

PRESS RELEASE

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FEARS FOR OVERCAPACITY IN UK WASTE INCINERATION PLANTS

“NYCC waste plant near Harrogate “double the capacity required”?”

Hot on the heels of the government’s review of waste policies in England, announced last week, come concerns from UK environmentalists and campaigners about the prospect of over-capacity with the large number of new waste incinerators in the pipeline.

There are plans for a further 65 potential waste incinerators to add to the existing 25 in the UK, nine in Scotland and one in Wales. Friends of the Earth fear that the UK could end up like Europe where some countries are finding they no longer have sufficient waste to keep incinerators going, resulting in recycling rates being restricted. Overcapacity in the stock of waste incinerators in Germany and the Netherlands has led to the importation of waste from other EU countries. Campaigners point out that with official statistics showing collected municipal waste levels now in decline, as the public increases recycling, there is a very real possibility of over-capacity for incinerators in the UK.

Similar fears have been voiced by campaigners in North Yorkshire over council plans for large scale incineration in the NYCC waste strategy plan. “This is one of several major concerns we have had about the plan for an incinerator at the proposed 320,000 tonnes waste site at Allerton Quarry, near Harrogate,” said Steve Wright, chairman of NYWAG (North Yorkshire Waste Action Group). “It has been clear from the beginning, to anyone who has gone into the NYCC waste strategy plan in detail, that overcapacity has been built into the project

from the outset. This can't be accounted for by realistic future waste tonnage or population growth in North Yorkshire, as NYCC and the contractor, Amey Cespa, have tried to claim.”

“The Coalition Government waste review will consider “how to ensure the right contribution of energy from waste, including delivery of a step change in generation from anaerobic digestion’ (a method of processing biological waste that generates methane which can be used to produce power and heat, as well as a soil improver). “So why” says Steve Wright “are there plans to saddle North Yorkshire with a 25 year contract for 90% of its waste to go to a hugely expensive, environmentally-unfriendly, outdated method such as incineration?”

“By the time the AmeyCespa 320,000 tonnes waste site opens in 2014 households in North Yorkshire will be producing 100,000 tonnes less than the facility capacity “ says Antony Long, chairman of Marton cum Grafton parish council, who has done considerable research into the proposed waste project. “Amey Cespa say that this shortfall will be made up with commercial waste but the details of this are not known and have not been made public, either to the ratepayers or to their elected representatives, the North Yorkshire county councillors.”

Mr Long points out that there is no guarantee that commercial waste would go to Allerton Park, given the growing competition for cheaper ways of handling waste and that this could be a huge risk to North Yorkshire County Council. He said “The fees charged by incineration are already significantly higher than those charged by other waste treatment facilities, including those that recycle at a significantly higher rate. This reflects the huge capital costs of an incinerator plus the expensive financial terms of the Private Finance Initiatives that underpin so many of these schemes, including this one”.

“In any case “said Antony Long “why should the ratepayers pay for a commercial facility and why has this not been made public knowledge? We’ve looked at the numbers and have concluded that we only need a facility half the size of that proposed to deal with our household waste by 2020, and that could mean half the cost. These more realistic levels of waste can be managed by using more capacity for the environmentally-friendly Anaerobic Digestion or other methods”.

Campaigners believe that over-capacity in the UK incineration market therefore poses a real threat at both national and regional levels. They point out that North Yorkshire’s approach to their waste problem is one that fails to recognise the changing market conditions, including the provision of significant new capacity within neighbouring counties. At a time when North Yorkshire County Council faces severe financial cutbacks and the new Government is committed to a zero waste economy, campaigners are demanding for a fundamental review of the North Yorkshire waste strategy.

“On October 13th North Yorkshire’s county councillors will be asked to approve this unsound, over-scaled and financially disastrous project which is based on old data, huge capital costs and rich profits for AmeyGespa,” said Antony Long.

(Text 750 words)

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