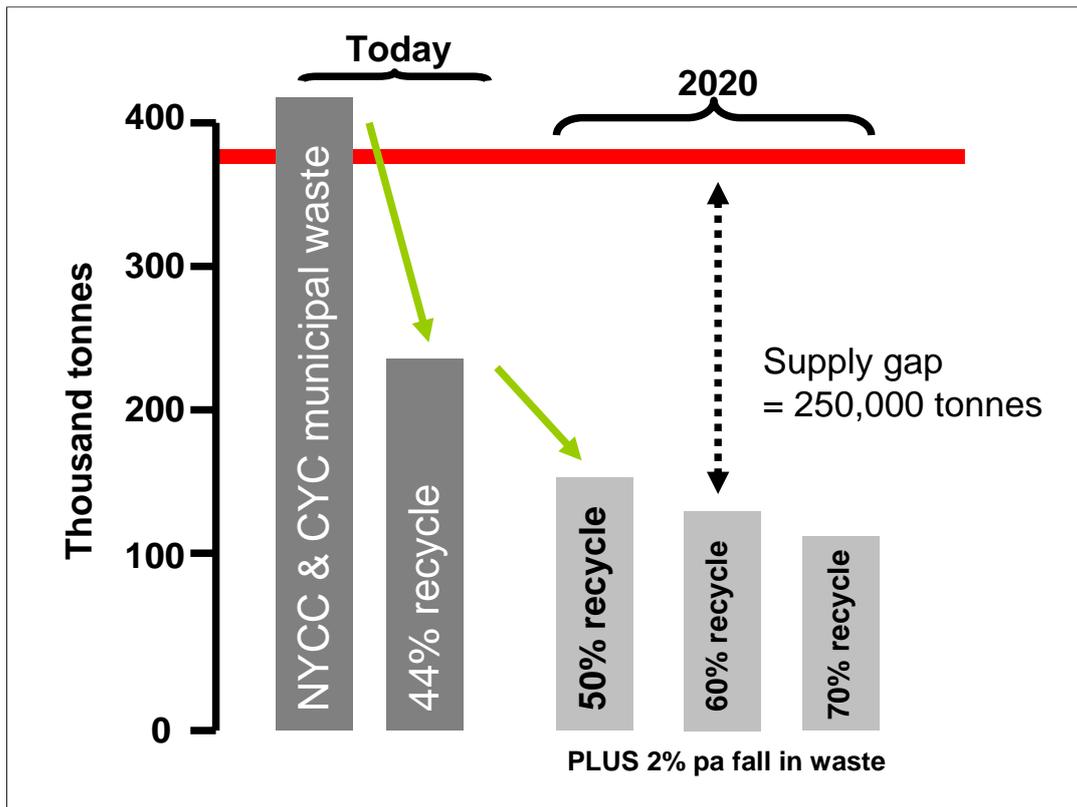
And we know there is significant room for improvement here in North Yorkshire. Harrogate Borough Council is currently only recycling about 32% of its waste, although we understand this is set to change shortly.

So, most people now agree that recycling rates will quite easily reach 60% by 2020, and could be as high as 70%.

And what happens if we combine the reduction in waste production AND recycling?

Well, this graph shows how the amount of household waste that might go to landfill will fall in the next decade.

You can see that if we recycle 60% of our waste, we will only have about 135,000 tonnes of waste left. If we manage 70%, then that figure is even less.



This is one reason why we are so concerned about the proposal from North Yorkshire and AmeyCespa.

WE JUST CAN'T WORK OUT WHY WE NEED SUCH A BIG FACILITY!

We show this in this slide. Here the height of the columns indicate the amount of waste involved. We start with a reminder of the proposed capacity for the new facility – 380,000 tonnes per year shown by the horizontal red line.

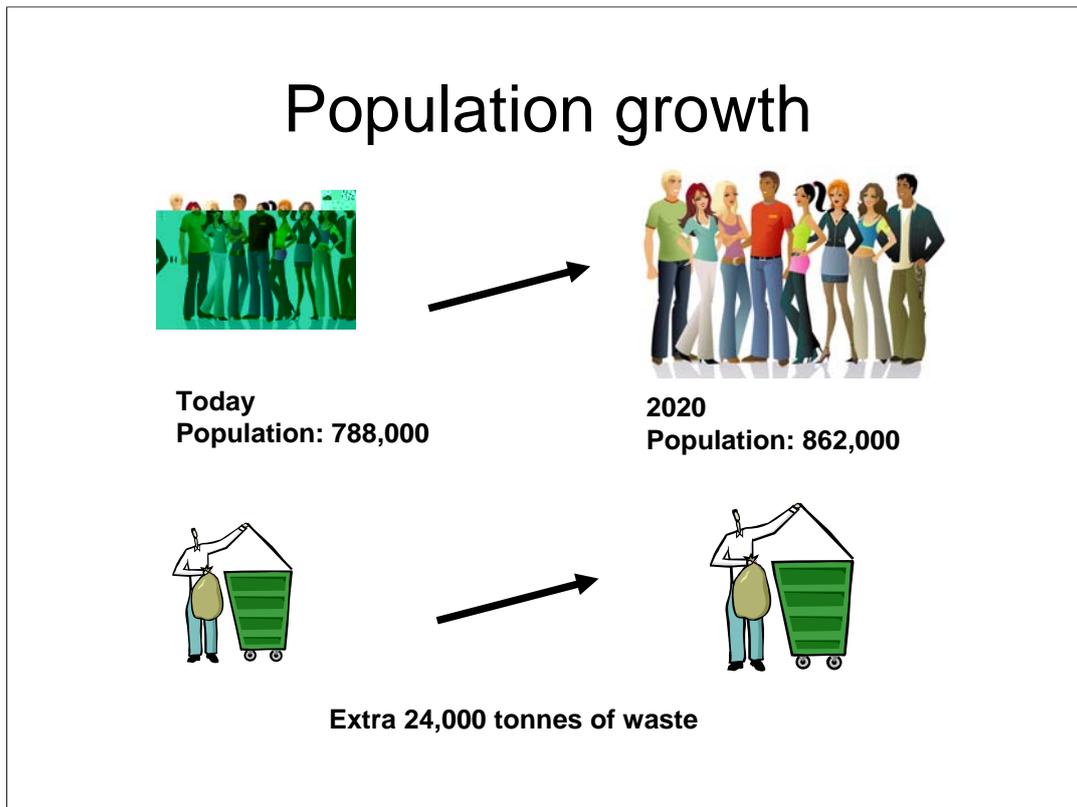
The first column shows the amount of residual waste that we are generating TODAY – you'll remember this is 416,816 tonnes.

The second column shows how much of that waste is left after our present recycling efforts at 44% – about 233,000 tonnes. This is ALREADY 150,000 tonnes below the facility capacity.

The third, fourth and fifth columns show what how much waste we will produce in 2020, if we reduce the amount of waste we produce by 2% per year AND we recycle at rates of 50%, 60% or 70%.

What is so clear from this slide is that there is a huge gap between the capacity of the planned facility and the amount of household waste we will likely be producing. By 2020, assuming modest recycling targets of 60%, the facility will be 250,000 tonnes short of waste.

NYCC think that the spare capacity will be filled by a growing population in North Yorkshire. We don't think this has any real impact as we now show.



NYCC think that waste levels will rise into the future because of population growth. More households = more waste.

AmeyCespa tell us that by the end of the 25 year contract, this waste gap will have closed to zero.

We've looked into this using the latest predictions from the Office of National Statistics, who published population projections for North Yorkshire and City of York in May 2010.

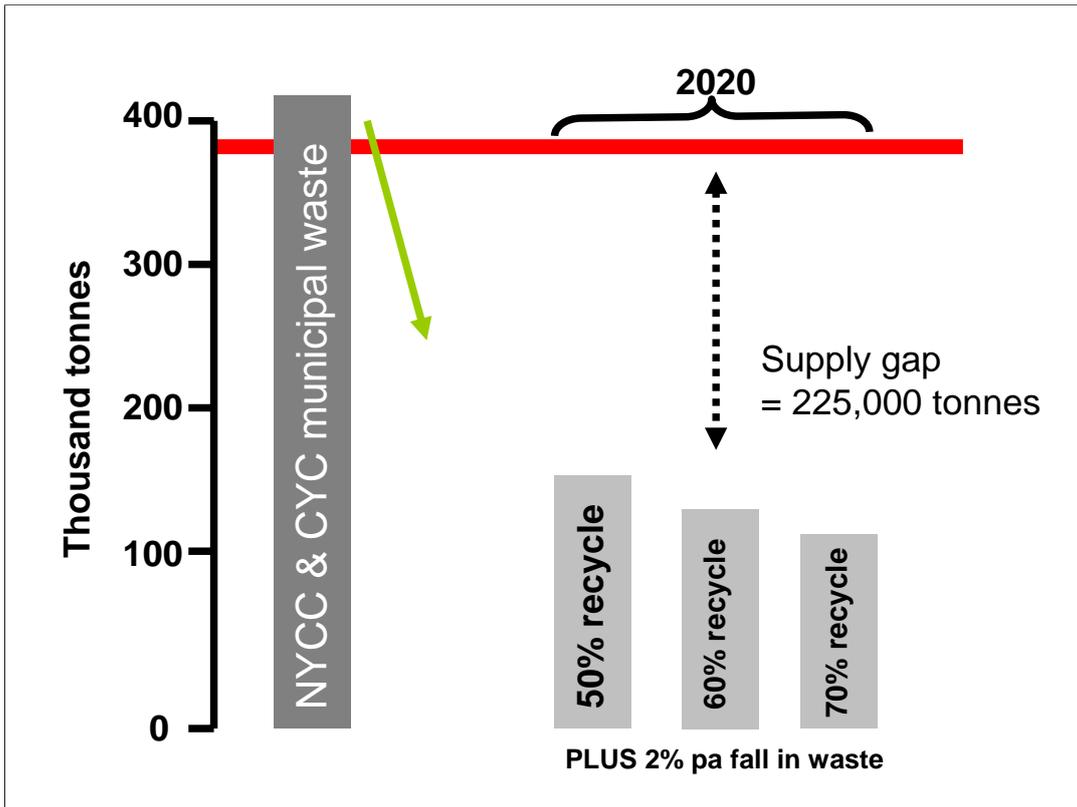
They predict that there will be an extra 74,000 people by 2020.

Today each person generates about 0.6 tonne of waste per year. Assuming that 50% of this is recycled, this will create an additional 23,800 tonnes of waste by 2020.

This is peanuts compared to the gap in waste we predict for the facility.

NYCC are wrong to assume population growth will close this waste gap.

We show this in the next slide, updated for population change.



COMMERCIAL WASTE

“Households in York and North Yorkshire produce around 470,000 tonnes of rubbish each year” AmeyCespa

“It will be sized to take household waste from York and North Yorkshire and some of the county’s commercial waste” AmeyCespa

Here is the answer to the missing waste – in AmeyCespa’s own words it will be provided from COMMERCIAL WASTE.

Now we need to be clear about this and look carefully at what is possibly going to happen. We are careful here because without the details of the NYCC scheme, we are making a best estimate of what might happen.

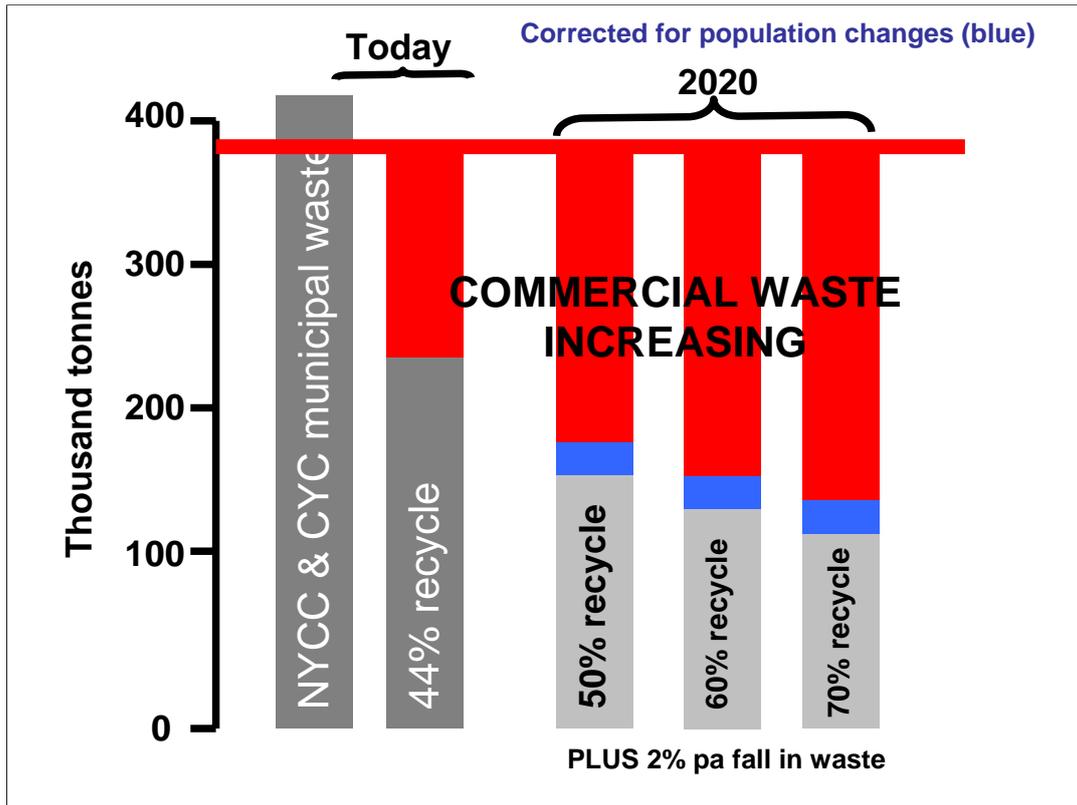
The government definition of residual municipal waste (which is what matters here) allows for the inclusion of a “small” amount of commercial waste.

Ask yourselves, does a quarter of a million tonnes of waste sound like a “small” amount? We don’t think it does – after all, it could amount to 65% of the total throughput by 2020 based on the assumptions we make above.

So, what we think is likely to happen is that from day 1 of the facility opening this will be used to process a significant amount of commercial waste.

The amount of commercial waste that it processes will likely rise with time, especially as we recycle more and produce less household (black bag) waste.

We show this in the next slide



The more we recycle, the less waste we produce, the MORE commercial waste AmeyCespa will burn at Allerton Park.

This has not been made clear to the public, nor to the County Councillors.

Why should we be paying for a commercial facility?

Why should we be building a facility that is far too big, only so it can run on commercial waste?

BE CLEAR – THE ALLERTON PARK FACILITY WILL RELY ON COMMERCIAL WASTE

So, by 2020....



How much less waste by 2035 ?

N. YORKS DOES NOT NEED THIS FACILITY !!!

To recap, here is a summary of where we are.

The facility has a planned capacity of 380,000 of our waste. But by 2020, we, the householders of North Yorkshire and York City, will only be making a fraction of that.

And remember that we've only looked ahead 10 years to 2020. By that time the facility is already massively over capacity.

Also remember that this is a long-term scheme – the contract is for 25 years – strapping North Yorkshire into a contract with penalties until 2035.

And then the scheme can EVEN be extended ANOTHER 5 YEARS.

Just think how this picture will look like by then as technology advances further, as waste produced falls even more, and as recycling rates continue to rise.

So, some unanswered questions

- Why build such a huge facility?
- Why is this being presented as a way of dealing with household waste when it is not?
- Where are the costs for a GREEN solution based on higher recycling?



By now, you can probably see why we are concerned.

We just can't get the numbers to add up.

Maybe there is a plan to limit recycling in order to ensure we have enough waste to feed this facility? It's worth recalling here that NYCC predict that recycling will only grow 0.5% between 2013 and 2020. But surely they wouldn't do that? After all, most of WANT more recycling because we care about the environment of North Yorkshire.

And where is the costing of an alternative Plan B? One based on investment in higher recycling and a more appropriately scaled facility – perhaps even located at Allerton Park?

Beneath all of this is money – and a lot of it. And remember, this is not North Yorkshire's money. It is ours.

And this facility won't be paid by those people who live close to the Allerton Park site.

It will be paid by rate payers scattered across North Yorkshire.

It will be paid for in our council tax. And for the next quarter of a century it will be paid for by a loss of investment in other front-line services – like education, like our hospitals, like our roads.

What we all need to do NOW



Get your County Councillor to vote against this proposal

Spread the word across the County

Sign the petition on-line

So, this is the final slide.

I hope you now understand why we are so concerned about what North Yorkshire is planning to do.

The proposed 'solution' to our waste problem is based on wrong planning assumptions.

They've grossly over-estimated the amount of waste they think we'll produce because they have not realised how quickly the amount of waste we produce is going to fall because of changes to packaging.

And they've grossly under-estimated how much waste we can reduce through a real commitment to recycling.

Because of this, the facility being planned by North Yorkshire and AmeyCespa is at least double what we need.

Don't get us wrong. We are deadly serious about addressing the waste problem.

But just not in the way North Yorkshire are proposing.

So what can you do about this?

Well, if you are a County Councillor and have a vote on this matter, then come October say NO to this scheme.

If you don't, you and your electorate will end up paying for this facility for the next quarter of a century through reduced investment in other services like roads and hospitals.

And if you are a member of the public, then you should sign the online petition, write to your County Councillor, contact your friends and families across North Yorkshire and tell them NO.

Remember, we don't need a facility this size, we don't want a facility of this type. Don't let it happen.

Thank you for reading.