



NEWS RELEASE

5 March 2010

## **PUT OUR CHILDRENS' HEALTH FIRST!**

CHAIN has been pointing out the serious human health risks for the people of Mid Cheshire of potentially living in the vicinity of four huge waste incinerators over recent months. Our concern has been reinforced by the recent BBC News reports from Fallujah in Iraq which link the large increase in serious birth defects there with dioxin levels. Dioxins would form part of the emissions from the chimneys of all four incinerators. The situation in Mid Cheshire would be unprecedented and there has been no medical research to support any reassurances that the authorities or the commercial developers of the incinerator plants can possibly give. The application by TATA/Brunner Mond to build a large plant less than one mile from the centre of Northwich has now brought matters to a head and set more alarm bells ringing.

CHAIN met Dr Heather Grimbaldestone, Director of Public Health of the Central and Eastern Cheshire NHS PCT and her colleagues on 10 February 2010 to discuss the matter and we wrote the letter below to her afterwards. It sets out the issues in a clear manner and our demand that the madness of building a large number of potentially lethal incinerators across Mid Cheshire is halted immediately until we are totally confident that such a concentration in a small geographical area is safe. We believe that the contents of the letter should be shared with all involved including councillors, MPs, medical experts, planning authorities and, most importantly, the general public. Nobody can then say at some time in the future, when it may be too late, that they were not warned.

*'Dear Dr Grimbaldestone*

*Thanks again to you and your colleagues for a very interesting meeting last week.*

*We reported back to our CHAIN Committee and had a discussion about the key issues that emerged. In our considered opinion the most important of these is that the 'authorities' including the Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT have not taken due account of the combined scale and multiplicity of incinerators in the area for which planning permissions have already been granted, Runcorn and Ince Marshes (Frodsham) or are being considered, Middlewich and Northwich.*

*As we said, this concentration of waste incinerators would be without precedent in the world both in terms of the number of separate facilities and the aggregated volume of waste incinerated, 2.4 million tones per annum. (That is 600,000 lbs per hour; a lot of smoke and emissions into the air every hour every single day of the year)*

*To illustrate the point, two of the incinerators, Northwich and Middlewich, would be just four miles apart and Norley near Weaverham would be within eight miles of all four!*

***The problem is seriously exacerbated by local climatic and topological conditions. There is a strong prevailing wind from the North West which would blow the accumulated emissions towards relatively highly populated areas including Crewe, Sandbach and Congleton.***

***CHAIN have repeatedly made the point that there is no medical research which can be used to give reassurances to the public about the potential health effects of such a hazardous set of circumstances. Nobody has given an answer. The guidelines issued by the Health Protection Agency relate to single sites and cannot reasonably be extrapolated to cover four locations and 2.4 million tonnes. On the other hand, we have the recommendation of the Scottish NHS, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency and Health Protection Scotland contained in their very recent report 'Incineration of Waste and Reported Human Health Effects' that '... planning controls should prevent new incinerators within the locality of existing facilities' (page viii)***

***We believe that the Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT has a duty of care and an important protective role in this worrying and unprecedented situation because most of the people whose health could be at risk happen to live or work in it's geographical area or, indeed, have not yet been born. As we know, many of the serious medical conditions that could develop take years to manifest themselves. In these unique circumstances, it is therefore appropriate to apply the 'precautionary principle' and act in the most cautious way to avoid unnecessary risk to the population.***

***Taking all of the above into account, we are making a formal request that the Trust use its good offices to call for an immediate moratorium on the consideration or granting of planning permission for waste incinerators in this area at least until the undoubted health uncertainties identified have been further investigated and resolved. The community could then be assured that the PCT, in which it places its trust, had done all in its power to avoid what could turn out to be a catastrophe.***

***In making this request, we are confident we have the support of at least 25,000 local people who have signed our CHAIN petition opposing waste incinerators in this area and will, of course, inform them that we have written this letter to the Trust.***

***We believe this is a matter of urgency and any revised advice that you may decide to issue should be communicated to the local municipal authorities and to the Department of Energy and Climate Change as soon as possible and therefore look forward to an early response to this request.***

***Yours sincerely***