

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Briefing

Rufford Energy Recovery Facility



Veolia Environmental Services has put forward a proposal for a new Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) - through the incineration of waste - on the site of the former Rufford Colliery near Rainworth. The development of an ERF forms part of the PFI waste management contract between Nottinghamshire County Council and Veolia, to help to reduce the waste going to landfill. This proposal is currently subject to a Public Inquiry which opened in October 2009 and has been adjourned until April 2010. Whilst Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust recognises the need for a more sustainable approach to waste management, it is seeking to ensure that new facilities minimise direct impacts on wildlife, and do not limit opportunities to re-connect and enhance the natural environment in the face of climate change.

Any proposals for development around Rainworth are of concern to the Wildlife Trust as they will impact on the heathland and woodland ecology of the area. This is significant because the area is of national and international importance, with one Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 10km of the proposed development. In addition, there are 12 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and one Local Nature Reserve within a 2km radius. The wider area of Sherwood meets the qualifying criteria for a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the 'Birds Directive', providing valuable habitat for breeding nightjar and woodlark.

The Wildlife Trust has objected to the development proposals for the ERF on the grounds that:

- The development would have significant adverse impacts on the area's ecology. In particular, the site is required by a pre-existing planning condition to be **restored to heathland and native woodland**. The development would be contrary to this and reduce the potential to create a robust complex of Sherwood habitats
- The development will **increase emissions of nitrogen compounds (NO_x)** over adjacent heathlands. Emissions levels are already high in the area and should be reduced not increased
- The development is inconsistent with the emerging **Sherwood Forest Regional Park** which aims to enhance the natural landscape assets to promote regeneration.

Key facts

Heathland is an important habitat internationally, with Great Britain now supporting 15% of Europe's lowland heathland.

Nottinghamshire's heathlands represent one of the UK's strongholds for this habitat, with targets to restore 1,000 ha by 2015.

The Wildlife Trust manages Rainworth Heath SSSI, which lies adjacent to the ERF site. The development would cause significant disturbance to the heath and prevent the quiet enjoyment of nature.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has consistently raised concerns over this proposal and will be represented at the forthcoming Public Inquiry

'Implicit in the Regional Park Proposal is the use of environmental enhancement as a mechanism for social and economic improvements.'

Sherwood Forest Regional Park Feasibility Study Report 2008

Is incineration the right way to deal with waste?

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust believes that our approach to waste should fit within the National Waste Strategy to move waste management up the hierarchy towards recycling, reuse and reduction. However, we believe that incineration can play a role in waste management, particularly where non-compostable or non-recyclable material is used and combined heat and power is utilised. Critical to this is the scale and location of such developments, which should be sited to avoid loss of or damage to important habitats and species. We believe this proposal falls short of these requirements.

Why is the land around Rufford Colliery so important?

Rufford Colliery sits in the heart of a complex of heathland sites within the former Sherwood Forest. Heathland is a nationally and internationally important habitat, identified for priority action within the UK and Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plans.

The availability of suitable sites for heathland restoration or re-creation is limited, and the Rufford Colliery site is strategically important as it provides the opportunity to connect existing heathland blocks and create a robust area that can cope with external influences such as climate change. This complex of sites contains nationally important populations of birds such as nightjar and woodlark, amphibians and reptiles including great-crested newt, slow worm and common lizard, and plants such as bee orchid.

For further information on Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust visit our website www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org

With nearly 11,000 members Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is the county's largest environmental charity run by local people for the benefit of local wildlife and wildlife habitats. Improving people's understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the natural world is fundamental to our work. We manage more than 60 nature reserves covering more than 2,000 acres, liaise with farmers and landowners to promote and encourage conservation stewardship, campaign for the protection of threatened species and habitats and work to influence government policy and decisions affecting the future of wildlife. Our efforts are part of a nationwide network of 47 local Wildlife Trusts working in partnership to protect our precious natural heritage.

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The Wildlife Trust believes that the existing planning conditions to restore the former colliery site to heathland should be upheld. We also believe that the proposed mitigation for the ERF development, involving translocation of lizards and restoration of adjacent land, does not adequately compensate for the loss of what could potentially become a significant block of re-connected heathland.

In addition, heathland is particularly sensitive to the raised levels of nitrogen compounds (NO_x), which increase soil fertility and growth of more vigorous species. Because of this threat to an internationally important habitat, we believe that emissions levels in the area should be reduced not increased.

Will the proposals for a new ERF fit with the development of a Sherwood Forest Regional Park?

We believe that the ERF proposals are contrary to the emerging ethos of the Sherwood Forest Regional Park. The underlying principle of the Regional Park has been described as *'the use of environmental enhancement as a mechanism for social and economic improvements within the Regional Park and wider sub-region.'* Sherwood Forest is an area of national and international importance that is recognised in the Regional Park objectives to enhance the natural environment and build on the tourism potential of the area.

We believe that proposals for the ERF would significantly reduce the ability of the Regional Park to reach its potential, and that development for the area should instead focus on sustainable tourism. **December 2009**