

Environment and Sustainability Committee

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Inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales - Evidence from the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management Wales



The Chartered Institution of Wastes Management

A brief introduction to CIWM Cymru Wales

The Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM) is the professional body which represents around 7,000 waste and resource management professionals, predominantly in the UK but also overseas. The CIWM sets the professional standards for individuals working in the waste management industry and has various grades of membership determined by education, qualification and experience.

The CIWM Cymru Wales Centre represents Chartered Waste Managers in Wales comprising Waste Managers at all levels of responsibility throughout every sector of Welsh waste management public, private and community sectors. Be they regulators, operators, environmental consultants or community enterprises.

Main Points to bring to the Committee

The “best” technology for recovering energy from residual waste will depend on local, technical and financial circumstances. Strategic choices should be made on the back of detailed life cycle, environmental and health impact assessments of all options available.

Energy from waste (EfW) and certain other thermal treatment technologies must comply with the Waste Incineration Directive (WID) which ensures that the gasses produced and released into the atmosphere are thoroughly cleaned and constantly monitored. This level of regulation far exceeds other combustion processes such as coal fired power stations or other industrial combustion processes.

EfW currently contributes around 1.5% of the UK’s electricity demand but it is predicted that renewable electricity from thermal combustion of waste could grow from 1.2 TWh to between 3.1 and 3.6 TWh by 2020. This contributes to the UK’s target, set under the 2009 Renewable Energy Directive, to achieve 15% of energy consumption from renewable sources, compared to 3% in 2009.

The UK has also become increasingly dependant on 'energy imports'. Energy security for the future is a key concern and diversity of supply is an important factor in ensuring a high quality, reliable and affordable supply for the UK. The energy recovered from the thermal treatment of wastes contributes to the base load electricity generation and will contribute to the decarbonisation of the energy sector.

The public perception and understanding of energy recovery from waste is poor and Welsh Government has a role to play in addressing this through more visible policy and leadership than has been evident to date in Towards Zero Waste and Waste Sector Plans. Indeed, future waste strategies alongside Welsh energy review would be an ideal opportunity to do this. As suggested above, Welsh Government policy and support for district heating may also need to be clarified and published.

Factual information the Committee should be aware of:

There are numerous published studies and reports with varying conclusions relating to the health impacts of the health of communities in proximity to Energy from waste Plants. In 2004 Defra published a report entitled "*Review of Environmental and Health Effects of Waste Management: Municipal Solid Waste and Similar Wastes*" This report concluded that such published studies have failed to establish any convincing links between emissions and adverse effects on public health.

The Health Protection Agency published updated position statement, *The impact on health of emissions to air from municipal waste incinerators*.

 [The Impact on Health of Emissions to Air from Municipal Waste Incinerators \(PDF, 121 KB\)](#)

After reviewing the latest literature the Agency's general position remains unchanged: Modern, well managed incinerators make only a small contribution to local concentrations of air pollutants. It is possible that such small additions could have an impact on health but such effects, if they exist, are likely to be very small and not detectable.

New incinerator projects are being proposed throughout the country with the aim of reducing the UK's reliance on landfill for municipal wastes. EU legislation has stimulated this major change in waste management strategy.

Concerns have been expressed about the air pollution risks posed by municipal incinerators and the Agency first issued a statement giving advice on health issues in November 2005. Since that time, more research has been carried on the possible air pollution risks posed by modern incinerators and the HPA has therefore issued a new position statement.

This statement was first published in September 2009 and has now been reproduced in the Documents of the HPA series of advisory documents for convenience of

access and citation. [The Impact on Health of Emissions to Air from Municipal Waste Incinerators - RCE 13](#) The HPA will review its advice in light of new substantial research on the health effects of incinerators published in peer reviewed journals. To date, the HPA is not aware of any evidence that requires a change in the HPA's position statement.

The HPA reviews each individual environmental permit application to ensure that the installation does not present a risk to public health.

The WG Regional Waste Plans "*1st Review Final Strategic Health Impact Assessment March 2008*" concluded that the positive health impacts from energy from waste included employment, stimulated economy, reducing climate change through reductions in greenhouse gases by offsetting the use of fossil fuels and methane reduction from landfill. While negative impacts were likely to be quality of life, annoyance and nuisance impacts from noise, litter and increase vehicle traffic.

The e-Digest of Environment Statistics, published February 2006 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs would also appear to show that high levels of recycling can be compatible with high levels of incineration with the Netherlands thermally treating 32.9% of its municipal waste recycling and composting 64.4% with only 2.7 % going to landfill the best example.

Recommendations for the Committee consideration

Public perception and understanding of energy recovery from waste is poor. Welsh Government policy and leadership is needed to support it if Wales is to meet its sustainability objectives.

Welsh Government should provide further support for the development of district heating via the planning system for new developments and substantial community regenerations by giving suitable incentives to provide district heating

Long delivery times for new infrastructure mean Welsh Government should encourage use of existing industrial and power generation infrastructure to recover energy from high specification residual waste derived fuels, but ensure that only extends to schemes that are able to demonstrate high levels of energy efficiency.

Welsh Government adheres to its already stated policy position supporting the use of thermal treatment use for up to 30 per cent residual municipal waste