

Binn Farm Newsletter, 20.12.09 – FRAUDULENT NEW WASTE PLAN IN PERTH & KINROSS

Dear Binn Farm Campaigner

I have just read the Council's new [Draft Waste Plan](#), which is currently open to consultation. I am sad to say that it is one of the most disingenuous and fraudulent documents I have ever read. From start to finish it is riddled with half-truths and outright misinformation, clearly designed to create the false impression that the Council urgently needs the new incinerator proposed for Binn Farm. In this letter I shall address some of the more outrageous claims that are made in the Plan.

First, the Plan states at page 9:

"The original proposal in the Plan was for this Council to utilise the energy from waste facility in Dundee (operated by Dundee Energy Recycling Limited) for residual waste treatment. *This has not been possible in practice, as there was insufficient operational capacity at the plant.*"

However as the following chart shows, the DERL incinerator has consistently run at well below its capacity of 120,000 tonnes per annum. The chart also shows that the Council is now sending less than 1% of its waste to DERL. Is this consistent with its claim to need new incineration facilities?

Amount of waste incinerated by Tayside waste authorities at DERL incinerator (figures from SEPA – [click here](#))

	2001-2	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8
Dundee	50692	42047	39191	40764	44250	53034	58390
Angus	19330	19730	15563	15262	17404	9450	18256
P&K	1052	1245	1499	1214	1461	987	804
Totals	71074	63022	56253	57240	63115	63471	77450

Intriguingly, in June 2005 the Head of Environmental Services stated "Dundee City Council officers should be contacted regarding their plans to step down Dundee's use of the incinerator" (click [here](#) to see quote in context). No such contact was made, and subsequently Dundee's use of the DERL incinerator has risen rapidly. Nevertheless DERL is still working well below its full capacity.

The second of the more fictional claims in the Draft Waste Plan concerns the potential threat of fines against the Council for failing to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill (as required under the landfill allowance scheme). The plan states at page 14:

"If the landfill allowance scheme was re-introduced this Council would start to face penalties as early as 2012, dependent on waste growth. Without the Council having access to residual waste treatment, LAS penalties will increase to between £1 million to £3 million per annum by 2020, again dependent on waste growth."

Back in 2006 the Head of Development Standards claimed that without the new incinerator the Council would face fines of £5.7m per annum. This was the lie that prompted the Development Control Committee to award planning consent for the Binn Farm incinerator. However even the new figure of between £1 million and £3 million is completely false. The Landfill Allowance Scheme only applies to the biodegradable portion of municipal waste, i.e. the portion that can rot and produce methane if it is sent to landfill. Biodegradable waste consists mainly of paper, card, fabric, food and garden waste, nearly all of which can be recycled or composted at a fraction of the cost of incineration. This begs the question, why has the Council not implemented the plan it announced in 2008 to seek new composting and anaerobic digestion facilities (Bruce Reekie, the Council's Waste Plan Coordinator, told me that the Council would put contracts out to tender in August last year)?

As for non-biodegradable waste, more and more of this is becoming recyclable such as batteries and Tetrapak drinks cartons. Much more could be recycled if there was the political will, such as yoghurt cartons, plastic bags and fruit punnets (plastic bags and film alone make up 12.77% of waste in Perth and Kinross). However if there is a big shiny new incinerator at Binn Farm, that is where they will go instead. According to Friends of the Earth

recycling plastics saves five times as much energy as can be retrieved from incineration. Therefore burning this material will be a grotesque waste of resources.

In fact, recycling rates are rising exponentially across the UK, with two councils in England (South Oxfordshire and Rochford) already breaking the 70% barrier. It is possible that within a few years these Councils will achieve nearly 100% recycling, leaving nothing to be burnt at all.

Incidentally as this table shows, plastics account for almost a fifth of waste in Perth and Kinross. Even with the new three-bin recycling system the Council will only be recycling a tiny fraction of this.

Figures for 2008, provided by Bruce Reekie

Material	Percentage of total for 2007/8 (105,900 tonnes)	Weight (tonnes)
Film/Carrier bags (type 4)	12.77%	13536
PET (Type 1) plastic	1.50%	1590
PP (Type 5) plastic	2.11%	2237
Plastics – Other (Type 7)	1.67%	1770
PVC (Type 3)	0.85%	901
PS (Type 6)	0.39%	413
Totals	19.29%	20447

Landfill is not the enemy

The Plan acknowledges that the Government will not allow the Council to burn 60,000 tonnes of waste per annum as it claimed it needed to in 2006 and that it will have to restrict the amount it burns to 26,478 tonnes each year. Dundee City Council will also have to reduce the amount of waste it burns, thereby freeing up further capacity at the DERL incinerator.

However the Plan offers no explanation as to why the Council needs to burn its residual waste at all. For a start it will contain almost no biodegradable waste, except for a few old shoes and bits of furniture, and it will therefore be quite safe to landfill. Furthermore the cost of incineration has risen sharply in recent years, to as much as £141 per tonne for the type of relatively small facility proposed for Binn Farm – see [WRAP Gate Fees Report 2009](#).

The Plan does its best to scare its target audience (Councillors) with the threat of annual increases in landfill tax. However this is completely bogus. No-one seriously believes that the Government would mindlessly penalise local authorities that were clearly doing their best to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. Also, don't forget that the landfill tax remains in the public purse, and can be disbursed back to Councils for the purpose of increasing recycling. By contrast the money we will pay for incineration will go to the French multinational Suez.

Last but not least, the Plan states that the Council will tie itself to a minimum 20-year contract with a single firm – *almost certainly SITA* – to deal with (i.e. burn) its residual waste. This is insanity. If the council commits itself to provide 26,000 tonnes of rubbish each year for an incinerator at up to £141 per tonne, it will be crucified financially, and will gravely undermine recycling. Dumfries and Galloway Council has followed this disastrous route and has instructed householders not to bother separating their waste. Instead it all now goes to a sorting facility where all plastic and paper is turned into fuel stock for its new waste burner.

Lastly, a message to elected members of Perth & Kinross Council – I beseech you, do all in your power to stop your pyromaniac waste officers from taking the Council down the disastrous route of incineration, and press for the Council's total disavowal of all forms of waste burning.

Yours sincerely



Michael Gallagher
33 Precinct Street

Coupar Angus
Perthshire
PH13 9DG.

p.s. Dundee City Council has burned approximately 400,000 tonnes of rubbish at the DERL incinerator since it was built in 2000. At the time it managed to negotiate a "level playing field" subsidy, whereby the Government would pay half of the £56 per tonne that the Council was to be charged. Although this has saved Dundee a total of £4.5 million since 2000 (when compared to landfill), the cost to the public purse has been £14.4 million higher overall.