

WASTE MATTERS

WHEN WILL THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OLDER GENERATION ACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES?

HAZEL McRiley lives in Froyle, Hampshire. When she found out that a new incinerator has been proposed in her local area, Hazel decided to investigate.

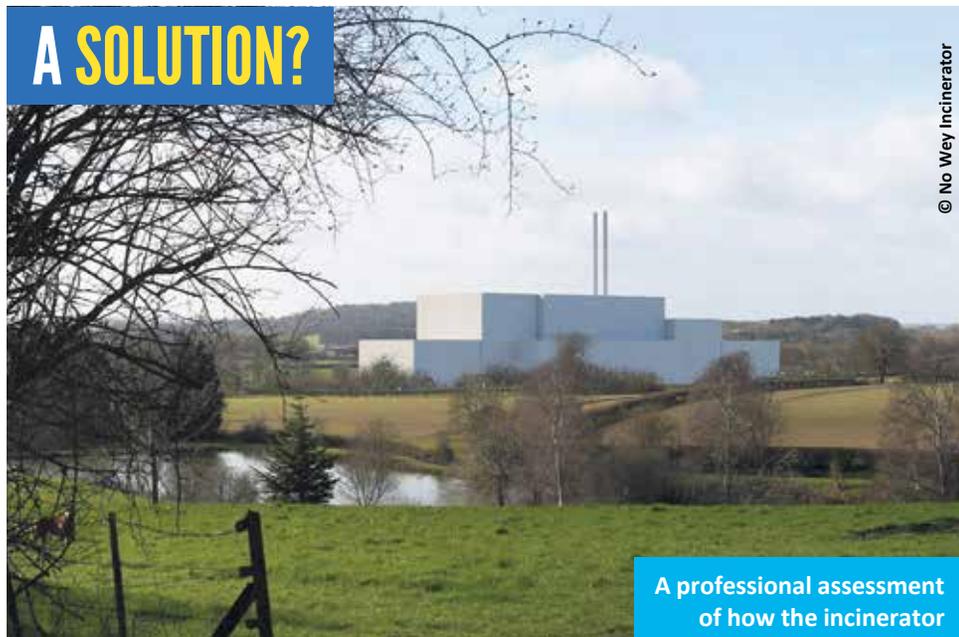
THE PROBLEM

We live in a society that has a 'throwaway' mentality. Over the last few years people have become more aware of the environmental impact of the amount of rubbish we are throwing away, but we need the Government to make new laws to help reduce our waste. An example of an effective legislation was when microbeads were banned from cosmetic products as they were polluting the oceans.

In the past, the UK Government has allowed waste companies to send low-quality recycling abroad for processing. In reality this has taken our waste and created a problem in other countries who will no longer accept it.

Surely the solution to this environmental issue is to ensure that we create less waste and package things in materials we can actually recycle. A vast amount of the waste we send to landfill could be recycled: our cartons, toothpaste tubes and many film wrappings all show recycling symbols, but in some areas the facilities to recycle them do not exist.

A SOLUTION?



© No Wey Incinerator

A professional assessment of how the incinerator would look in the landscape

Veolia, the waste management company for Hampshire, the county where I live, have proposed a solution... to build an incinerator in the Wey Valley, near Alton, to burn waste.

If the plan goes ahead, they will replace a recycling centre with a new massive facility with 90-metre chimneys, about the same height as Big Ben! The site will sit just alongside a national park and the chimneys will reach above the height of the surrounding hills in the countryside setting.

When it is operational, lorries will collect waste to be incinerated here. This process will produce a vast amount of energy, some of which will be used to generate electricity.

Unfortunately, it is not a very efficient process, as a large amount of energy is lost as heat. The chimneys will also release plumes of carbon dioxide and other chemical pollution into the atmosphere.

The process will also produce tonnes of toxic ash, which will need to be transported away to be disposed of.



Here is us [Hazel and her brother, Robbie]! Behind us is the valley where the incinerator would be. The chimneys would be higher than the hill we are standing on!

COMMUNITY ACTION

My brother (13), sister (10) and I went to the meeting in our village about this project, to see what Veolia had to say. Apparently, it is needed as part of a Government plan to deal with more waste inside the country, rather than exporting it.

The air pollution specialist told us the impact on the environment around where we live would be minimal. But it's not just the effect on the local area I'm worried about – pollution has a worldwide impact.

Schemes like this give the message that it is okay for companies to produce single-use packaging and products with a short lifetime, as the unrecyclable materials can just be burned. But burning the waste is harmful for the environment, and we as consumers need to recycle as much as we can and be mindful of what we buy.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

If this facility is built, it removes the driving force for us to address our waste production.

Where is the motivation to clean up our wasteful habits of mixed materials, excessive packaging and short-lived products if we can easily send them to an incinerator and not consider the environmental consequences?

We need the Government to act to protect the planet's resources and curb our waste production. We can no longer turn a blind eye to the impact of our everyday lives and for this reason I stand against the building of this incinerator.

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