



PRESS RELEASE

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EDMONTON INCINERATOR DATA ‘GROSSLY MISLEADING’ OR SIGN OF IGNORANCE

- New analysis demonstrates CO₂ from waste incinerator at least twice as bad for climate as landfill
- ‘Devastating takedown’ of North London Waste Authority (NLWA) as deceptive or inept
- NLWA ‘should have’ installed ‘pre-sorting’ facility to cut climate impact, extract plastics, boost recycling
- Investors warned to ‘steer clear’ of Edmonton incinerator ‘green bonds’, which are ‘simply not green’
- UK Treasury, UK Municipal Bonds Agency advised not to issue any bonds for waste incinerators

London, 19 April 2022—A new report demonstrates that the North London Waste Authority has been using inaccurate carbon emission figures to misrepresent the planned waste incinerator in Edmonton as ‘part of the climate solution’ and capable of ‘saving’ more than 200,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year compared to landfill.

The report, authored by established waste sector expert Dr Dominic Hogg, was released just two weeks after the UN’s climate scientists warned that ‘it’s now or never’ in that CO₂ emissions must decline by **2025** to avoid dangerous climate change. Dr Hogg’s analysis debunks NLWA claims by revealing that sending waste to the planned incinerator would actually be far worse for the climate than landfilling it.

‘The net emissions from incineration are double those of landfill,’ finds Dr Hogg. He also shows that the Edmonton incinerator’s climate impact would increase over the years: ‘by the time the facility nears the end of its life, its net emissions may be 3.7 times the emissions that would be generated by landfilling the same waste’.

NLWA’s attempts to present landfill as the only alternative to burning waste is similarly greenwash. In one of its own 2021 assessments, NLWA shows that north London’s non-recyclable waste would be sent for incineration elsewhere in London if the Edmonton plant remained unbuilt. Indeed, the Mayor’s forecast indicates that London will have 250,000 tonnes of surplus incineration capacity if recycling targets are met and the Edmonton plant is *not* built (overcapacity would swell to 950,000 tonnes if it *is* built).

In analysing the data used by NLWA, which is based on calculations undertaken by the consultancy Ramboll, Dr Hogg identified a methodological flaw in the way the landfill was assessed, and a failure to update a 2013 figure for the avoided carbon intensity associated with power generation. He concludes that the use of a 2013 figure for an incinerator that is not expected to be operational until 2026 or later ‘is either grossly misleading or reflects a failure to understand what is happening to the UK power generation system’, since the grid alternative is decarbonising rapidly.

Dr Hogg also slams the UK Municipal Bonds Agency (UKMBA) for planning to issue ‘green bonds’ to finance the Edmonton plant. He advises green investors to ‘steer clear of the UKMBA’s debut green bond’ as it is ‘simply not green’ and ‘should not have passed scrutiny by UKMBA’. He adds: ‘The issuance’s inclusion of the Edmonton facility undermines the credibility of the UKMBA’s green bonds, and is particularly damaging since this is the UKMBA’s debut green issue.’

The critique extends beyond the Edmonton plant. Dr Hogg writes: ‘The HM Treasury and UK Government Debt Management Office and the UKMBA should cease any bond issues in support of energy from waste incineration. They should then align their approaches with the view developed under the aegis of the official UK taxonomy’ of sustainable finance activities.

Dr Hogg’s analysis of NLWA data comes after years of campaigning against the planned incinerator, and multiple attempts by Extinction Rebellion and others to prove that the NLWA CO₂ figures are invalid. Given that he has more than 30 years of experience campaigning and consulting on environmental issues, his intervention will be difficult to dismiss.

On Twitter, one campaigner called Dr Hogg's report a 'devastating takedown of the NLWA incinerator plan', noting that the £800 million 'environmentally disastrous' incinerator project was 'massively worse' than councillors who supported it had been told.

This news comes on the heels of the Government's proposal to halve non-recyclable waste by 2042 (compared to 2019 levels), which corresponds to a recycling rate of 70%–75%. The proposal has already led to calls for two waste incineration projects to be halted – in Dorset and Wiltshire – amid predictions that considerably less waste will be available for incineration. The target is expected to become law by the autumn and will further weaken the basis on which NLWA is building the Edmonton incinerator.

Links

- Dr Dominic Hogg's blog and report: <https://www.dominichogg.com/hoggblog/should-incineration-attract-finance-from-green-bonds>
- Dr Dominic Hogg and Prashant Vaze's Environmental Finance article about the 'green bonds' (registration required): <https://www.environmental-finance.com/content/analysis/a-burning-issue.html>
- Public Finance article on pausing of 'green bonds' (registration required): https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2022/04/waste-body-pauses-plans-uk-municipal-bonds-agency-issuance?utm_source=Adestra&%3Butm_medium=email&%3Butm_term=
- Call on UK Municipal Bonds Agency to withdraw 'green bonds' for Edmonton incinerator: <https://stop-edmonton-incinerator.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Call-on-UKMBA-to-withdraw-green-bonds-for-Edmonton-incinerator-as-incompatible-with-UK-taxonomy-for-sustainable-finance.pdf>