



Cornwall's breathing in Manchester's filth

FOLLOWING the recent confirmation by Suez management that waste is being brought in from out of the county to be burnt in its incinerator at St Dennis, we have now learnt from the actual HGV driver(s) who were bringing in waste that waste is being brought in from Wiltshire, Bristol, Wales and Manchester.

This confirms previous suspicions that Cornwall does not need a 240,000 tonnes per annum incinerator and that the polluting monstrosity is a money-making machine for Suez, funded by Cornwall's council taxpayers. In effect we, the taxpayers, are funding the dividends of a private company's shareholders.

It also raises many questions, including whether Cornwall's Council taxpayers are legally responsible for paying for the disposal of other counties' waste. Considering that Cornwall Council is paying £2 million a month of taxpayers' money to Suez, are Cornwall's Council taxpayers getting value for their money? I think not: and how long will taxpayers accept such a situation when the council cannot find money to fund everyday basic services which taxpayers are entitled to?

A very relevant question is why Cornwall's recycling rate (according to Defra) has dropped to 31%. Your guess is as good as mine. I remind readers that prior to signing the contract in 2006 our MP at that time, Matthew Taylor, supported the funding application to the European Investment Banks for the £80 million PFI loan (which was successful and used to pay for the incinerator) on the basis that it would be used to achieve a comprehensive recycling policy – which as we all know, has never come to fruition. The

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reality is that ten years have passed and we still have not got a comprehensive recycling policy; the question is, why? This has cost taxpayers thousands if not millions of pounds in lost revenue.

Apart from creating continued controversy, there is no doubt the waste contract with Suez represents a financial millstone that will hang around the necks of Cornwall's taxpayers and the authority itself for many years to come unless serious consideration is given to the consequences of continuing with such a contract. The officers who agreed to this contract did Cornwall's taxpayers a massive human and environmental injustice.

In the meantime, the negatives continue. While the incinerator is reportedly running at 95% capacity, there is no evidence of any electricity being produced and no heat is being exported, as no outlet has been found. Both these issues are conditions of planning approval and were used by the contractor as support evidence at the public inquiry. The incinerator has continually presented a quality-

of-life nuisance of one kind or another since it was first fired up; one example is the tipping bay doors, which are continually being left open, as witnessed by local inhabitants who have had their lives seriously affected by the resulting putrid and overpowering smells. Other examples, apart from the usual polluting emissions, are releases of high-pressure steam, loud banging and the well-documented light pollution from the red lights. Cornwall Council is now in the process of inviting comments on its Clear Air For Cornwall Strategy, incorporating the Cornwall Air Quality Plan, which is yet another flawed and hypocritical document. How can the authority be serious about air quality when it supports incineration which pumps 240,000 tpa of CO₂ into the atmosphere and creates massive amounts of HGV emissions, by transporting in waste from other parts of the country and allowing Suez to close the Cannon Bridge landfill site, sending Cornwall's private waste companies all the way to Devon to dispose of collected commercial waste? This whole situation is a considerable detriment to climate change and global warming. There are other negatives about this so-called strategy; this document is hypocrisy at its worst and just another hollow tick-box exercise to appease Westminster's and EU regulations.

Officers and councillors cannot hide for ever behind the limp excuse: "We are where we are." Some time, somewhere, someone has to make a stand for common sense and democracy.

Beware; the elections are not far away.

Ken Rickard, St Dennis