

I'm Nick Williams, I've lived in the town for more than forty years, its welfare is very close to my heart and I'm secretary of Wisbech, March and District Trades Council. We're an umbrella organisation of delegates from Unite, Unite Community, Unison, the FBU, the NEU, the RMT and the GMB among others.

We promote union membership and we campaign on issues where the interests and well-being of our members and of the wider community are threatened.

Unions are for workers, workers need jobs so of course we're all for jobs - but not at any price.

I'd like to focus on MVV's suggestion that local job creation would be a positive benefit of this incinerator.

We're told there'll be up to 700 jobs during construction and approximately 35 full-time jobs during operation and MVV says they will "be looking to employ local people to build, operate and maintain the facility."

We doubt that many, if any, of these jobs will be local because in the opinion of experienced union officers, most major construction projects like this will see a workforce and then operatives brought from outside with the work in fact not going to local skilled trades.

Mark Plumb, Unite the Union London and Eastern regional officer says

Current and future businesses may not wish to invest in Wisbech if an incinerator existed.

If anything employment figures suggest that youth unemployment is the biggest issue in Fenland and in the current climate most employers that Unite deal with seem to be having some challenges with turnover of staff due to the pressures of the cost of living and wage stagnation over many years.

As for MVV claiming that over the construction period they will employ up to 700 people, most major projects like this sees staff employed from either national or international employers most of which will come down to price.

And as for the very small number of permanent workers, I note they intend to mainly outsource all other employment creating a race to the bottom of wages, terms and conditions by the use of tendering.

MVV imagines more local jobs coming through the need for goods and services but in our judgement that won't have any real impact " for example in Wisbech there's no hospitality sector that could benefit from this.

And we can't agree with them that an incinerator would, as they say, attract further quality development bringing even more jobs with it. We don't buy this supposed "boost to the local economy".

In fact quite the reverse. We see that the incinerator will blight the town and we fear it will discourage current and future businesses from investing, like for example at the Wisbech Gateway just down the road from the application site, ten acres of planned development.

That's the sort of development that has the potential to replace good retail and hospitality jobs the town has already lost and provide greater and wider career opportunities especially for women, school-leavers and other young people (currently we have lower than national average unemployment but markedly higher than national average youth unemployment)

These are the kinds of solutions and the kinds of jobs, the kind of real boost to the local economy that we need in our real world and not a fanciful vision of the future dreamed up by a publicist who dangles the prospect of some work and tells us:

"Don't worry, it's not all bad." Well we think it is.

The trades council has weighed up the pros and the cons, we recognise that a few local jobs may be created but it's clear to us that the price we'd pay for them would be far too high.

So we have passed a resolution opposing this incinerator because of the overwhelmingly

negative impact it would have on the town and district, its economy and the lives of its residents. It's far too big, too threatening to our health, too much a visual eyesore, too stigmatising, too punishing on our groaning road system and in completely the wrong place " it would be a body blow to a town which is by no means down and out but is always struggling to preserve its identity and maintain the well-being of its people and doing it in the face of significant levels of economic, educational and social deprivation.

Because we are in that struggle it feels faintly unpleasant of them to dress up this scheme as something that could be the beginning of an economic regeneration for the town when we realise that couldn't be further from the truth.

That's why we stand absolutely against this application and urge you to recommend refusal. Our opposition is supported by the London, East and South East region of the TUC.