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### **Re-Waste and Incineration Petition P-04-341**

Submission by Terry Evans, Chair United Valleys Action Group (UVAG)

UVAG was established in the Merthyr, Rhymney and Blaenau Gwent valleys as an overarching committee group set up by delegates from all the committees of the towns and villages in the valleys, UVAG is a legally constituted group which was to oppose the Covanta incinerator in Merthyr Tydfil and incineration as the method of waste disposal, during our campaign UVAG members undertook extensive research and obtained extensive knowledge of waste management and incineration.

First UVAG fully endorses the submission by STOP NEWPORT INCINERATOR CAMPAIGN (SNIC), Pippa Bartolotti, Professor V Howard and other expert submissions, therefore I do not wish to duplicate the submissions already made by SNIC, Pippa Bartolotti, Dr V Howard and other experts, but would call upon the petitions committee to fully take in to account these submissions, I would like to add the following points for my submission.

Incineration is a waste of resources that also carries a risk to human health, it is 20<sup>th</sup> century technology that is not needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where there is alternative methods and cleaner greener technologies of waste disposal, the tunnel vision of our elected representatives and officials towards incineration is close to being a biased decision as you can get, they must be called to account for ignoring the risks of incineration with the failure to consider alternative safer and cheaper technologies, the world opinion in modern countries is that incineration is not the technology or method of disposing of our waste, you only have to

look to America, no new incinerators built since 1995, this is a massive and overpowering statement from the world's largest economy.

America has NOT BUILT an incinerator for 16 YEARS and many have been closed down. The Welsh Government MUST ask why America (usually slow to act on Green issues) is acting responsibly towards their residents and we are not and we must do this before it is too late. America has reduced their toxic emissions from incinerators by a staggering 99.9% WHY IN GODS NAME ARE WE INCREASING OURS!!!! American Clean Air Acts Standards in the last 16 years including the latest Cross-State Air Pollution Rule implemented by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will result in \$120 to \$280 BILLION in annual benefits; the emission reduction will have significant and immediate public health benefits and by 2014 will annually prevent:

- 13,000 to 34,000 premature deaths,
- 19,000 cases of acute bronchitis,
- 15,000 nonfatal heart attacks
- 19,000 hospital and emergency room visits
- 1.8 million days when people miss work or school
- 400,000 cases of aggravated asthma, and
- 420,000 cases of upper and lower respiratory symptoms.

Above data from US EPA web site [www.epa.gov/airtransport](http://www.epa.gov/airtransport).

We urge the Welsh Government to consider our petition and the contents of the letter to Welsh Environment Minister John Griffiths (copy enclosed). We feel that the Welsh Government have failed the people of Wales with their waste management policy and with regards to the use of incineration as a means to divert waste from landfill. There are better techniques and technologies than incineration. Recycling of waste should be paramount before any of the waste is disposed of. There are many Countries that recycle a much higher percentage of their waste than Wales. We need to know why Wales cannot follow their example.

There is money to be raised from waste? Even now recently the UK coalition Government has set up a fund to encourage the return of weekly bin collections and investment by local authorities in equipment that can sort the rubbish into different categories.

With the soaring value of scrap metal and other waste materials there should be every prospect of such machinery paying for itself in very short order. THE FACT THAT SO FEW COUNCILS AND THE WELSH GOVERNMENT HAVE YET INVESTED IN IT WILL GIVE RISE TO SUSPICION THAT THE MANIA FOR DOMESTIC RECYCLING HAD MUCH MORE TO DO WITH PUBLIC SERVANTS WISHING TO BECOME PUBLIC MASTERS THAN WITH ANY COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT we need a farsighted Welsh Government with courage and vision to grasp this opportunity. We call on the Welsh government to do this.

Prosiect Gwyrdd, this project should be review for all reasons put to the petition committee in this submission and other submissions.

The flawed Wales waste survey, this survey of just 1,300 people from around Wales only gave people a two choice option of 'continue to landfill and pay fines' or 'to burn and make energy', this survey only had one answer in mind, no other option was available, therefore this survey was deeply flawed.

Make it illegal to burn recyclable material by 2020, this would really kill off the incineration process because there is not much material that cannot be recycled, Scotland have already taken the lead on this by already banning the burning of certain materials, ok perhaps 2020 is to soon but 2025/30 should be achievable. The Welsh Government should follow Scotland's lead on this.

The following questions must be asked of our Welsh Government

1. Why and for what reason would any Council or Government lock itself in to a 25+ year contract, when contracts of 9-10 years in other cheaper, greener and safer technologies are possible?
2. Why would any Council or Government lock itself in to a 25+year contract when they have visions of a zero waste policy?
3. Why does a Council have to pay to collect the waste and then pay again to get rid of it, when there are companies out there that would do it far more cheaply or even for free if they are allowed to keep the waste as a resource?

4. Why was Prosiect Gwyrdd formed, when it is against the Welsh Government policy of localised facilities, which is to dispose of waste as close as to where it is produced, this is a searching question that needs to be fully answered, it may have been somebody's brainwave four years ago when certain companies were promoting themselves with financial incentives to Government officials, but many of these officials are no longer in office, the new Labour administration now need to review this policy.
5. Why is the Welsh Government in times of severe cutbacks in all budgets prepared to pay over £9,000,000 per year to Prosiect Gwyrdd, which over 25 years amounts to over £240,000,000, clearly the Welsh Government has plenty of money to throw at this project without exploring cheaper, cleaner, greener options, the question must be asked what motive is behind this decision
6. Why as the Welsh Government chosen open grate incineration over other cheaper, greener and safer Technologies such as autoclave, MBT, and Plasma Arc Gasification, the past reasons of not proven or established technology processes are now found to be not true when there are numerous plants of all the alternative processes working in the UK, you only have to look at the new MBT plant in Avonmouth, or the new Enviropark being built in Hirwaun our Government officials and Assembly Members need to view these plants,
7. Why as the Welsh Government with a zero waste future policy chosen incineration, The Welsh Government will never achieve the zero waste policy it promotes because there will always be bottom ash and fly ash sent to landfill of up to 25% of incinerator input.
8. Why did the Welsh Government undertake a survey that did not give the people of Wales all the information and the option of all the technologies available to dispose of waste.

We call upon the petitions committee and the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to review its waste policy and to review

- a. Prosiect Gwyrdd which is against the Welsh Government policy of localised facility, and allow our Councils to choose their own waste technology and waste management procurement;
- b. The flawed Wales waste survey that only gave people a 2 choice option on waste disposal
- c. By 2020, make it illegal to burn recyclable waste which would promote Councils to recycle

If the Welsh Government does not review its waste policy and this petition in light of all the information and evidence put before them, the 13,000+ people's petition, plus the now law Localism bill passed by the UK Government, this would be tantamount to failure of their 'Duty of Care' to the people of Wales of such a degree that there would be grounds for a judicial review or legal challenge to the Welsh Government on an act of irresponsibility.

Terry Evans  
Chair United Valleys Action Group (UVAG)