

WOOD WASTE LANDFILL RESTRICTIONS IN ENGLAND – BCAG SUBMISSION

INTRODUCTION

The Breathe Clean Air Group of Urmston, Greater Manchester was set up in September 2010 to stop the construction and operation of the Barton Renewable Energy Plant in Davyhulme, Greater Manchester. This incinerator plans to burn waste wood and solid recovered fuel including plastics.

The Group's members have read many research papers about burning biomass and has made contact with many other campaign groups connected with burning biomass, incineration and wood storage in the UK and USA.

Our major concern with this consultation document is that it only looks at the economic advantages of waste wood and has no regard for health risks associated with storing and burning waste wood as biomass.

WASTE HIERARCHY

We agree with the waste hierarchy, particularly re-use, recycling and composting of waste materials. This has many economic benefits, but above all, it appears to be the healthiest and safest option. Landfill is the last option, but it should be recognised that it is the usual place for the disposal of toxic fly ash and bottom ash from incineration.

GREENHOUSE GASES

You make the point that wood buried in landfill will produce methane. This is true, and many landfill sites burn the methane, which of course produces carbon dioxide. However, methane production is very slow, particularly if the wood is treated with preservatives. Compare this with the vast amounts of carbon dioxide that is emitted constantly from a biomass incinerator. Carbon dioxide is a more serious greenhouse gas than methane. In fact burning wood produces 50% more carbon dioxide than burning coal and 330% more carbon dioxide than burning natural gas.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

DEFRA really has to be part of a "joined-up" Government. It needs to consider health implications. You might see the economic advantages of burning wood to create energy, but ignore the health impacts, both the cost to the Department of Health, the NHS and local Social Services, and the human cost of suffering and premature death. (Or perhaps you are in alliance with the Department of Work and Pensions and see the advantage in paying shorter pensions if people die young)!

Waste wood from construction and demolition sites and industry will be treated with toxic heavy metals such as arsenic, chromium and copper and may be protected with lead paint. Other protection could include creosote or halide based fire protection. Waste wood board can contain resins or acrylics. Pallets may have absorbed spillages of every chemical known to man.

Burning waste wood and other waste (especially plastics) can emit toxic heavy metals, dioxins, PAHs, VOCs and Particulate Matter - PM10, PM2.5, PM1 and nanoparticles. Recent scientific/medial research papers link this pollution to asthma, COPD, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, Alzheimer's disease and premature death. PM1 particulates can cross the lung/blood membrane and circulate throughout the body and be deposited in various organs causing disease.

Dioxins, which are accidentally produced when organic material and chlorides react in a low temperature burning biomass plant, can lodge in fatty tissue causing cancer. Dioxins will settle in breast milk and be passed on to a vulnerable baby. The HPA has said that food that has been grown/produced near an incinerator should not be eaten as it may contain dioxins.

The storage of waste wood creates wood-dust which is carcinogenic and will cause asthma and respiratory distress.

CONCLUSION AND WARNING

Burning wood and biomass is dangerous. If you ignore the research you will be responsible for the next "epidemic" as per asbestos and DDT. The Minister who signs this paper will be held responsible for condemning millions of people to suffer and go to an early grave. DO NOT allow waste wood to be burnt and place strong restrictions on companies that store waste wood.