

To: Chief Executive of Hertfordshire County Council - John Wood

Copied particularly to:

Executive Member - Richard Thake

Leader of the Council - Rob Gordon

Chief Legal Officer & Monitoring Officer - Kathryn Pettitt

Councillor for Letchworth South division - Terry Hone

Waste Management officers - Simon Aries and Matthew King

Co-ordinator of the Herts. Waste Partnership - Duncan Jones

and to all county councillors

From: Dr John Webb FRGS, 1 Meadow Way, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 3JB

On behalf of: Herts. WithOut Waste, a community group that seeks to promote a circular economy

We work closely with the UK Without Incineration Network (UKWIN), Friends of the Earth and the Transition Network

We seek to engage with all interested parties, especially community groups.

We have no party political allegiance nor are we a campaigning group.

Dear John Wood,

Waste Management - The Way Ahead

On 14th March the Cabinet arrived at its decision primarily on economic and contractual grounds, based on the Waste Management Officer's Report on behalf of the Council's Waste Disposal Authority function. Now we are asking the Council urgently to consider the implied consequences of that decision at the strategic level of its Constitution, the policy Framework (especially the Waste Local Plan) and precedents (especially the New Barnfield proposal).

Below are some questions to help councillors to shift their attention from the WDA request to the long term implications and toward more sustainable alternatives.

Kind regards,

John Webb
for HertsWOW
07960 825668

Key points / questions

Are you aware that...?

1. There are major risks to the deliverability of the proposal in the RPP.*
2. If it were to be delivered, there would be further major risks as a result of future changes during such a long period of operation.*
3. It uses incineration, which is toward the bottom level of the Waste Hierarchy. Instead the county's surplus materials should be steered into a circular economy.
4. The capacity of the proposed plant that is not used by the Council would serve as a

merchant facility on the open market, to make Hertfordshire a mass disposal centre for London and farther afield.

5. The proposed facility would have to incinerate almost 12.8 million tonnes over the rated 40 years of operation.
6. Air quality considerations - especially along the polluted Lee Valley where the incinerator would be situated.**
7. Landfilling and landraising of inert materials is benign. The Landfill Tax regime recognises this by charging (from 1st April 2016) a Lower Rate of £2.65/tonne (rather than the Standard Rate of £84.40/tonne for mixed or biodegradable waste).
8. A large new landfill capacity is arising in Hertfordshire, sufficient for the Council's needs for landfilling of inert material and properly treated biological waste for the foreseeable future.
9. In terms of current technologies, mechanical biological treatment (MBT) and anaerobic digestion (AD) would best suit that purpose.
10. We are as opposed as is Herts. CC to the landfilling of untreated biological waste, however there is good evidence from the UK Government's own departments that in the short to medium term, using MBT-AD to treat such waste before landfilling is an environmentally superior option to incineration.
11. If the councils of the Herts. Waste Partnership were empowered to act in a unitary manner for their waste collection and treatment functions, a rate of diversion from disposal of 75% or more could be achieved.
12. This approach would bypass the need for re-procurement of a large, central facility since multiple plants could be located in industrial and agricultural sites near to the clusters of large towns.
13. It could be based on medium term contracts to provide flexibility for upgrades in collections, waste stream compositions and processing technologies, while providing jobs across the county and an outstanding example of leadership toward a circular economy in the East of England.

*Examples of risks to the County Council's exercise of its Waste Management function include:

- Concerns about the high capital costs (with high financing costs by Veolia) and significant implications for council tax levels.
- Concerns about potential extra costs and liabilities to HCC (or which Veolia could offload to HCC) regarding, for example.
 - The monopoly position that the RPP gives the contractor for the proposed 30 years of operational service to the County Council.
 - Planning permission delays and disputes (*see below*).
 - Future requirements for more rigorous and costly testing of Incinerator Bottom Ash generated by the facility; along with extra costs of disposing of this ash.
- Risks of protracted disputes and local protests regarding this proposed facility (e.g. for planning permission, public inquiry € as at New Barnfield).
- Dangers of wasting yet more time in pursuing an approach that the New Barnfield precedent shows is not appropriate, will not work and is not the best option. Better to work now collaboratively with all the parties and stakeholders concerned to derive a more sustainable and financially and environmentally better waste management strategy.
- The possibility of an incinerator tax being introduced to stop the current perverse incentive to incinerate materials which could actually be recycled if the appropriate collection systems were in place, in a move to make the circular economy a reality.

- The removal of Renewable Obligations Certificates (ROCs) from efw incinerators as the science and calculations by Tim Searchinger from Princeton University and published in the respected Science Journal "Nature"™ now shows that the burning of biomass is not "carbon neutral"™, and that efw incinerators themselves are actually high carbon emitters contrary to the industry's claims.
- The possibility of a reduced landfill tax for treated biological waste.
- The inevitable reduction in residual waste as the production of waste becomes decoupled from economic growth and as waste collection systems improve.

**Besides the ultrafine particulates there would be emissions of NOx and low level ozone. The incinerator would be emitting to air around 700 tonnes of gases & particles from the burning of approx. 1,000 tonnes of waste per day (1,000 tonnes in, less the bottom ash and filtered out toxic particles.) This is not just a matter for the Environment Agency as the permitting agent in the planning stage. In terms of strategy and risks, it involves the Council's duty to act responsibly at the earliest stage of consideration.
