



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Catherine West MP
House of Commons
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Your ref: ZA8270
Our ref: MC2020/13266/MP

3 August 2020

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your letter of 1 June to the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of your constituents about waste incineration facilities. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and I apologise for the delay in doing so. Defra is currently dealing with high volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. Thank you for your understanding during this challenging time.

The Government's Resources and Waste Strategy, published in 2018, sets out how we will minimise the damage caused to our natural environment by reducing and managing waste safely and carefully. Our ambition for the future of waste management in England is to ensure we preserve material resources through a reduction in the generation of waste and by moving towards a circular economy. We also want to manage any residual waste in a way that maximises its value as a resource whilst minimising environmental impacts.

Our view is that energy from waste should not compete with greater waste prevention, re-use or recycling; it does, however, play an important role in diverting waste from landfill and is the best management option for most residual waste.

New development proposals for energy from waste treatment facilities will require planning permission. Careful consideration is given to the siting of the plant against a number of key criteria, including environmental and amenity impact, before planning permission is granted. Whether or not to grant planning permissions is the responsibility of the planning authorities.

All energy from waste plants in England are regulated by the Environment Agency (EA) and must comply with the strict emission limits set down in legislation. The EA assesses the emissions from new energy from waste plants as part of its permitting process, and consults Public Health England on every application it receives. The EA will not issue an environmental permit if the proposed plant will have a significant impact on the environment or harm human health.

Every application for a new plant is assessed by the EA to ensure it will use the best available techniques to minimise emissions, and that it will not have a significant effect on local air quality. Public Health England's position is that modern, well run and regulated municipal waste incinerators are not a significant risk to public health.

With regard to recycling initiatives generally, we want to make recycling easier and ensure that there is a comprehensive, consistent service across England. This will help to reduce confusion with recycling, ensure that there is more recycled material in the products we buy and that the UK recycling industry grows. It would also constitute a significant step towards meeting our 25 Year Environment Plan commitment to eliminate avoidable waste by 2050 and contribute towards meeting recycling targets, including our target of 65% of municipal (household-like) waste to be recycled by 2035.

In 2019 we consulted on 'Consistency in Household and Business Recycling Collections in England' and asked for views on introducing a core set of materials to be collected by local authorities for recycling from households across England. This core set included paper and card; plastic; glass; metal; food waste and garden waste.

Following support at public consultation, the Environment Bill stipulates that all local authorities in England must make arrangements for these materials to be collected from households. We are also looking closely at additional materials that could be included in the core set of recyclable materials, including food and drink cartons. We will be seeking input from stakeholders to develop proposals ahead of our second consultation.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact the Secretary of State about this important issue.



REBECCA POW MP