

Statement to Full Council Meeting 4/12/07

3 December 2007

Bristol Friends of the Earth are concerned that the West of England Partnership is moving us closer towards a return to mass incineration for Bristol's residual waste.

On 18 December, the West of England Waste Management & Planning Strategy Board is likely to recommend that three alternative plans for dealing with the West of England's residual waste are forwarded for approval by the respective authorities, to later be put out for public consultation in March 2008.

The three plans currently on the table all include a strong reliance on incinerator-based 'energy from waste' (EfW) for disposing of our residual municipal waste.

These proposed 'solutions' are completely at odds with the conclusions of the Rubbish or Resource consultation, that found a strong consensus amongst respondents that:

- We should reduce, reuse and recycle much more
- Any waste disposal technology should be selected with an aim to reduce our carbon footprint
- We should reduce our 'waste miles' (the distance that waste is transported to disposal site)
- We should have small, local facilities, close to where waste is produced
- We should have relatively short-term, flexible contracts with waste contractors, so we can adapt to decreasing waste streams, and take advantage of new technologies.

The Citizens' Jury has reinforced these views, supporting an intensive drive to increase recycling rates, and to decrease the volume of waste produced in Bristol.

Councillor Bradshaw's presentation at the recent Friends of the Earth seminar 'Don't waste your climate', demonstrated how Bristol was able to quickly increase the rate of recycling from 18 to 37%. Councillor Bradshaw's presentation was part of an event in favour of the Waste Framework Directive, which would see 50% recycling targets across Europe. Bristol Friends of the Earth would welcome a swift adoption of this 50% target in Bristol, with a longer-term target of 70%.

In the light of this support for boosting recycling in Bristol, why would we consider a return to 'the bad old days' of burning our waste?

Incineration-based 'energy from waste' plants:

- **Tie Councils into long term contracts, where they have to guarantee to supply high volumes of waste, for periods of 25 years or longer. This provides a disincentive to increasing recycling rates, as the EfW plant needs to be constantly fed. Contracts often carry a financial penalty for under-supply of waste. Councils that have opted for incineration, have correspondingly low recycling rates.**
- Turn harmless waste into toxic ash residue, which has to be disposed of to hazardous landfill.
- Do not generate 'green' or 'renewable' forms of electricity. Burning plastics is just burning another fossil fuel, and in terms of climate change impact, incineration-based EfW performs badly compared to other technologies.
- Create very few jobs, compared to recycling and composting-based processes.
- Have proved to be operationally unreliable.

We would urge Bristol City Council to work with its partners in the West of England to come up with a better solution, or to adopt its own strategy that will help support the work that has been done to boost recycling in the city – rather than something that will undo our progress so far.

Pip Sheard, on behalf of Bristol Friends of the Earth