



BBOWT POSITION STATEMENT

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is an independent and local charity concerned with the protection and enhancement of wildlife within our region.

We live in a crowded part of the country where a vast number of development projects take place: in the course of a typical year, BBOWT will be asked to look at and give detailed comments on 70 planning applications.

Many of the planning applications for new developments where BBOWT is consulted are complex, and involve many different issues, of which the impact on local wildlife is just one. In every case, BBOWT is only able to comment on the impact of the proposed development on local wildlife. Commenting on broader issues, such as the impact on human health, is beyond both BBOWT's charitable objectives and its area of expertise.

To achieve its aim of protecting and enhancing wildlife, BBOWT works with many partners including other conservation organisations and Government agencies. There will be occasions when the expertise in other organisations is greater than BBOWT's; where this is the case, BBOWT will defer to that expertise and will aim to give references to these sources in its statement.

For further information about BBOWT's planning work, please refer to our website: www.bbowt.org.uk.

Waste Incinerators

The processing of waste, by any means, causes significant environmental and social costs. Assessing the relative impacts of alternative methods is complex and much disputed..

The European Union has a Landfill Directive aimed at reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill. This is intended to reduce, amongst other things, the contribution of landfill to greenhouse gas emissions, and has led to an increasing focus on incineration or energy-from-waste (incineration linked to energy production) as a means of waste treatment.

On the other hand, Friends of the Earth issued a report¹ claiming that "energy from waste" incinerators produce more CO₂ than some traditional forms of energy production and other available systems of waste treatment and they believe that an increase in incineration may lead to a reduction in focus on recycling initiatives.

There is also considerable concern amongst environmental groups about the by-products of incineration, with a range of chemicals released into the atmosphere, or retained in the fly ash and bottom ash recovered from the burning process. Again, proponents of incineration deny that the impacts are significant.

¹ Dirty truths. Incineration and climate change. Warhurst, M. and Watson, A. May 2006.

However, there is little or no evidence about the direct impacts of chemicals released by incinerators on wildlife, and considerable dispute about the impacts on public health. A Greenpeace report in 2001, which reviewed studies on the health of workers at incinerators and nearby residents states that “*These studies give rise to great concerns about possible health impacts from incinerators*”². The Environment Agency on the other hand says that “*Studies into the health of communities living near to incinerators have not found any convincing links between incinerator emissions and adverse effects on public health*”³

BBOWT does not have the in-house expertise to comment upon the relative merits of different waste processing operations. We do, however, have considerable knowledge of the habitats and species of our three counties. Where clear evidence exists that a waste treatment method, of any sort, will have a significant effect on wildlife species or habitats of conservation importance BBOWT will object, in line with our existing policy on responding to planning proposals.

We recognise that waste treatment methods can have significant indirect impacts on wildlife, through diffuse pollution and through their contribution to climate change, and we believe that the key focus for decision makers should be to reduce the generation of waste and encourage recycling. Where appropriate BBOWT incorporates waste reduction into its education programmes, highlighting the links between waste and the natural world. BBOWT also works to reduce its own CO₂ emissions and generation of waste.

Approved by Campaigns Steering Group October 2008

² Incineration And Human Health. State of Knowledge of the Impacts of Waste Incinerators on Human Health. Allsopp, M., Costner, P. and Johnston, P. Greenpeace Research Laboratories, University of Exeter, UK. 2001.

³ http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/yourenv/eff/1190084/resources_waste/213982/1863482/?version=1&lang=_e Accessed 1/10/08