

BEDFORDSHIRE CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM

Energy from Waste Public meeting at Stewartby on 17 March

Many people have great concerns about one solution to our waste problems, which is incineration, or energy from waste. So we organised this meeting to provide an opportunity to listen to the arguments.

Dr Geoff Brighty from the Environment Agency told us that Bedfordshire's landfill capacity has declined from 26 million cubic metres in 1998-9 to under 5 million in 2005. Similar declines are evident across the Eastern Region. Annual deposits of waste are also declining, but at nothing like the same rate.

We desperately need a solution.

Geoff outlined the virtuous cycle that will help:

1. We must stop producing materials for waste as much as possible
2. We must minimise that which has to be created
3. We must re-use products as many times as possible
4. After re-use we must recycle as much as possible
5. What is left can be used to recover energy
6. Finally, anything else must be disposed of in a responsible way

He showed how the Government's Waste Management Strategy 2007 is organised to achieve these ends, with an emphasis on diverting waste from landfill (25 million tonnes pa will reduce emissions by 9.3 million tonnes pa, equivalent to taking 3 million cars off the road). Energy from residual waste, using a mix of technologies, has an important role in this..

Incinerators are "an appropriate solution", provided that they do not undermine 1-4 in the cycle. They reclaim energy from waste, which can be used in such things as Combined Heat and Power schemes, and can reduce significantly the production of toxic leachates and landfill greenhouse gases, which persist for many years.

Local authorities decide on need, location and size.

The Environment Agency vets the proposal, particularly ensuring stringent health and environmental standards and the best available technology. There has to be wide public consultation. There is rigorous monitoring of all aspects of a working incinerator, some of it continuous.

There are already 16 operating incinerators in the Eastern Region, 2 in Bedfordshire.