

# SWARD

## Safety in Waste and Rubbish Disposal

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14<sup>th</sup> September, 2006.

**Submission to The Cabinet, Oxfordshire County Council, 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2000,**  
**Agenda Item 11**  
**by B.E.Fryer, on behalf of**  
**SWARD (Safety in Waste And Rubbish Disposal), Bishop's Cleeve, Gloucestershire.**

I live in Bishop's Cleeve, a community of 10,000 people north of Cheltenham in Gloucestershire. It may seem strange for someone out of County to approach you about Oxfordshire policies but one of your possible policies may affect me and the community in which I live.

I belong to a local group which goes by the acronym of SWARD. S-W-A-R-D. Safety in Waste And Rubbish Disposal. We present our case according to available scientific evidence, and advise the precautionary principle where there is uncertainty and doubt.

You are currently considering your Waste Disposal plans; how to cut the rising tide of waste to meet targets and avoid your Council Taxpayers paying enormous fines for failure.

One method is burning waste in an incinerator. Even if the incinerator generates electricity (Energy from Waste) the process still leaves ash, including fly-ash which still has to be landfilled in a hazardous waste site. Fly-ash (APCR – air pollution control residues) is formed by using lime in the incinerator chimney to catch the toxic elements and prevent them leaving the chimney. Mercury, cadmium, arsenic, lead, amongst others as well as carcinogenic dioxins and furans are trapped in the lime. It is, of course, only right to protect the surrounding population.

However, the more toxic elements are taken out of the flue gases, the more toxic is the fly-ash. I live half a mile downwind of a landfill site, which is taking fly-ash from other counties and regions which include places like Birmingham, Coventry, Hampshire and London. You will, I hope, understand the anxiety and fear which we, and, more particularly, mothers-to-be and families with young children who live closer than I do, experience when accidents happen, and they have happened. We do not have confidence that it is possible to completely contain these toxic substances so that there is no surface, sub-surface or airborne leakage out of the site, which could harm us, or for that matter our grandchildren and great grandchildren, who will have to look after this stuff for maybe hundreds of years even when the site is closed and covered.

Other authorities choosing incineration already face the dilemma of failing to meet targets, in order to avoid penalties for not feeding the incinerator enough waste to keep it going. Cleveland County Council in the 1990s, and recently East Sussex County Council has signed a thirty year contract, and, even before it is built, is finding it may have to restrict its district councils from recycling more than they do at present.

There is mounting evidence of health effects from incinerator residues. The effects are not likely to be unassailably evident for some time yet. A recent report on the health effects of incinerators from the British Society for Ecological Medicine (Note 1) draws on hundreds of research references suggesting that the precautionary principle should be firmly applied now. For example, the effects of toxins accumulating in the body seem to point towards more cancers in those living near incinerators. We feel we are in the same stage as smoking was 40 years ago, CFCs and the ozone layer, and DDT – all once regarded as harmless.

Whilst, at the tendering stage for a waste disposal contract, the Council has no firm intention to incinerate, it is possible you will receive a tender which proposes this. We ask you to consider the consequences of landfilling such toxic residues anywhere.

Of course, we have been called nimby (“not in my backyard”) - after all waste has to go somewhere. But, with respect, it is not we who are nimby. It is the people who are only too glad to have got rid of the problem of dealing with toxic waste from their backyards.

Obviously, as Councillors, you are faced with the dilemma between achieving targets in the short term to avoid huge fines, and the legacy which will be left to future generations, just as the councils in Gloucestershire are, and all other counties.

Whilst we acknowledge that our landscape is not of the special character of the Chilterns or the Cotswolds, it is *our* local countryside, designated Greenbelt, and, despite PPS 10, we do not feel that it should be sacrificed as a national dustbin for other communities in other regions to achieve solutions to their problems (‘out of sight, out of mind’) to the detriment of others.

We believe that the policies of the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership are admirable within the constraints of local government powers. It seems to us that local authorities do not have enough control over their local situations. Your Council’s submission to the current inquiry being conducted by Sir Michael Lyons, on the organisation and funding of local government, seems to agree with our view. We believe that local authorities should have some control over the *generation/creation* of waste in their areas rather than have to face everything presented to them because, seemingly, they are specifically prohibited from doing so (Note 3). It is therefore encouraging to see the Partnership’s policy to lobby central Government. It would be a great step forward if Oxfordshire and colleague authorities and other bodies, such as the Women’s Institute with their present campaign, could persuade central Government to act to cut the generation of excess packaging (Note 4). Transporting excess packaging has CO2 emissions implications, and even more so when that packaging is imported from around the world.

We believe the way forward is to pursue, vigorously, the principles of zero waste, i.e. not producing the stuff in the first place. Other authorities in this country and around the world have set themselves this goal.

We submit you should promote the principles of zero waste which begins with stimulating innovation, and designing waste out of the process before production begins. It will be hard work to reach the ideal, of course, but with effort, ingenuity and research we can reach closer than at present, and exceed current targets.

And when we succeed there will be less rubbish, less transport needed to carry it and therefore less congestion, and less climate change gases from the manufacture, transport and incineration of materials which will have to be replaced, involving more manufacture and transport. Thus it would also contribute to the achievement of other Government targets.

Whilst we understand that at this point you may not be in a position “to rule anything out or anything in”, we ask you to consider that an operator’s tender recommending incineration should be examined very critically to find another way which does not involve long term contracts, and perhaps locking the Council into situations which will be regretted by those who follow you.

Whilst we are pleading our own case, we recognise your problems. Oxfordshire seems to be under pressure to accept London waste, in way similar to the pressure on us to accept waste from outside our county. We therefore hope you will approach the decisions in a way which will benefit both your constituents and ourselves.

Yours sincerely,

Ted Fryer

Notes:

1. Report: The Health Effects of Incinerators by Dr. Jeremy Thompson and Dr. Honor Anthony [www.ecomed.org.uk](http://www.ecomed.org.uk)
2. [www.zwalliance.org.uk](http://www.zwalliance.org.uk), [www.bathnes.gov.uk](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk) and other websites.
3. Waste Minimisation Act, 1998, Annex C.
4. Some examples:
  - (a) Plastic bags for inserts in weekend papers, when it could be paper which is recyclable.
  - (b) Epson inkjet cartridges are the only ones which cannot be recycled. Sale should be prohibited until they can.
  - (c) If Marks and Spencer can pack their sandwiches in a compostible card and corn starch window packet, so can other retailers