

Waste Incineration

Volume 733: debated on Thursday 25 May 2023

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Elliot Colburn >

(Carshalton and Wallington) (Con)

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6. What steps she is taking to reduce the environmental impact of waste incineration. ([905123 \(Unique identification number\)](#))

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs >

(Rebecca Pow)

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We want to see less waste being sent to incinerators, which is why we set a statutory target to halve the 2019 level of residual waste by 2042. The Environment Agency inspects and audits energy from waste plants to ensure that they are complying with the requirements of their environmental permits, which include strict emissions limits and associated strict requirements to monitor those limits.

Elliot Colburn >

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Only about 20% of the waste that goes into the Beddington incinerator in my constituency is plastic, but it makes up three quarters of the harmful particulates that come out of the chimney stacks. Technology is available to extract plastic before it is burnt, and is being trialled around the country. Does the Minister agree that all waste incineration plants should be installing this technology as soon as possible?

Rebecca Pow >

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We have legislated to prevent incinerators from accepting separately collected paper, metal, glass and plastic unless they have gone through a recycling facility first. We are trying to reduce all our waste but particularly plastic, and our plastic packaging reforms, which are under way, will mean that, overall, less waste will be incinerated.

Kerry McCarthy >

(Bristol East) (Lab)

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As the Minister has said, we need to reduce the amount of waste that is being incinerated. One way of doing that would be to develop a truly circular economy, which could also result in the creation of many more green jobs. This is a DEFRA responsibility, but we do not hear much from DEFRA about its plans. Will the Minister tell us what action she is taking?

Rebecca Pow >

The hon. Lady is right, and we are committed to measures to introduce a much more circular economy. We must cut the amount of resources that we use, and recycle more, reuse more and refill more. Work is under way, and data is being gathered on our extended producer responsibility scheme, which we will introduce in 2024, and the deposit return scheme will be introduced in 2025. Those, along with consistent collections, will reduce the amount of waste that we, as a society, throw away.

Mr Speaker >

I call the shadow Minister.

Ruth Jones >

(Newport West) (Lab)

Waste incinerators are three times more likely to be built in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods than in the least deprived, and people in those communities are twice as likely to have a lung condition and seven times more likely to die from one. Is the Minister confident that she has enough monitoring in place to provide accurate, timely and consistent data to ensure that these incinerators do not breach our emissions targets and thus put local people at risk of further harm?

Rebecca Pow >

It is crucial for waste incineration plants to have the correct permits and to be correctly monitored, which is why the Environment Agency has imposed strict emissions limits and applies the permit scheme to a number of pollutants to ensure that people who live near incinerators are completely safe. All operators of incinerator plants must carry out their own monitoring and report back constantly on the safety of their plants, because human health is, of course, critical.