

European Landfill Fines in Perth and Kinross?

One of the main reasons that Perth & Kinross Council is happy to allow the construction of a big new waste incinerator at Binn Farm is that they claim it will make it easier to avoid incurring large fines under the terms of the European Landfill Directive. This imposes targets on local authorities to reduce the amount of Biodegradable Municipal Waste (BMW) they send to landfill. These targets are as follows:-

75% of 1995 levels by 2010

50% of 1995 levels by 2013

35% of 1995 levels by 2020

The Scottish Executive has translated these targets into tonnages, allowing Perth & Kinross to landfill no more than 38,990 tonnes of BMW in 2010 ([Scottish Executive Guidance: April 2007 – Annex B](#)).

BMW comprises 9 separate waste streams. According to figures from SEPA (see table B6 in '[Waste Arisings, Perth & Kinross, 2005/6](#)') these waste streams amounted to the following percentages of total municipal waste in Perth and Kinross:-

Newspapers and magazines - 8.28%

Other recyclable paper - 0%

Card and Card packaging - 5.41%

Non-recyclable paper - 3.28%

Textiles - 4.1% (but only 2.1% counting as BMW)

Organic kitchen (catering) waste only - 22.96%

Organic garden waste only - 5.33%

Other putrescibles - 0%

Other combustibles - 6.48%.

If we add these percentages together, we find that in 2005/6 just under 54% of municipal waste in Perth & Kinross was BMW. In 2006/7 Perth & Kinross Council dealt with a total of 107,000 tonnes of municipal waste. If we assume that the proportion of municipal waste falling into the category of BMW remained about the same as in the previous year (54%), this would equate to around 58,000 tonnes of BMW in 2006/7. If the quantity of BMW continues to rise over the next 3 years by about 3% per annum (as the Council pessimistically predicts), this would give us a figure of 63,400 tonnes of BMW in 2009/10 - the year in which the first of the European landfill targets will apply.

Will we meet this target? Figures released under the Freedom Of Information Act ([Click here](#)) indicate that the Council predicts it will manage to divert at least 28,221 tonnes of BMW from landfill in 2010. If we deduct this from our projected BMW figure of 63,400 tonnes, it leaves a little over 35,000 tonnes that will go to landfill - well within the Government's target of 38,990 tonnes.

So far, so good. However, the question then arises as to whether or not we will be able to meet the subsequent targets for 2013 (25,993 tonnes) and 2020 (18,195 tonnes). In other

words, between 2010 and 2020, will Perth & Kinross Council be able to reduce the amount of BMW that it sends to landfill by a further 17,000 tonnes?

The answer to this question is emphatically yes. As mentioned above, SEPA's figures indicate that 22.96% of the total amount of municipal waste produced in Perth and Kinross is 'organic kitchen (catering) waste' – one of the components of BMW. This amounts to 24,400 tonnes in Perth & Kinross in 2006/7. However, the Council is currently diverting just 3,000 tonnes of this, as part of a small-scale trial. If the Council eventually manages to divert the bulk of the remaining 21,400 tonnes, for example by composting or anaerobic digestion, it will easily meet both the 2013 and 2020 targets for reduction of BMW going to landfill.

Therefore let us hear no more nonsense from Perth and Kinross Council about how they need to burn our rubbish to avoid multi-million pound fines from Europe. If the Council continues to improve recycling and composting, there is not the remotest chance that these fines will apply here.