



OF BARNET, CAMDEN, ENFIELD,
HACKNEY, HARINGEY, ISLINGTON
& WALTHAM FOREST, TOGETHER
WITH EXTINCTION REBELLION LONDON

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EXTINCTION REBELLION URGES 7 COUNCILS TO ABANDON INCINERATOR PLANS

Letter to 400+ Councillors Calls for Official Pause by 20 May, Solicits Independent Review

London, 11 March 2020—In a mass mailing today, Extinction Rebellion (XR) groups of the seven North London boroughs, together with XR London, called on more than 400 councillors to ‘immediately pause’ all work related to the construction of a new incinerator in Edmonton, in the Borough of Enfield, and to ‘issue a public announcement to this effect no later than 20 May 2020’.

In a heavily annotated letter sent to every councillor in North London, the XR coalition notes that construction on the new incinerator is due to begin at the end of 2022 as part of the £1.2 billion North London Heat and Power Project, managed by the North London Waste Authority. It urges councillors to ‘take advantage of this narrow window of opportunity’ to launch an independent review of the project.

The XR groups say they are ‘confident’ that such a review would lead councils to conclude that the project is no longer viable and that it should be abandoned ‘in favour of a renewed focus on efforts to reduce waste, recycle more of the waste that is generated, and manage the smaller quantity of residual waste in a more responsible manner’.

‘We have no doubt that councils can combine fiscal responsibility with sustainability when dealing with North London’s waste,’ states the letter. It urges councillors to refrain from building ‘facilities that will lock North London into high waste generation and high greenhouse gas emissions for decades, and possibly beyond 2075’.

The letter stresses that the public consultation on the incinerator lacked transparency and was carried out under circumstances that no longer apply. Since then, councils have declared climate and ecological emergencies and set net zero targets, the UK signed the Paris Agreement, and the UK Climate Change Act 2008 was amended to mandate net zero by 2050. Also since then, the project expanded to include non-household waste and, potentially, imports of waste from outside the seven boroughs, as the planned incinerator already exceeds present local waste processing needs by about 120,000 tonnes per year.

Meanwhile, political and public opposition to incineration has intensified, largely based on concerns about the climate and public health. The letter references MPs of all major parties who oppose incineration, including Shadow Minister for Energy and Climate Change Alan Whitehead, who said: ‘We are at a turning point. The future is net zero; it cannot be incineration.’

The XR coalition identifies numerous environmental, financial, and governance problems associated with the planned incinerator. It highlights that the facility would burn 150,000 tonnes of fossil fuels per year in the form of plastic and that it is likely to emit 700,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year (about half of which would be derived from fossil fuel sources), which is tantamount to adding 360,000 cars to North London’s roads. It also stresses that the incinerator risks becoming an ‘entirely stranded asset’ if London drastically reduces its waste and recycles more, in line with national recycling targets of 50% in 2020 and 60% in 2030, as well as the London Environment Strategy target of 65% recycling by 2030—and as national legislation sets additional requirements on emissions, packaging, and recycling.

To ‘move North London towards net zero’, the letter proposes far less costly, lower-carbon alternatives to incineration. It emphasises the benefits of reducing waste generation, boosting recycling of organics, metals, plastics, and other materials, investing in real renewable energy sources, and ‘upcycling’ waste trucks to secure a near-zero-carbon waste management system. The XR groups estimate that more than half of North London’s waste that is currently being incinerated could be recycled or composted.

The letter was sent to councillors in the Boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, and Waltham Forest, whose councils constitute the North London Waste Authority. See the full letter at <https://stop-edmonton-incinerator.org/extinction-rebellion-letter/>.

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