

**Press release 12 August 2014**

**Solar panel installation at Northacre RRC, Westbury :**

**Wiltshire Council install solar panel system that helps convert household waste to fuel**

Work to install the largest single-roof Local Authority-owned solar panel system in the UK on the roof of the new Northacre Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) in Westbury has been completed.

The 1,248 solar panels – covering an area equivalent to more than seven tennis courts – will generate over 280,500 units (kWh) of electricity each year. This electricity, all of which will be consumed on site at Northacre RRC, will help to power the mechanical biological treatment process used to turn household waste into solid recovered fuel (SRF) in place of it being sent to landfill.

The benefits of the solar panel system to Wiltshire Council are significant, with annual bill savings and income from the Feed-in Tariff of over £55,000, as well as annual CO2 emission reductions of 148 tonnes. Over 20 years the benefits are expected to exceed £1.5 million, and avoid CO2 emissions of over 2,720 tonnes.\*

Crucially for a plant such as Northacre RRC with a high energy requirement, the unit price of electricity produced by the panels over the system's 25 year life is significantly less than the current rate for grid supplied electricity.

Toby Sturgis, cabinet member for waste said: "As a council we are committed to finding sustainable solutions to our energy requirements as well as cutting costs where possible so more can be spent on frontline services. This is an ideal opportunity to use renewable energy to power a site which uses innovative technology and I'm delighted that we are leading the way in doing this."

David Snape, Commercial Manager at Solarsense, the company responsible for the design and installation of the system said: "The Northacre RRC project is a great example of how solar PV can significantly reduce consumption and deliver long-term cost savings for industrial processes. As the developer of the largest single-roof Local Authority owned solar panel installation in the UK,

Wiltshire Council is making a very clear long-term commitment to carbon reduction and sustainability, as well as a very sound investment which will benefit the county.”

Mike Webster, group director for Hills Waste Solutions, the company that owns and operates the Northacre RRC under a 25 year contract with Wiltshire Council, said: “Investing in energy security is an important step and we are pleased to have been involved in the procurement process with the Council. The next step for Hills will be to look at securing more local solutions for the solid recovered fuel (SRF), ideally to generate energy which could be utilised in Wiltshire. At present the SRF is sent to energy from waste facilities in other northern European countries.”

**END**

\*The benefits from the system assume a three percent annual increase in the RPI and a five percent annual increase in electricity prices. Total energy generated from the system by year 20 is expected to be 5,143,118 kWh with a total benefit of £1,522,243.

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Facts and figures on Northacre RRC

Website [www.northacrerrc.co.uk](http://www.northacrerrc.co.uk)

- 1 unit of electricity = 1 kWh
- 280,500 units is equivalent to the annual energy use of 85 homes
- The plant handles 60,000 tonnes of household waste each year, around 240-250 tonnes of waste per day (Monday-Friday). When processed (averages) per year are:
  - 28,200 tonnes of solid recovered fuel (SRF)
  - Equivalent of 20,000 tonnes lost through drying
  - 1,800 tonnes of recyclable materials recovered
  - 10,000 tonnes of bio-stabilised residue to landfill
- This plant is the first and only mechanical biological treatment plant in Wiltshire
- It is one of only two in the West Country (the other is at Avonmouth, Bristol)
- It uses only air and natural microbes found within waste to bring about the decomposition process i.e. no chemicals are used
- By diverting waste away from landfill it saves Wiltshire Council money on landfill tax (currently £80 per tonne) Feed-In Tariffs are the main financial incentive to encourage uptake of renewable electricity generating technologies. You can be paid for the electricity you generate, even if you use it yourself, and for any surplus electricity you export to the grid. You also save money on your electricity bill because you use your own electricity.

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