



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WASTE DISPOSAL OFFICERS

## **NAWDO press release – New waste incinerator standards**

**[Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025]**

[Start]

The National Association of Waste Disposal Officers (NAWDO) supports the principle of ensuring that the right mix of infrastructure is developed to support Net Zero ambitions. However, restricting energy from waste (EFW) capacity will not in itself drive reductions in material use, nor increases in reuse and recycling. It is an outdated notion that recycling is reduced by a need to feed EFW plants, and NAWDO is concerned that it is distracting focus from where change really needs to be made to drive down raw material use and decrease emissions.

Local authorities already have a statutory duty to dispose of municipally collected waste and bear the cost and delivery risk if there is not enough EFW capacity, and it's therefore essential for Government to have in place regulations that require producers and retailers to drive the delivery of low waste outcomes without leaving the problem to hard pressed councils alone.

The report states that new EFW incinerators should use the best pollution controls, make use of heat production and carbon capture technology, as well as lowering the amount of waste sent to landfill. NAWDO agrees that any facilities need to be built to an extremely high standard for the benefit of communities and the environment. Many local authorities using EFW facilities are already working (solely or with their provider) to meet these criteria, ensuring that clean and safe waste disposal facilities are available to receive municipal waste. Government needs to do more to support this, and particularly when it comes to implementing technologies such as carbon capture infrastructure, as this option will be difficult for some owing to cost and geography.

In addition, the UK still expects to landfill up to 10% of all municipal solid wastes until 2035, which will see several million tonnes of residual waste being landfilled. Incinerating this waste would ensure that there is recovery of energy and material resources from this waste, while minimising the amount of potentially harmful waste that is left buried, creating highly polluting leachate and air emissions, for future generations to manage. The continued reliance on this landfill capacity raises the question of whether there is actually sufficient EFW capacity for the UK to be self-sufficient, particularly as the true impacts of the Government's collection and packaging reforms remain to be seen. The Government must be careful to avoid a scenario where restricted EFW capacity leads to greater reliance on landfill or export in the future, which would be a backwards step.



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Government policy should also be focused 'upstream' of the waste sector, driving change in how the UK actually consumes products and materials. Extended producer responsibility (EPR) regimes should be introduced as a matter of urgency for a much wider range of products than for packaging alone, in order to drive design changes and promote more sustainable consumption habits. However, rather than just seeking to increase recycling, which does not always offer significant carbon benefits over efficient disposal methods, there needs to be much greater emphasis on reducing waste, increasing reuse, and making product repair more accessible and affordable.

There also needs to be a renewed national dialogue about the role of citizens in driving a Circular Economy, including those living in the increasing number of higher density developments with shared bins. People with a wide range of circumstances, backgrounds and values need to be engaged in a relevant and motivational way to ensure that, in line with the principles of the waste hierarchy, waste is reduced in the first place, and reuse and recycling services that are put in place are used to their full potential. Although this is not something that is likely to be achieved by local authorities alone, with more funding and resources provided by Government, councils could do more to help initiate this change.

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**About us:**

**NAWDO**, the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers, is the primary network and voice for local authorities with statutory responsibility for waste treatment and disposal. NAWDO was formed in 1992 and its members include London Boroughs, Metropolitan, Unitary, Joint Waste Disposal Authorities, Waste Partnerships and County Councils from all UK regions (except Scotland) to keep up to date with the fast-changing waste and resources industry. Through NAWDO local authorities are provided with presentation on regional, national, international and strategic forums and groups to inform, influence and collaborate with key stakeholders and policy makers. NAWDO is entirely run by volunteers and through its Policy and Advisory (P&A) Committee it sets the direction of the organisation with member engagement. With over 80 members NAWDO represents around 80% of all local authorities with waste disposal duties in the UK. NAWDO holds quarterly meetings where its members, central government, regulators, waste industry and other affiliated groups discuss and debate challenges and current developments in the waste and resources industry, helping shape and influence (future) decisions and policy. It also provides an online forum where members can openly discuss and debate current and relevant issues facing senior officers with waste treatment and disposal portfolios.

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