

**Address by**

**Mr. John Gormley T.D.,**

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government**

**At the official opening of the**

**Dublin Local Authorities Materials Recovery Facility**

**at**

**Merrywell Industrial Estate, Ballymount Road Lower, Ballymount,**

**Dublin 12**

**on**

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2009 at 2.30pm.**

## Introduction

Good Afternoon Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor, Elected Representatives, Managers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be here in Ballymount this afternoon for the formal opening of this new regional Materials Recovery Facility. It's always gratifying to open facilities such as this , because I know how vital they are in meeting the challenge of how we manage our waste in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This particular development is a State-of-the Art facility that will serve the Dublin region for the next twenty years and represents a significant, and indeed a strategically important addition, to the waste management infrastructure at a regional level. It is of a size and scale – at 44,000 square feet – normally associated with mainland Europe and I would like to congratulate the 4 Dublin local authorities on their vision and ambition in purchasing the site and bringing this facility to completion.

I commend the contractor, CP Manufacturing (Europe) Limited, and the various subcontractors involved, the project management team led by Sharon McMahon and the consultants on the team for their accomplishment in completing this facility within two years of the start of construction.

I also wish to congratulate Greyhound Recycling and Recovery on their success in being appointed by the four Dublin Local Authorities to collect and process the recyclables in the Green Bin for the next three years and wish them well in their endeavours.

I am particularly pleased that the introduction of this facility has led to an improved service for the householders of Dublin, as for the first time all clean plastic, including plastic bags, can be placed in the Green Bin for collection.

### Background

Material Recovery Facilities are vital cogs in the whole recycling process and without them we would not have a Green Bin service. Their function is to separate the materials collected in the Green Bin into their various waste streams and bale them for further processing or recovery offsite.

This facility, using the most modern technology on the market, will have the capacity to process 100,000 tonnes of material each year. While, in view of the economic recession and the current difficulties in securing a market for recyclates, it must be recognised that demand will always be higher for high quality, properly segregated material. Therefore we all have a part to play in ensuring that we continue to present properly segregated and clean material in our green bins.

The end-product from this facility will be of the highest quality and I am confident that as the demand for recyclates picks up, there will be a ready market for recyclates of the quality that will be produced at Ballymount. I am actively engaged with the relevant stakeholders in addressing the current market difficulties and I have already announced that, as a one-off measure, I am allocating an additional €2 million from this year's Environment Fund allocations towards the subvention available to local authorities towards the operational costs incurred in the operation of their recycling facilities.

### Funding

My Department has provided funding, through both the Environment Fund and the Exchequer, of over €26million to assist in the development of this facility. I find it particularly gratifying to note that proceeds from

the plastic bag levy will fund the recycling of, amongst many other materials, plastic bags.

Ballymount is the largest single project that has been grant-aided in the area of waste infrastructure and, after seeing this facility, it is clear that it represents money well spent.

The grant assistance I have provided was part-funded by the European Union, through the European Regional Development Fund under the Waste Management Measure of the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of the EU in assisting the development of both this facility and the many other projects, ranging in scope and scale from bring banks, through civic amenity sites, composting facilities and biological treatment plants to the facility we are opening today, which has led to a dramatic improvement in the nationwide network of waste recycling facilities.

## Future Funding for Capital Waste Infrastructure Projects

We are living in unprecedented economic times and are now battling the most severe global economic depression since the period of the Wall Street Crash. While the downturn in the economic climate means we have less money to meet growing public expenditure demands this facility represents the type of investment that must continue to be prioritised.

It is a vital piece of infrastructure that will be of benefit to the people of Dublin for many years to come and represents the type of sustainable, clean, efficient and cost-effective waste management system that is a basic requirement to ensure, not only the quality of the environment, but sustainable growth and economic prosperity.

## Challenges ahead

This facility is an outstanding example of the considerable progress we have made in dealing with our waste in some areas, particularly in the last decade.

But there are even greater challenges which we have yet to deal with, particularly with respect to the landfill directive, under which we are committed to reducing the amount of waste going to landfill by 2010.

This is an enormous challenge, which I am sure none of you underestimate and which will require the type of ambitious and innovative thinking that has resulted in the establishment of this facility.

In particular technologies such as composting, and mechanical and biological treatment have potential to reduce the amounts of waste going to landfill and should be vigorously pursued.

### Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to commend all those involved in the establishment of this important facility and to wish the 4 Dublin local authorities and the operators of the facility, Greyhound Recycling and Recovery, every success with this project.