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**Friends of  
the Earth**

# Briefing

# Incinerators and deprivation

Poorer communities tend to be hit hardest by environmental pollution. This new research on municipal waste incinerators adds to the growing evidence that environmental problems are adding to the deprivation that the poorest communities face.

It shows that 50 per cent of operating municipal waste incinerators in England are located in the most deprived 10 per cent of wards.

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- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland
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### **Methodology**

Previous research by Friends of the Earth has found that there is a link between polluting industries and poverty. The research found that factories are located predominately in the most deprived areas and that these areas also bear the brunt of the worst pollution<sup>1</sup>. Friends of the Earth is continuing to investigate this relationship for other environmental issues.

This research investigated if there is a trend of municipal waste incinerators (MWI) in England being built and proposed in deprived communities.

The list of MWI that we were able to confirm an exact location<sup>2</sup> for fell into four categories:

- 14 built and currently operating
- 8 for which planning permission has been approved
- 8 for which planning permission has been refused
- 18 for which a MWI site has been identified in a Waste Local Plan or where a NFFO 5<sup>3</sup> contract has been agreed.

The location of these sites was compared with the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This Index ranks all 8,414 local authority wards in England on several categories, including health, education, income, employment, housing and access to services. The most deprived ward has a ranking of 1 and the least deprived ward a ranking of 8,414.

### **Results**

#### **1. National Picture**

##### **Existing MWI**

The results show that operating MWI are predominately found in the most deprived wards in England (Graph 1). Out of the 14 operating municipal waste incinerators 9 are found in the most deprived 20 per cent of wards. In fact 7 (50 per cent) of the incinerators are found in the most deprived 10 per cent of wards. These seven incinerators are in Sheffield, Nottingham, South East London, Huddersfield, Wolverhampton, North London and Bolton.

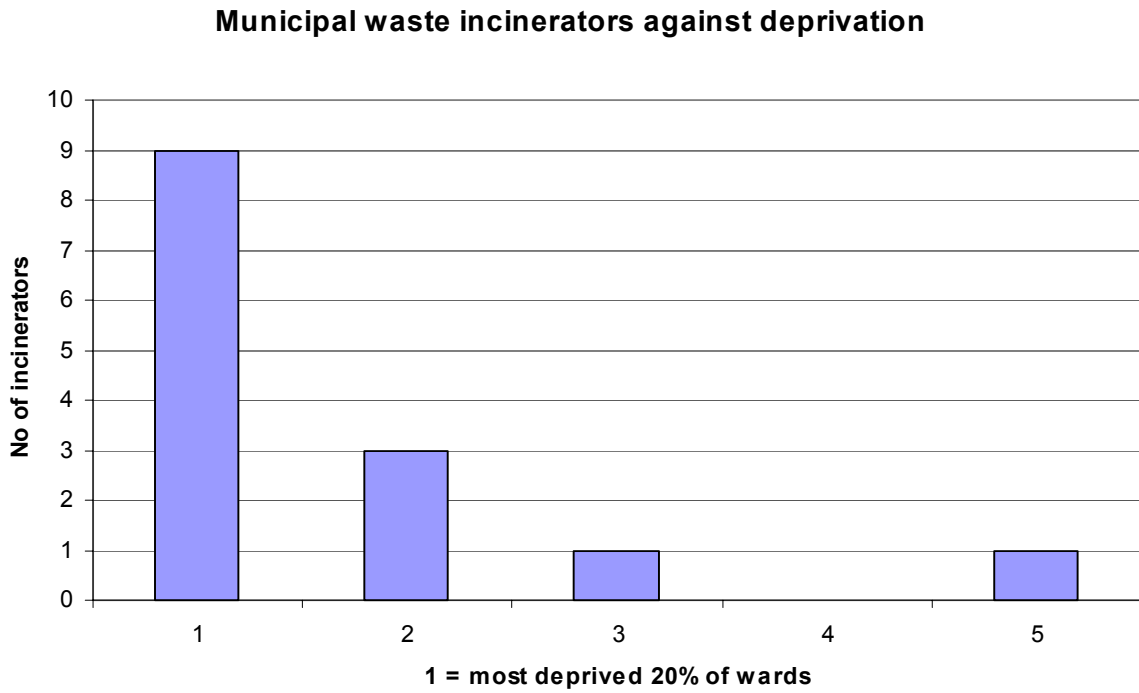
##### **Proposed MWI**

When looking at the wards where MWI have been proposed to be built (both where planning permission has been sought and where sites have been suggested), it can be seen that they are still being proposed in poorer areas (Graph 2), but there are also proposals coming forward in all wards. Out of the 16 recent planning applications for MWI there have been five planning applications in the most deprived 20 per cent of wards compared with two in the least deprived 20 per cent of wards.

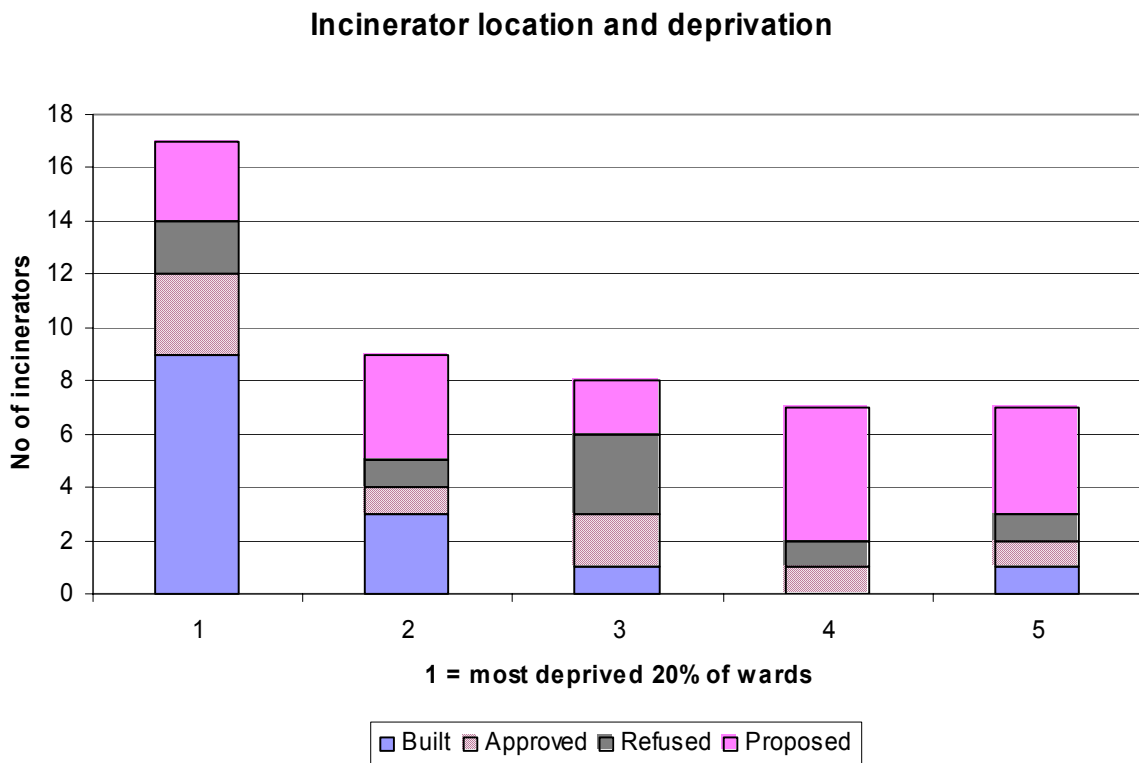
There are 18 sites where incinerators have been proposed, but no planning application has yet come forward (Graph 3), it will be interesting to see how these proposals are followed through and whether MWI get approval in wards proportionately across the range of deprivation.

## Incineration location and deprivation

Graph 1 Municipal Waste Incinerator location against deprivation

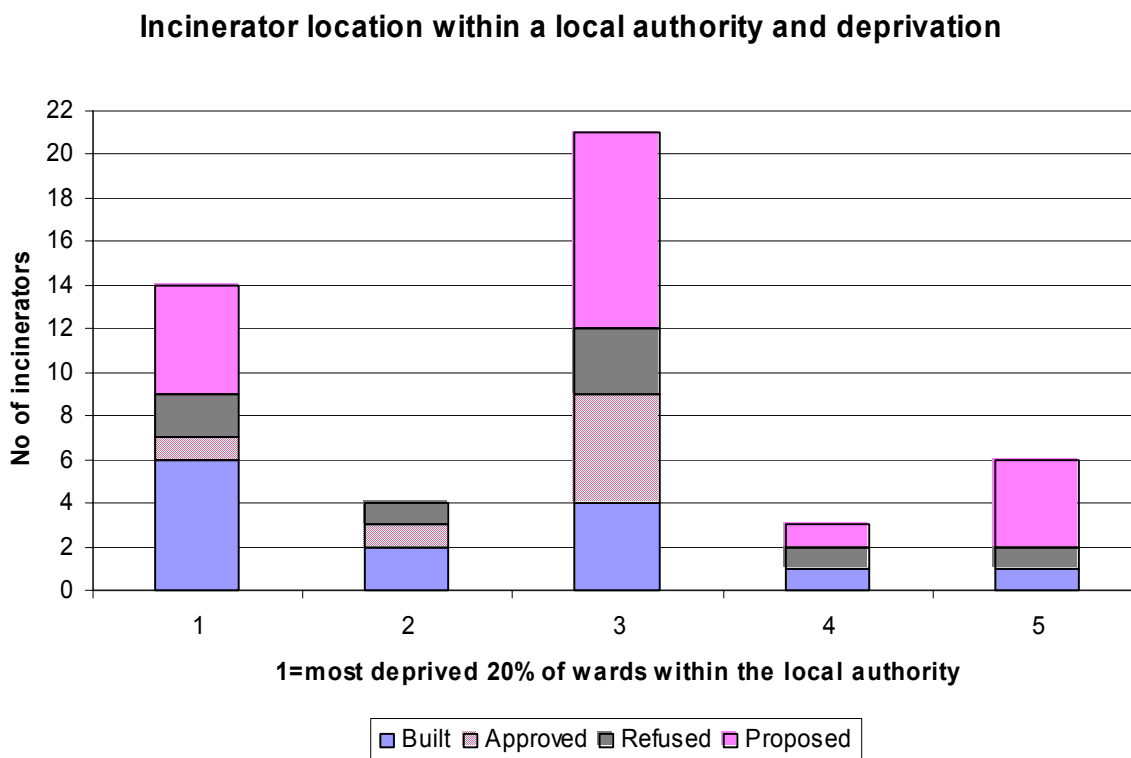


Graph 2 Built and Proposed Municipal Waste Incinerator locations against deprivation.



## Incineration location and deprivation

Graph 3 Built and Proposed Municipal Waste Incinerator location against deprivation within a local authority area.



### 2. Within a Local Authority Area.

Decisions on allocating sites within an area for waste disposal are made by the Local Planning Authority. And a decision on whether to grant planning approval for a MWI also rests with the Local Planning Authority. We therefore also investigated if incinerator sites within a local authority area tend to be in the most deprived wards of that individual authority.

The ward where the incinerator site was located was ranked against all other wards in the authority. For example:

An incinerator was proposed in Odlington and Foley Park ward in Wyre Forest, Worcestershire. Worcestershire has 123 wards and Odlington and Foley Park ward is ranked as the most deprived ward within the district – 1 out of 123 wards, and therefore is in the most deprived 20 per cent of wards within that local authority. (Nationally Odlington and Foley Park ward is ranked as the 752<sup>nd</sup> most deprived ward out of 8,414 for the whole of England, so falls within the most deprived 20 per cent of wards nationally.)

The results also show that there is a trend within an individual local authority to site MWI in the more deprived wards (Graph 3). Currently there are only two operating MWI (Chineham, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight) sited in a ward that is in the least deprived 40 per cent of wards within a local authority area. And only two more planning applications have come forward that would also site incinerators in these least deprived wards - both of which have

not been given planning permission (Hull and Capel, Surrey).

Of the 17 MWI sites in the most deprived 20 per cent of wards nationally, 10 sites are also in the most deprived 20 per cent of the wards within their local authority area. These include the wards that currently house the MWI in Nottingham, London (Edmonton and South East London Incinerator - SELCHP), Huddersfield, Wolverhampton and Dudley.

### **The case for action**

Municipal Waste Incinerators (MWI) are an unwelcome addition to any community. They produce health-damaging emissions, bring in extra traffic and are a blight on the community. Friends of the Earth believes that building more municipal waste incinerators is unnecessary as there are better ways to be dealing with our waste through reducing the amount of resources we use and the waste we create and recycling materials.

Everyone should have the right to live in a clean, safe environment. This research has shown that poorer communities are bearing the brunt of burning household waste in incinerators.

### **Recommendations for Action:**

**1. The Government should introduce an incineration tax** to create an incentive against burning waste. Less incineration would mean less environmental burden on communities and less environmental inequality. Friends of the Earth has also released a report revealing how much the Government subsidises incinerators – Money to Burn – available from [www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/waste/resource/media.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/waste/resource/media.html)

**2. The Government should set out clear policies and targets for waste reduction.** The best way to stop the burden of incineration is to reduce the amount of municipal waste that we produce. Reducing waste at source is the way not to impose burdens of disposal on people, whether they be rich or poor.

**3. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit** should investigate the reasons why siting unwanted developments seems to concentrate in more deprived areas and what can be done to address this. This will be a core requirement for their long term goal that “in 20 years no-one should be disadvantaged because of where they live.” They should also issue guidance to local authorities to carry out equity assessments before determining policy.

**4. The Environment Agency** and other relevant Government bodies, should carry out environmental equity assessments as a core element of policy appraisal.

**5. The Environment Agency** should identify which areas and communities suffer from multiple environmental problems, and coordinate action to reduce multiple adverse environmental impacts.

For a full list of incinerator locations in England contact Friends of the Earth.

## **Incineration location and deprivation**

### **References**

- <sup>1</sup> Pollution and Poverty – Breaking the link. A report by Friends of the Earth 2001
- <sup>2</sup> Friends of the Earth knows of 10 more proposed sites for incineration but could not confirm their exact location.
- <sup>3</sup> NFFO 5– Non Fossil Fuel Obligation 5 contract for plants that will generate energy from waste.