

The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

20th September 2020

Prime Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of a group of NHS doctors, many of us from North London, but also from all over the country, to respectfully request that you stop the North London Waste Authority's (NLWA) plans to rebuild and expand the incinerator in Edmonton – because air pollution and climate change are preventable causes of disease and death.

As you will no doubt be aware, the proposed new incinerator secured a Development Consent Order from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in 2017, and more recently, the NLWA secured a loan at the Local Infrastructure Rate from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We are respectfully asking you to instruct the Secretaries of State of these ministries to immediately review and revoke the planning permission and the granting of the loan.

While this would be an exceptional intervention, we are sure you will agree that the climate and air pollution emergencies and public health crises require it. We also understand that your personal intervention into plans to build a large incineration and gasification plant in Washington, Sunderland, recently led to the scheme being put on hold.

We would like to tell you more about why we, as doctors, believe the incinerator plans must be scrapped.

Air pollution causes more than 40,000 deaths per year in the UK. It has been linked to cancer, asthma, stroke and heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and changes linked to dementia. The health problems resulting from air pollution cost the UK more than £20billion every year.¹ Air pollution is also associated with increased rates of autism,² preterm birth, and stillbirth³. There is evidence that increased air pollution allows pathogens such as coronavirus to spread further.⁴

The incinerator will release ultra-fine particulate matter (PM 1 and PM 0.1) that cannot be filtered. According to the World Health Organization, for the very smallest particles, there's no safe threshold below which no damage to health is observed.⁵ With regards to slightly larger particles such as PM 2.5, the parliament's Particulate Matter Research Group estimated last December that the current incinerator emits some 1.8 billion PM 2.5 per second, while a study from the British Heart Foundation found that Waltham Forest, downwind from the incinerator, has the second highest PM 2.5 concentration of all boroughs in the country. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has stated that no safe level for PM 2.5 exposure has been identified.⁶ There has been no modelling of the plumes of pollution from the incinerator, and no health impact assessment conducted on the short- or long-term exposure to the plumes.

Air pollution affects deprived communities more which makes existing health inequalities worse.⁷ Recent studies have found a strong correlation between the risks of poor outcomes to Covid-19 and chronic exposure to poor air quality. In this context it is perhaps no surprise that the Edmonton wards have been the worst affected of all wards in Enfield by Covid 19, with the greatest cases and mortalities recorded amongst a community that is over 60% BAME.⁸ Dramatic improvements in health have been shown to occur when air pollution is reduced⁹ and the decommissioning of the current incinerator presents a significant opportunity to improve the air quality of one of the poorest parts of London.

The climate emergency is a public health emergency. Over the next 50 years, the proposed facility would produce as much CO2 pollution as all of London does in two years – seven hundred thousand tonnes of CO2 per year.¹⁰ This is because burning waste produces approximately one tonne of CO2 per tonne of waste burnt¹¹ and the new incinerator will have a capacity of 700,000 tonnes of waste of year, with no plans for carbon capture and storage. CO2 pollution lasts in the atmosphere for hundreds of years – so the negative health effects of the climate disruption it causes are felt far into the future.

The climate emergency will have terrible consequences for health. Floods, heatwaves, droughts and wildfires kill and injure people. Increased air pollution and allergens, decreased water quality, food scarcity, increased infectious diseases, forced migration, increased conflict and violence, and damage to health services infrastructure, are just some of the problems we will face. The climate emergency also damages people's mental health. The groups most vulnerable to health damage from the climate emergency are children, older people, those who are sick, and migrating and marginalised populations.¹² Preventing these terrible effects on health, by acting on the climate emergency now, is much easier and cheaper than trying to deal with the consequences. Prevention is better than cure.

As doctors we work daily to save lives. By securing a stop to the NLWA and the North London councils' reckless plans, you, Prime Minister, will save more lives than we will in our entire careers.¹³

It's easy to clap for our NHS and we appreciated you joining in the clapping during the height of the pandemic, despite your own ill health. We are now respectfully asking you to truly support our NHS by scrapping the Edmonton incinerator rebuild and expansion, and so reducing rates of preventable death and disease both now, and far into the future.

A copy of this letter has been sent to Iain Duncan Smith, the MP for Chingford and Woodford Green, who has been extremely supportive of the efforts of local residents to secure a pause and review of the incinerator expansion plans.

A copy has also been sent to Kate Osamor, MP for Edmonton.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Dr Rebecca Redwood, GP, London
Dr Hannah Blanchford, Specialist Registrar, London
Dr Edward Tranah, London
Dr Katie Knight, Paediatric Emergency Department Consultant, London
Dr Seveda Hassan, London
Dr Selda Ahmet London
Dr Helen Ward, Consultant in Acute Medicine
Dr Justin Daniels, Paediatric consultant, London
Dr Harry McDonough, London
Dr Jayana Patel, London
Dr Jennifer Plunkett, London
Dr Hayley Pennock, London
Dr Polia Naydenova, Geriatric Consultant, London
Dr Robert Smillie, London
Dr Christie Noble, Paediatric doctor, London
Dr Dev Mukerjee, Rheumatology Consultant, London
Dr Bhavni Shah, Rheumatology Consultant, London

Dr Zozik Fattah, Rheumatology Consultant, London
Dr Virginia Lam, London
Dr Alasdair Frater, London
Dr Lady-Namera Ejaimike, London
Dr William Walshe, London
Dr Ahmed Nisar, London
Dr Nick Rollitt, London
Dr Cara Surtees, London,
Dr Shreya Chaudhuri, London
Dr Rebecca Sen, London
Dr Eleni Armeni, London
Dr Chris Valerio, Consultant Respiratory Physician
Dr Zaheer Mangera, Consultant Respiratory Physician
Dr Asim Khan, London
Dr Maya Zosmer, London
Dr Laura Davis, London
Dr David Peprah, London
Dr Sonia Adesara, GP Registrar, London,

Dr Honey Smith, GP, Sheffield
Dr Hellen Caller, Paediatric Doctor, London
Dr Alasdair Frater, London
Dr Clare Tomlinson, London
Dr Claire Highton, GP, London
Dr Rachel Cottam, GP, Brighton
Dr Vishal Cohauhan, Tunbridge Wells
Dr Sarah Benn, GP, Birmingham
Dr Clare Andrews, GP, London
Dr Jim Cave, Haematology Consultant, Manchester
Dr Chris Newman, GP, London
Dr Nadia Audhay, London
Dr Emma Radcliffe, GP, London
Dr Juliet Bottle, London
Dr Sarah Foot, London
Dr Hoon Teo, Manchester
Dr David Mckelvey, Manchester
Dr Grace Thompson, Bristol

Dr Angela Wilson, GP, Oxford
Dr Angela Nicholas, Dorset
Mr Andrew Stevenson, Surgeon, Somerset
Dr Dominic Nee, Brighton
Dr Deepa Shah, GP, London
Dr Jessica Keeble, GP, Bradford
Dr Sarah Andersen, GP, East Sussex
Dr Kat Bristol, GP, Gloucestershire
Dr Naomi Adelson, GP, Birminham
Dr Amelia Cussans, Psychiatry doctor, London
Dr Emma Monaghan, GP, Lincolnshire
Dr Elizabeth Harris, Newcastle
Dr Hannah Rosen O'Sullivan, London
Dr Matt Thomas-Davies, London
Dr Suezee Hill, Somerset
Dr Finola O'Neill, GP, North Devon
Dr Kirsten Shukla, Consultant Psychiatrist, Oxford
Dr Rebecca Hall, GP, Somerset
Dr Katie Belremolt, London
Dr Lola Rivas, London

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