

E-mails

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the whole Burgos Today team and the one heading it for his efforts in creating such an uplifting local radio station and its new reliable and entertaining web page format.

Concerning the poll about the Human Evolution Museum & Complex Research whether it will become a magnet for tourists, I would like to point out that it is pointless to imagine that Burgos will turn into a great tourist center unless an international airport is built. Besides, they should also think about up-to-standard road and train links and appealing accommodation facilities. As to a replica of the Atapuerca site being built next to the Human Evolution Museum it would be advisable for the developing and sales of the Human Evolution Museum. If nothing is carried out, the Human Evolution Museum may only have a mild appeal.

Javier I would like to discuss Burgos bid as European capital of Culture 2016.

From my point of view, Burgos is like a diamond in the rough which still needs smoothening and polishing to become a great jewel. Others may be considering that Burgos is itself a real jewel, being our weak point not knowing how to sell it correctly and efficiently through overseas. You Know, and as we know, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder"^a. Therefore and despite the fact that both arguments are conflicting, both of them might be considered no so far wrong.

Northern Bypass

It is thanks to the perseverance and doggedness shown by Diario de Burgos that all burgaleses are daily reminded of the number of days, 1.083, which have accrued since the drilling of the Northern Bypass was halted. Three years back, a tunnel on the Northern Bypass caved in. There were no casualties but that incident brought its construction to a halt. Now some action is visible from a distance. We must be some hundred meters from where technicians are carrying out some on-the-spot testing of the kind of drilling machinery that will eventually be used when the drilling resumes. Back to the studio....

We saw in the local papers that a high official from the central government's office in Burgos was here paying a visit and trying to instil some excitement back into locals but she was unable to deliver the good news that everybody was waiting for: a concrete start day for the resumption of the drilling.

Well she did say that it will be imminent, and bearing in mind previous unmet promises and deadlines, she kept on the safe side by affirming that when drilling does resume, it will progress very rapidly towards its completion, "being a project that has given us all already too much of a headache".

Actually, it should not surprise us that everybody involved in tunnel-drilling in this country has overnight become extremely cautious as lately we have had a very negative record.

Well we all tend to be tarred with the same brush when there is trouble. I mean, this tunnel does not necessarily have to come up with the same difficulties as that in Catalonia.

More on the Northern Ring Road Project. Any time soon construction work will also commence on one of the most sensitive sections of the whole Northern Ring Road Project: the Villafria interface where it will connect to the N-I. Traffic diversions will have to be arranged and in place for quite some time.

Residents in the Villimar area can be relieved now as the opening of a link road, 1,300 meters in length, will ease traffic on the Poza de la Sal Regional Road by removing through traffic.

This new road progresses northwards and meets the Inner Relief Road and Alcalde Martin Cobos Street, this one taking most of traffic originating in the Villimar area.

Regional Public Works officials agree that this new road is a further step into the re-routing of the railway coming into being.

This was recorded on Friday, 10 May. We should then say that that report does not do justice to reality, well almost. As the press release from the central government office in Burgos reads as of yesterday, that is, Monday, 13 March, drilling work has resumed.

All is well that ends well, however, some may doubt that this tunnel will ever see the light. There were some workers at it but nothing like a frenzy of activity.

Some high officials from the Department of Public Works were adamant that they are determined to bring the construction of the bypass to its completion which they forecast will come ahead of schedule.

What makes them be so confident?

One of them was fast to reply: they are working on shifts round the clock. They predict almost boastingly that they will finish it up well ahead of schedule. However, what nobody knows is what deadline they have in mind.

It seems as if the delay has been caused by the whole Burgos Ring Road project coming back to the drawing board. On the design front, the deadlock was broken when it was decided that there should be a shift in the drilling system. At some stage, they even considered building an open-cut tunnel but it was rejected because of the environmental impact statement.

Biogas Plant

The waste-treatment plant and the biogas plant remain at the center of a controversy over claims of breach of contract. Burgos City Council Office for the Environment contends that FCC, Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas, was responsible not only for the construction of the waste facility but also for starting its various waste-disposal processes, and this task it failed to accomplish.

And the threat is the administrative proceedings instituted against FCC, which might include some cash penalties and a disqualification. It must be remembered that at the last City Council meeting held, all parties agreed that the contract given to FCC should be terminated.

Meanwhile, a contract to operate the plants will be out to tender. Let's see what our environment correspondents have to say.

Burgos City Council Office for the Environment have drawn up some tender documents that will be made public in due time. Which contract is this Office putting out to tender, Margarita?

The contract being put out to tender is the contract for the operation of both the waste-treatment plant and the biogas plant in the eco-park.

Arantxa, are these tender documents which hopefully, as I said, will shortly be made public, are they likely to contain specific terms?

No, they contain no specific terms. They are waiting for the offers proposed by bidding companies. The selected company will enter into a contract for six years.

All right, so the contract will be a six-year one, plus

... a three-year extension.

So you said that the aim in having worded these terms in very broad terms is that they hope that bidding contractors will suggest, will come up with their own proposals. What controversy surrounds the biogas plant, Yolanda?

This company FCC has to make this plant operational.

And has it, Gonzalo?

No they haven't made it operational and they blame there is not enough raw material to make it operational.

Whichever company is awarded the contract to run the plants will have to first tackle the issue of making the biogas plant operational. The enormous costs, ... who will afford them, Merche?

The new bidding company. On the other hand, FCC have to pay some fines.

Right, those are the penalties that have been leaked to the press, that will be imposed. There is a 600,000 euro penalty and that's for what, Margarita?

A serious breach of contract.

What they consider a serious breach of contract and there was a deposit which was handed in in due time by FCC. That amounted to which, how much, Yolanda? The deposit amounted to ...

370,000 euro

That deposit will be retained and I think that there is probably more penalties such as this disqualification, for how long, Arantxa?

For a year.

For a year and what does it mean for FCC?

They can't give any contract.

Right, they cannot be given any contract by Burgos City Council, construction or otherwise.

Energy-savers

In the energy-saving debate many are the proposals which evoke groans and applause from all corners. Some individuals, particularly those who feel that those proposals demand courses of action they had not anticipated, feel infuriated by them. They claim they are blatantly unreasonable or unworkable.

Others are delighted. I guess that every time any government or government agency suggests we should cut down on our consumption of natural resources or that we should save energy and conserve water, they should feel their way in and above all, sound very convincing. All of the initiatives are bound to demand some degree of effort in the form of tightening one's belt or skimping on commodities they had thought they couldn't do without.

I hope that this debate will shed some light upon this issue. I'll be asking your opinions about some initiatives that have been hinted at may in the near future.

Isabel, how about stopping this disposability madness, as some experts have called it, and reintroduce returnable cans or bottles for soft-drinks?

I think it should be great

It should be great news for most of us. As consumers, let's think of bar owners first and stores. The fact that they will have to increase, say if many bottles and containers returnable come back to them, they will have to increase their storage capability. Will that be good news to them? I'm sure bar owners and store owners have frowned upon this initiative because if we make cans and bottles returnable they face being flooded by these cans and bottles returned.

Sure they will have to invest in bigger storage and maybe some warehouses and they will not be able to afford it.

They will not be able to afford it, unless the government provides grants.

Victoria, can you picture yourself or any of your relatives and friends making two trips, one to purchase a container, a bottle of , say, Coca-Cola, and another trip to return it?

It think it is offputting.

It is really offputting, probably for both as Isabel suggested, for both customer it has you coming back to the store or bar to return it and offputting for the shop owner because he/she will have to build extra space.

Let's look at the bottle being returned and being snatched off the counter by the bar tender. Now, that will go into the crate and then .. what's the fate of that returned bottle, Merche?

For me we have to think of our future, because we are polluting the Earth every day.

Right, a positive step for the environment although we may have to take that extra burden of returning bottles. How about if you paid a reimbursable deposit on soft-drink bottles, that being an amount of money, that is, you get a refund, your money back when you return the bottle. Should that help customers feel prompted to overcome that reluctance to return the bottle.

Maybe if the quantity is high enough. I think that consumers should have ...

Yeah, I know what you mean incentives to return the bottle, such as Actually, there could be a reduction in price rather than a deposit, is it?

Yeah.

So incentives Isabel, it might be very difficult to even think of specific, concrete initiatives in that regard, other than price-reduction. But who'll have to pay that margin that you don't pay? Because manufacturers and bottlers cannot lose that money. Will it have to be the government?

The whole society must be concerned about this, so the whole society should pay for this.

You were saying off air, Victoria, that rather than cash incentives in the form of discounts or price reduction we should, as a society, be more concerned about educating people.

Yeah, because it's very difficult to change the behaviour of other people as they are more reluctant to change, instilling young people these concerns.

Right instilling these concerns into young people. And do you believe that young people will readily adapt to these changes that you We can be inspirational that we can make them change.

Well, I think that if they are not, who can?

Very good, if they can't who will. Move on to another question that may sound outlandish to you, but I have seen it advertised in Japanese websites in United States. It would be some sort of disposable aluminium food packages with electric plugs. So you plug it in, you cook it or you heat it, you eat the food and throw it away. Very sophisticated but will it catch on in Spain, Isabel? Will this be popular in Spain?

It depends on the price. Maybe these could be quite expensive and many people could not afford it.