



Illogical system will lead to tip troubles

One of the best ideas to come out of government was the requirement on local authorities to provide centres for householders to dispose of household waste and recycling free of charge.

We have all come to rely on civic amenity tips such as Hop Oast near Horsham to dispose of the detritus of modern life from grass cuttings to the waste materials left over from do-it-yourself projects, and much, much more.

In recent years we have become more aware of the importance of recycling and learned to sort our waste into a number of different skips at the recycling centres. In turn, this has helped enormously to meet West Sussex County Council's recycling targets.

The staff at Hop Oast have become much more professional, and are always willing to offer help and advice to sort materials.

It is no exaggeration to say that its current success is a result of a willing and productive partnership between staff and users.

But now that success is under threat. WSCC, under the cosh from Government



Opening days and times are changing at Hop Oast

to deliver ever greater savings, is looking to save on the cost of operating civic amenity tips.

Over the summer the council consulted over proposals to reduce the opening hours. From October 1 Hop Oast will be closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and opening hours will be reduced to 10am to 5pm, extended to 7pm in summer.

On balance this did not seem unreasonable: possibly a little inconvenient, but we will get used to it and adjust our trips to the tip accordingly.

What I didn't realise until very recently is that from 1st October WSCC is also introducing charges for disposal of items that are not deemed to be 'household waste'.

So what items will we have to pay to dump? The list includes bricks, ceramic drainpipes, tiles, soil, DIY, rubble or hardcore, and turf. To dump these items will now cost you £4 for each 55x85cm reusable rubble bag.

Larger items such as cisterns, ceramic shower trays and, other items that won't fit in a bag, will be charged per item, but we haven't been told how much or how the charge will be determined. Car or van tyres will be £4 each.

The picture is further complicated by the definition of non-chargeable 'household waste' which, somewhat bizarrely, includes clay flower pots, grass cuttings, internal or external doors, radiators, fitted kitchen cupboards and flooring (except ceramic or stone).

Whoever dreamed this idea up cannot

have visited a tip in recent years. How on earth do they expect the public to understand such an illogical system?

Have they ever undertaken a moderately complicated DIY project themselves?

More important, how are the staff at the tips going to police such a system and what will it do to the current positive relationship between staff and users?

It also seems inevitable that some people will try to circumvent the charges either by including small quantities of such waste in their household collection or by fly tipping, either of which will have potentially damaging consequences and could cost a great deal to put right.

By the way, next time you go to the tip remember to take your debit or credit card because that is the only way you can pay.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns.

For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 261905.