



## **Meeting of the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services and Advisory Panel 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008**

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

### **Eco Depot Safety and Security Review**

#### **Summary**

1. This report provides information on changes planned and undertaken at the Eco-Depot to improve the linked issues of site safety and security. The changes are being made in response to an independent review of safety carried out on the council's behalf by the Freight Transport Association (FTA). The FTA had been asked to undertake the review by the directorate management team following concerns about safety and security. The work was commissioned in June 2008.
2. The changes are intended to improve the safety and security of staff and visitors to the depot.

#### **Background**

3. Neighbourhood Services (NS) moved into the Eco-Depot in December 2006. The new site offers a significantly improved amenity to both staff and visitors alike.
4. On moving in, NS had initial concerns about the safety and security of the site, due to the lack of a physical barrier to stop or check vehicles or pedestrians entering or leaving the site. The directorate initially concentrated on actively managing site safety (issues caused by pedestrians and vehicles moving round what is basically an industrial site) and security issues.
5. Since December 2006, a number of changes and improvements to the site have been made including attempts to foster a disciplined approach to site safety and security from the workforce. However concerns have continued over the potential level of risk to the safety of site users, which stems from the inability to control site access. This issue also impacts on security at the depot.
6. In June 2008, NS commissioned a review of site safety from the FTA, who were asked to provide a safety assessment of the depot as a working environment.
7. In July 2008, the directorate suffered a high profile theft of equipment from the depot. This prompted a further review of site security arrangements.
8. This report sets out the issues and informs members of the actions we propose to take (or have already taken) in response to FTA's assessment.

## Site Safety

9. Neighbourhood Services moved into the new Eco-Depot in December 2006. As a busy working site, which also includes a public reception office, health and safety of all users is a key issue. The risk to safety is high because vehicles (many of which are heavy commercial vehicles) are moving around a site close to pedestrian walkways. The proximity of pedestrians and vehicles brings the potential for a fatal accident, as the two cannot be totally segregated. When people (likely) or vehicles (less likely) move into parts of the site where they should not be, the potential risk is greatly increased. Uncontrolled access to the site is a major risk which we need to address.
10. The uncontrolled access has in the last two years led to examples of visitors (the vast majority of whom will not be wearing high visibility clothing) walking in through the vehicle entrance or walking around the site to try to find the reception area. We have also had numerous examples of members of the public missing the entry to the Household Waste Recycling Centre and driving round the depot to effect a U-turn. Each of these non-essential 'visits' heightens the level of risk.
11. In July 2007, the council's Principle Environmental Health Officer (H&S) audited workplace transport at the site and made a number of recommendations. In response, we have taken steps to mitigate the risk and to improve the safety of site users. During 2007 and 2008, various work has been undertaken to improve signage, to improve the clarity and definition of pedestrian walkways, to slow traffic using traffic calming measures, to clarify and extend site rules (eg the use of high visibility clothing) and (where practical) to place physical barriers between pedestrians and vehicles at key points.
12. There have not been any reportable accidents on the site since December 2006 relating to vehicles hitting people. However despite the mitigating work carried out, uncontrolled vehicle access means that the potential for fatal accidents remains higher than it need be.
13. We have also been working to develop a strong health and safety culture among all staff. In March 2008, we introduced a 'Safety Observation Booklet' (SOB) in Neighbourhood Services that would give all staff a simple means to report health and safety issues that they observed at any time. These reports could be filed anonymously. A large number of the forms returned to our Health & Safety Advisor in the first couple of months of that initiative mentioned a range of site safety issues at the Eco-Depot.
14. In response to remaining concerns about transport safety, and to the concerns being raised by staff through the SOB route, the directorate management team commissioned an independent review of the site from the FTA in June 2008. Their review was undertaken during the summer, and we received feedback in late August. Their review made recommendations which they saw as essential (immediate), important (short term) and desirable (medium term).
15. The FTA's assessment placed gaining control of access to the site as a number one priority. They made a number of other recommendations about vehicle and pedestrian movements on site that we are keen to take forward as well. Many of the site safety recommendations will help to improve the related issue of site

security. Good site security will help to reduce levels of risk to health and safety by reducing the likelihood of visitors wandering round the site, without a clear understanding of the inherent dangers of a busy site where heavy vehicles operate.

## **Site Security**

16. The Eco-Depot is a busy working site. It serves as a base for about 350 employees and about 250 work vehicles. The site includes a public reception point at the back of the main eco-office building, where visitors can request a service or meet members of staff. While it is not a busy reception compared with the city centre reception points, having any visitors means that the site must be open and accessible, and safe.
17. The single means of entry into the Depot is at the end of Hazel Court. There is a perimeter fence around the site, which is checked daily. There is an additional pedestrian exit gate at the rear of the site, but this is locked at all times.
18. The buildings on the site are secured using a key card system. This means that only card holders are able to gain entry to the buildings, and are able to move within the building through internal security doors. Staff can only access those areas of the site that they need access to, and this is controlled via the key card system.
19. The depot is in use 24 hours per day. Although the bulk of movement on and off site occurs between 6am and 5pm, services such as Civil Engineering (eg winter gritting crews, emergency drainage team) and Neighbourhood Pride (eg mechanical sweeper drivers) require 24 hour access. The main eco-office houses the Night Service Co-ordinator (NSC) for the council. This member of staff is on site every night from 4.30pm to 8am, and during weekends. The NSC's role is to coordinate out of hours service queries and requests from across the council and other agencies. While the NSC provides a pair of eyes on the site at all times, they are not a night watchman for the site. Their role in relation to intruders or suspicious activity is to call 999 rather than to tackle the intruder themselves.
20. In light of the work already commissioned from FTA, a review of security arrangements was undertaken following the theft in mid July, which has led to a number of additional security proposals being made.

## **Proposed actions.**

21. This section of the report sets out the most significant actions being taken to improve safety and security at the depot.

### Tighten up Site Access

22. The key problem to address is our lack of facility to control vehicle access through the vehicle entrance at the end of Hazel Court. Potential solutions have been thoroughly considered. Any solution must work for both staff and visitors who arrive driving a variety of vehicles and needing to access the site for a variety of reasons. An added complication has been that the site

reception is at the far end of the eco-office – out of site of the front gate. The solutions that have been considered have included the need to get visitors safely to where they need to be.

23. In the medium term, a capital bid to the value of £205k has been made to build a permanent gatehouse and customer/visitor reception area near the entrance. This would stop visitors whether on foot or in vehicle entering the site in an uncontrolled manner. If the bid is successful it would at best take a couple of years for the gatehouse solution to be built.
24. Therefore in the mean time, a temporary Portakabin gatehouse has been put in place. The current reception area will be moved from the eco-office into this gatehouse.
25. In addition card operated vehicle barriers will be put in place to control access to both the car park at the rear of the eco-office, and to the main depot site itself. This will allow card-holders to access the site without intervention, but will require visitors to enter the reception area, make themselves known, and be told where to park. Visitors who need to see a member of staff will then be picked up by that member of staff from the temporary gatehouse. Both the temporary and permanent solutions will put in place a control over both vehicle and pedestrian access. The advantages of this proposed solution are to:
  - (a) Further reduce vehicle speed at the entrance. A speed table was put in place in April 2008, but the barrier forces vehicles to stop/queue.
  - (b) Remove the opportunity for pedestrians to enter through the vehicle entrance.
  - (c) Provide an opportunity to make site Health and Safety rules clear to all visitors – for example speed limits, danger areas, protected walkways, parking rule, and directions.
  - (d) Provide an opportunity to redirect members of the public who have got lost, rather than have them drive round the site.
26. At the same time we propose to improve control over access through the pedestrian entrances at the end of Hazel Court. Detailed proposals for the pedestrian access gates are under consideration. We intend to work with representatives from York Access Group to help us ensure that a more secure depot remains accessible to all visitors.
27. Further consideration is also being given to access and facilities for cyclists. We want to encourage staff to use cycles to get to work and have upgraded cycle storage facilities once already. In considering the options for the pedestrian access, we need to weigh up whether cycles would be better to access the site through the vehicle access, or whether the pedestrian access should be modified for use by cyclists.
28. We consider that taking a more stringent approach to vehicle and pedestrian access will solve many of the safety and security problems.

#### Workplace Transport Issues

29. Clearer signage is needed. A lot of new signs have been put up in the last couple of years, which tends to reduce their impact. FTA recommended that all of the signs on site were reviewed and that a more cohesive set of signs (or

markings on the road) be put in place. Once the entry barriers are in place, a full review of signage will be carried out and put in place.

30. FTA have suggested that the speed limit should be raised from 5mph to a more realistic 10mph. Some of the vehicles entering the site cannot be controlled at the slower speed. At the same time, we intend to purchase a radar gun to allow us to enforce the more realistic speed limit.
31. We have renewed and enhanced the areas of the site where high visibility garments must be worn – and this message has gone out to all staff based at the site through their team meetings and also through the staff newsletter.

### CCTV

32. CCTV cameras on site will be relocated to improve sightlines. Additional cameras are also being considered in areas of the site not currently covered.

### Tighter Internal Security Processes

33. A number of low cost measures have already been taken to reduce the risk of theft. Each department has put in place stronger procedures to improve vehicle security within their work issue rooms. The work issue rooms on site are now being locked from 5pm each day, and keycard access has now been introduced into those rooms to bring them into line with the rest of the site.
34. A new operating procedure manual has been adopted, which has tightened up rules regarding start and finish times, clarifying who should and should not be on the site out of normal working hours.

### **Other Issues**

35. FTA suggested a number of improvements that we are unable to take forward. For example they recommended that pedestrian barriers be installed in the run up to and around the hammerhead at the end of Hazel Court, to force pedestrians to enter and exit the site via the pedestrian rather than vehicle entrances. This would be very expensive, and we have no jurisdiction over the road as it is unadopted. In any case the vehicle entrance barriers should reduce the likelihood of people walking in through the vehicle entrance.
36. FTA also suggested some changes to the site which would have required further planning consents to be gained. For example they recommended that additional parking should be provided. These have not been taken forward.

### **Costs**

37. A number of the changes can be made without incurring any spending – for example introducing tighter site rules, or reinforcing messages through training. However most of the changes recommended have a financial implication.
38. The one off costs of the short term work relating to transport issues and site access, including the construction of the temporary gatehouse and relocation of reception total approximately £38k, based on initial estimates. It is recommended that this work commences without delay and as it is one off can be funded from a reserve set aside by Neighbourhood Services specifically to fund depot improvements. There is a recurring cost of £3k per year to cover

rental of the portakabin until the permanent solution is in place and this cost can also be funded from the reserve.

39. The one off cost of additional CCTV cameras is estimated at £20k. As this is also a one off cost it is anticipated that this can be funded from the above reserve.
40. A capital bid of £205k will be submitted in the 2009/10 capital investment (CRAM) process to cover construction costs for the permanent building. Due to the timescales required to submit the bid, the costs are best estimates at this stage but work is ongoing to finalise these estimates. Ongoing revenue costs of the gatehouse are not expected to be significantly more than current budgets and it is envisaged that these will be covered by existing repairs and maintenance budgets.

## **Summary**

41. The issues of user safety, and site security are closely linked. Following reviews of safety issues regarding vehicle movements and site usage, and site security following a theft in July, a number of new processes have been put in place, and a number of capital works have been started.

## **Consultation**

42. Consultation about the work around the site has been undertaken with the Facilities section in Resources. Unison have been asked to help us ensure the Health and Safety of staff and visitors to the site. York Access Group will be asked to consider the issues raised by the planned changes to the entry onto the site.
43. A newsletter covering these changes, along with other Health & Safety issues is being produced and will be circulated to all staff in the directorate.

## **Options**

44. The report is to inform EMAP members about measures to be undertaken and therefore no options are presented.

## **Analysis**

45. The report is to inform EMAP members about measures to be undertaken and therefore no analysis of options is presented.

## **Corporate Priorities**

46. The issues contained in the report will act to improve the directorate priority of 'Improve our health and safety culture'.

## **Implications**

47. **Financial:** Financial Implications are covered in the body of the report. Short term one off costs of approximately £64k can be funded from the Neighbourhood Services depot contingency, although it should be noted that it is unlikely that any unbudgeted or unforeseen increases to costs could be covered by the reserve. This assumes that the permanent gatehouse will be in

place by April 2010. Approval of a 2009/10 CRAM bid for £205k is required to progress the permanent gatehouse solution.

48. **Human Resources:** None.

49. **Equalities:** None

50. **Legal:** None

51. **Crime and Disorder:** None

52. **Information Technology (IT):** None

53. **Property:** None

54. **Other:** None

### **Risk Management:**

55. The report is primarily to provide members with information and as such there are no significant risks associated with this report.

### **Recommendations**

56. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to note the proposed improvements to site safety and security.

Reason: To inform members of initiatives being taken in Neighbourhood Services to improve site safety and security.

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**Report Approved**  **Date** 6/11/2008

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

None

**Wards Affected:**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**All**

**Background Papers:** None.