

CHAIN

Cheshire Anti Incinerator Network



CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS' UPDATE

JULY 2014

This is our first Update since December last year. The main reason for the long gap is that nothing of a significant nature regarding the TATA/EON Northwich waste incinerator project has occurred that we felt necessary to bring to your attention until recently and that development is described below. The other point to mention is that CHAIN is still very much alive as an organisation and continues to monitor the situation and lobby various bodies and individuals to further the aims of our campaign.

East Riding of Yorkshire and City of Hull municipal waste contract. - the Big News

This was a tendering exercise to win a ten year contract to treat about 120,000tonnes of waste per annum. EON submitted a bid to haul the stuff to Northwich and burn it. The excellent news is that their bid was unsuccessful.

The news is also very significant because it is strong evidence that TATA/EON has missed the boat as far as winning municipal contracts are concerned. Virtually all UK municipalities have now concluded long term deals with processors to handle their waste and certainly the major contracts have been sewn up and some are already in operation. This totally undermines the claims advanced by TATA/EON in their planning application that the major source of fuel would be municipal waste. The serious implications of this for an incinerator in Northwich are obvious. If the contracts are not there, the financial backers will not provide the £300million to build the plant.

The world of TATA Chemicals

As we all are aware, the planning consent granted to TATA/EON to build a waste incinerator rests on the claims made that the heat and power that it would generate are essential for the future viability of the Lostock chemical plant. CHAIN argued at the Public Inquiry that the claims were bogus because the business logic pointed to TATA closing the plant at a convenient time leaving EON with a money spinning power station linked to the national grid. The cessation of soda ash production in Winnington proved to be the first stage. TATA would depart the scene with a substantial profit and be able to dodge the responsibility of decontaminating the site and cleaning up their mess around the Northwich area. However the situation is more complicated now for the following reasons:-

- The price of gas has significantly reduced and will remain relatively low. Hence TATA's core reason for building a waste incinerator which was to move away from reliance on expensive gas, no longer applies.
- TATA Chemicals is running at a significant loss and the company has announced large scale redundancies and closures at its soda ash plant in Kenya. It is also changing its strategy and will concentrate on what it calls 'high tech' products in the future. These do not include soda ash. So, in other words, the Northwich factories will continue their very obvious decline and decay until they fall apart or the plug is pulled.

In another interesting development, TATA has entered a partnership agreement with Gazprom of Russia to operate the existing power station in Winnington. As you will recall, TATA bought this plant from EON a few months ago. Sounds like a case of 'change partners' which may have further ramifications for the TATA Northwich operation with the guys calling the shots based in Mumbai and St Petersburg .

CWAC Council.

As the local planning authority, if the project goes ahead the Council will have the responsibility of ensuring that construction is in accordance with the planning application submitted by TATA/EON and the consent subsequently granted by DECC. However, we now know that TATA/EON intend to depart from the application in several significant ways because that is what they told the Environment Agency when they sought an operating permit. For example, the incinerator would be built in two separate distinct phases, with all the additional stress and disruption that would mean for residents, instead of a single phase as set out in the planning application. CHAIN has written to CWAC Council about these issues on several occasions but the officers are just not interested. Most of the elected councillors have displayed similar disinterest. The attitude seems to be 'we don't believe you' or 'let's wait and see'. This is just not acceptable from people who are paid to protect the interests of residents and we intend to pursue these matters until action is taken. We also hope that local parish councils will get involved.

Worse case scenario

A number of people have asked about the first stages if, God forbid, TATA/EON do decide to commence construction, particularly about how the community would get to know about it. The fact is that before any work commences, including site clearance, a number of plans must be submitted to CWAC Council and formal approval obtained. These include a Construction Environmental Management Plan, a Construction Traffic Management Plan, an Ecology and Nature Conservation Plan and several more. The residents of the areas around the Lostock site expect to be informed immediately by the Council if any such plans are submitted and to be consulted before decisions are taken. Another job for the local parish councils.

Summary

Apologies for this Update being so wordy but we wanted to give more detail than usual. It appears most of the news for those who want to inflict a waste incinerator on Northwich is negative. All of the medium and large municipal waste contracts are now settled, mostly for very long periods; waste to use as fuel is becoming more scarce and expensive; new cleaner and cheaper technologies are already overtaking primitive incineration; energy derived from gas is cheaper than from incineration; TATA Chemicals is struggling and intends to move away from bulk chemicals.

Let us hope that logic prevails and TATA/EON remove the threat of damage to the health and wellbeing to the people of Northwich and to the environment that an incinerator would bring and that they do it soon. Meanwhile, the CHAIN campaign continues. Thanks again for your support.

2 July 2014