



## **Belfast City Council Waste Treatment Questionnaire** **A suggested response**

Belfast City Council is proposing to build a waste treatment plant on Belfast Lough's North Foreshore. It claims that it is necessary to build such a plant in order to avoid EU fines for sending too much biodegradable waste to landfill. It has sent out a booklet and questionnaire to homes throughout the city to consult with citizens on this issue.

The booklet and questionnaire offer two options:

1. **Mechanical/Biological Treatment (MBT)** which removes some of the recyclables mixed up in the waste before biologically treating the rest, turning it into inert, low-grade compost. The council proposes sending this compost to landfill or burning it through EFW (see below).
2. **Energy From Waste (EFW)** which in this case means incinerating waste and uses the resultant heat for electricity and domestic heating for nearby homes. The council claims that most of the resultant pollution would be abated by filters and other measures.

We are in favour of MBT, **without incineration**, but only if the following methods of dealing with waste have first been used by Belfast City Council:

- **Reduction at source.** Councillors should put pressure on the UK Government to stop so much packaging and waste being produced in the first place.
- **Better contracts with recyclers.** This would ensure that they recycled more materials than they do at present (eg yoghurt pots and plastic wrapping).
- **Better separation at the doorstep.** Plastics, glass and metals should be separated before they are loaded onto lorries.
- **A new bin for all biodegradable waste.** If we put all our food scraps into a new bin, then these could be processed via anaerobic digestion, resulting in compost and methane which can be used for Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

We would be in favour of any by-products of MBT being used for landscaping or capping landfill that has reached capacity. **We oppose any incineration of MBT by-products.**

**We are opposed to any form of incineration**, either with or without MBT, for the following reasons:

- The resultant **fly ash and bottom ash contain many toxins**, such as dioxins, heavy metals and furans.
- The cost of building the incinerator necessitates that it keeps burning waste for some considerable time to come, **locking us into a culture of producing and burning waste**, instead of reducing and recycling it.
- The proposed plant will be **highly inefficient**, as the surrounding area is sparsely populated, meaning few will avail of the heat being produced.
- The claim that they can control the temperature of incineration to reduce dioxins produced by burning is questionable – it is extremely difficult to maintain the optimum temperature to do this.
- There is currently **no suitable waste landfill site in Northern Ireland** that can legally take hazardous EFW incinerator ash. We would have to transport our waste ash over to Scotland.
- The proposal to use the resultant treated ash for construction would provide **a toxic legacy for future generations.**

Please fill in your questionnaire and send it back before 23 March 2009.

Please provide as much detail as you can in the spaces provided.

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