

Binn Farm Newsletter – polytunnels under scrutiny, 9 February 2010

Dear Binn Farm campaigner

I hear that the polytunnel meeting on 3 February was a lively affair. Do you, or anyone you know, have photos of the meeting? This would be good to put on the TEAG website, and on the new [GAINS website](#) (Green Alternatives to Incineration in Scotland).

I was delighted to read that a new Abernethy Action Group is getting involved in the campaign against the Binn Farm incinerator. This is great news, because TEAG (the Tayside Environmental Action Group) has become somewhat moribund of late. If you know who is running the new group, please let them know that I would be glad to help out - e.g. perhaps alter the TEAG website to the needs/identity of the new group.

Best wishes,

Michael Gallagher, [Tayside Environmental Action Group](#)

p.s. here are a couple of items from the Perthshire Advertiser that caught my attention:

Polytunnel plan sparks new incinerator worry

By Alison Anderson, Perthshire Advertiser, Tuesday 9 February 2010

PERTSHIRE villagers living close to the Ochil Hills yesterday reacted angrily to plans to extend waste disposal operations in the area.

A packed meeting in Abernethy's Masonic Hall heard representatives from SITA UK, the company which runs the Binn Farm operation, explain their plans to create a polytunnel fruit and vegetable growing operation over 144 hectares, harnessing heat from its planned waste to energy plant.

Planning permission for the hugely controversial incinerator was granted by Perth and Kinross Council in December, 2006.

But a spokesperson for Abernethy Action Group voiced deep concerns over a number of issues relating not only to SITA's proposals but also to the existing landfill operation at Binn, Glenfarg.

He also highlighted the lack of trust between the community and SITA. Noxious smells have regularly enveloped Abernethy since the Binn landfill site was created some 15 years ago.

It is SITA's lack of action over this highly contentious issue which the spokesman stressed led to suspicions over its plans for future development at the Binn.

"SITA cannot even run a hole in the ground, so why should the same company be allowed to run an incinerator?" questioned the spokesman.

"There is no trust. For all these years we have had problems with the landfill and nothing changes. In fact on Wednesday morning the smell in parts of the village was particularly bad."

Echoing the action group spokesman's criticism, another Abernethy resident who attended the meeting commented: "The landfill has been there for 15 years and we have been told since the first year that the smell problem would be solved.

"That has not happened. The stink is not nice but there are also fears of its toxic effects, especially on children.

"Now the company is going to operate an incinerator, which is in the process of getting a

licence.

"But to get that licence they have to comply with new legislation to harness heat from an incinerator. That is why they are planning the polytunnels.

"We do not think industry and agriculture so close together is a good idea. Nobody at the meeting said they would eat food grown in the shadow of an incinerator."

The Abernethy Action Group spokesperson urged concerned members of the public to express their views when the polytunnels planning application is submitted to Perth and Kinross Council - this is expected to be in around four to six weeks according to the SITA representatives

Binn Farm is not the only thing that stinks - letter to the Perthshire Advertiser, Tuesday February 2nd 2010

Dear Editor, - In December 2006 planning permission was given in Perth for an energy-from-waste plant at Binn Farm near Abemethy.

At that meeting it was clear from Councillor Lorraine Cadell's remarks about the many who had objected that their views were to be swept aside and not allowed to impede development of the site.

Of course Cllr Cadell and the rest of the politicians found the same arguments as ours quite compelling in their rejection of the Shore Road incinerator.

Funny, that. We obviously should have created merry hell as people did in Perth last year.

Abemethy's objections were not just NIMBY-ism. For the past 15 years the landfill, and later the composting plant too, have been inflicting an unpleasant and sometimes foul stench on the village.

SEPA, the environment protection agency has simply not done what it says on the tin.

Normally a business that breached the terms of its licence even a fraction of the times these plants have would have been shut down long ago.

It would seem that national and local governments refuse to let that happen to the Binn operators.

Furthermore, the scaremongering about financial penalties for landfills is a red herring - there is no need to incur such fines if the existing waste plans are followed. Baldovie incinerator in Dundee is supposed to take all Tayside's burnable waste, yet it is underused.

At the same time Perth and Kinross is reducing the amount it sends to Baldovie. It's not need or logic that's being followed here - it's money. Local domestic waste would never justify an incinerator at Binn; it will be industrial waste that fills the coffers, just as it already fills the landfill.

The fact is that the landowner and businesses at Binn stand to make even more money than at present if more development takes place. And who knows how much Perth and Kinross Council is already making out of the rubbish delivered daily to Binn from far-flung parts of the country?

The latest wheeze, in order to comply with recent legislation, is to grow delicate crops in polytunnels at Binn, so that a certain amount of the heat from our old friend incinerator is seen to be put to some use. So polytunnels are planned in order to help justify the burner. Mind you, some of us really don't fancy eating stuff grown beside a landfill, an animal waste composting plant and an incinerator, but that may be a matter of taste.

Councillors had a presentation of this plan about 10 months ago, Bridge of Earn had one on December 14, and Strathmiglo on January 11. Abemethy, the village most affected already by operations at Binn, was not on the original "consultation" list. The village was granted an audience only because the secretary of the community council asked for one. The presenting team accepted the invitation on December 14.

Then in early January, John Ferguson, who seems to be the main presenter, called off the meeting, citing a conflict of interest, i.e. that until January 25 he would still be an employee of SEPA, despite working for Binn too for many months! Oddly enough, this had never bothered him before, and indeed after calling off Abernethy's first date it didn't bother him on January 11 when he presented polytunnel plans at Strathmiglo.

Such, it appears, is the moral framework followed by the "public" watchdog, SEPA. Protection of whom?

One last concern: it is almost impossible to find out details, but we understand that there are two serious events at present under investigation at Binn. Needless to say, Abernethy Community Council was not informed that anything was amiss. And as low tech seems to cause the operators so many problems, what chance of an efficiently-run incinerator? Topography, prevailing wind and general atmospheric conditions would bring incinerator exhaust into the village as surely as it brings the other gases at present, if there were an incident.

All of the above amply demonstrates that the inhabitants of Abernethy are being treated with contempt. Given the impact of the Binn Farm site on the village already, the public meeting at the Masonic Hall, Abemethy on February 3, is an important opportunity for the community to have its say. The Binn Farm site itself is not the only thing that stinks.

Abemethy Action Group.