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20 August 2010

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Dear Professor Thomson,

Harlescott incinerator and your role as Director of Public Health in the issuing of an IPPC permit to Veolia by the Environment Agency and also your advice to Shropshire Council on the health impact of the incinerator, which is relevant to granting planning permission

I've seen from your letter of 8 April 2010 to Malcom Bell, Strategic Manager Minerals & Waste, Shropshire Council, that you have accepted the opinion of the Health Protection Agency (HPA) with regard to the impact that emissions from the proposed Harlescott incinerator will have on health. You'll be able to see from the following Hansard written reply that there's been an appalling lack of due diligence by the HPA and others on the incinerator issue. You can use the following Hansard reply as back-up when you write to the Environment Agency to withdraw the IPPC permit and to Shropshire Council to tell them that you've been misinformed by the HPA's opinion that the incinerator will not harm health.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm091130/text/91130w0038.htm>

30 Nov 2009 : Column 539W

Incinerators: Health Hazards

Paul Holmes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect on public health of emissions from a functioning incinerator; [302956]

(2) with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Lewes of 17 September 2007, *Official Report*, column 2209W, on infant mortality: incineration, what recent assessment his Department has made of the correlation between the presence of a functioning incinerator and the incidence of infant mortality in that area. [302957]

Ann Keen: The Department has made no recent assessments of the effect on public health of emissions from incinerators, or the effects on infant mortality.

The health protection agency (HPA) recently reviewed the latest research on the impact on health of emissions to air from modern municipal waste incinerators and published a statement in September 2009. It concluded that, while it is not possible to rule out adverse health effects completely, any potential damage from modern, well-run and regulated incinerators is likely to be so small that it would be undetectable.

The advice is available on the agency's website at:

www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1251473372175

The HPA also advised that studies of public health around modern, well managed municipal waste incinerators are not recommended, since any possible health effects are likely to be small.

My letter of objection to Shropshire Council dated 27 April 2009 ended as follows:

“Your Officers and Councillors cannot be expected to make a correct decision on the Harlescott incinerator unless relevant health and mortality data is carefully examined and understood. The Council has opted for an unsafe and expensive method of waste disposal when they knew about the safer alternative of plasma gasification over five years ago in January 2004.”

Councillors and Officers have had over a year to read my letter and the accompanying documents and I want the Cllrs who will vote on this issue on 1st September 2010 to be aware that any future legal action will need to have access to relevant documents and that’s why I want you to be a key witness in any such action as you’re in a position to get the IPPC licence withdrawn and also to be able to inform Shropshire Council and all Cllrs that you have been misled by the Health Protection Agency over health effects of incinerators and you can use this written reply of 30 November 2009, to back up your stance.

You will be under great pressure to do nothing at all, but remember that you’re the Director of Public Health and you’ll be key witness in any legal action. Don’t think that this issue can be “bluffed out”. The Councils at Corby (birth defects from steelworks remediation); Wigan (Broomfield Tip fire at Standish); Norfolk (Bacton gas terminal pollution); and power company Powergen (crop damage & car paint damage due to toxic emissions from Richborough Power Station, Kent) all tried to bluff it out at first and Dr Dick van Steenis had input into all four cases.

Powergen settled out of court in March 1997.

[PowerGen forks out for Orimulsion crop damage | The ENDS Report](#)

ENDS Report - ENDS Report (subscription) - Sep 1, 1997

PowerGen has paid a substantial sum believed to be £34 million to a Kent farmer and his landlord Prudential who had alleged that combustion of **Orimulsion** at ...

Wigan set aside £2 million for compensation according to the Wigan Observe article “£2 million tip blaze compo shock” (27 January 2005). The council’s insurers weren’t expected to pay out.

Dr van Steenis advised Solicitor Des Collins on the Corby birth defects issue in 2001 and encouraged him to continue the class action. (See “Clean-up victims sue for millions”, Sunday Express, 2 May 2010)

Dr (now Professor) Virginia Murray was key player in Bacton (when she was with Guy’s Hospital Poisons Unit) and Standish. She was representing HPA at a meeting in Standish in May 2004 to downplay the health warnings given by Dr van Steenis at the public meeting in Standish Labour Club, 22 April 2004.

Dr Murray apparently told Peter Rossington, of AMOCO, to keep quiet about emissions at Bacton. She had no concerns about health damage such as reported in:

THE OBSERVER: GAS CLOUDS BLIGHT VILLAGERS' LIVES: HUNDREDS FEAR TREATENING SKYLINE, AS SICKNESS AND SKIN DISEASE ARE BLAMED ON POLLUTION FROM NORTH SEA PLANTS

Observer, The (London, England) - Sunday, February 8, 1998

Author: DAVID HARRISON

VILLAGERS of **Bacton**, on the Norfolk coast, are convinced they are being poisoned by fumes belched out by two giant gas companies, less than half a mile from the nearest houses.

Around 100 residents in the area have suffered sores, scars, liver, kidney and thyroid problems, and breathing difficulties. They blame unprocessed North Sea gas from Amoco and Phillips, but exonerate a third firm on the site, Shell. Many complain that the pollution has affected their gardens, turning mint and parsley bright yellow and killing laburnum trees. One resident said he burned his hand when he put it into a rain barrel. Pigs and dogs have also been affected, coming out in blotches and 'scratching themselves to death', according to the villagers.....continues

Only one person was successful in a health damage claim due to Bacton emissions as far as I’m aware and that was Tom Rossington, the younger brother of whistleblower Peter Rossington whose honesty over health damage at Bacton cost him his career in the petro-chemical industry. It seems that no-one likes a whistleblower on health issues - probably because it makes things so much harder for those who want to cover-up the truth. Dr van Steenis advised the Rossingtons.

I’ve enclosed the following documents:

1. My letter of objection to Shropshire Council, 27 April 2009
2. My letter of objection to the Environment Agency, 18 March 2009
3. Surrey Mirror article “Chill wind over fumes risk from incinerator”, 22 May 2008
4. Dorking Advertiser article “Incinerator fury as bosses admit to no health checks: Protestors say agency is failing to protect public from illness”, 22 May 2008
5. South London Press article “Health risk: worries of more infant deaths and heart disease found near incinerators”, 4 May 2007
6. Graph of infant mortality rates in Newham, London & England in 3-year rolling averages from Newham PCT report of 2007. This graph (Fig 3.19) shows that infant deaths in Newham were falling prior to SELCHP incinerator starting in December 1993, but rose afterwards – just a infant death rates in Lewisham rose (home to SELCHP) while rates in Boroughs free from SELCHP emissions, e.g. Hammersmith & Fulham, and Havering fell over time as seen on graph that is enclosure 7.
7. Infant mortality rate graph for Newham, Lewisham, Havering, and Hammersmith & Fulham Boroughs showing how rates fell in unexposed boroughs. (1990-2 to 2005-7)

8. Page 30 from London Health Observatory's report "Health inequalities in London: Life Expectancy and Mortality, 1998-2002, showing electoral ward map of London with majority of wards with highest death rates from coronary heart disease clustered downwind of SELCHP (with SW wind). David Seadon (Shrewsbury Chronicle) has an A3-sized London ward map with incinerator positions marked and the wards with highest & lowest death rates coloured red & green respectively.
9. Carlisle Gazette article "Healthy concern", 29 July 2010
10. Big Issue in the North article "Incinerator health risks denied", 26 April-2 May 2010.
11. Runcorn Weekly News article "Incinerator health fears", 8 July 2010. Note that the article mentions Bridgend suicides increased after Crymlyn Burrows incinerator – just like the rise in cases of gastroschisis birth defects.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Ryan BSc, C Eng, MICE

cc Shropshire Councillors and their Chief Executive, Daniel Kawczynski MP, Environment Agency, Dr Dick van Steenis MBBS. Also the Shropshire Star, which has been asleep on this issue instead of alerting readers to the dangers of incinerator emissions and also to the failure of the Health Protection Agency to do their job.