

16 JUN 2004

Brussels,  
PMA/da A :26417/D :9182

Dr. Caroline Lucas, MEP  
European Parliament  
Office 8G103  
Rue Wiertz  
B-1047 Brussels

Dear Dr Lucas,

Thank you for your letter, dated 20th April, regarding the proposed incinerator development at Colnbrook and its possible impact on the concentration of particulate matter in ambient air.

I share your concern on the possible implications of particulate matter pollution for public health. The Commission is reviewing its strategy to improve ambient air quality in the Community, and as part of this exercise, the World Health Organisation is advising on the health impacts of ambient air pollutants. This work is due to come to a conclusion in 2005 although I agree with your view that there are already some very worrying messages coming from the scientific community on the impact of fine particulate matter on public health.

Regarding the project to which you refer, new incinerators now have to comply with emission standards laid down in Directive 2000/76 on the incineration of waste. In addition to this minimum requirement such installations have to comply with Directive 96/61/EC on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control which requires the use of best available techniques to ensure a high level of protection. When justified by local environmental conditions, this directive also requires competent authorities in the Member States to ensure that additional pollution control measures, which would be more stringent than those resulting from the use of best available techniques, are implemented.

According to the information provided, a project such as the one described in your letter may also fall under Annex I of Council Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (EIA Directive) as amended by Directive 97/11/EC. This directive requires that Member States must ensure, before development consent is given, that projects likely to have significant effects on the environment are subject to an assessment of the environmental effects. The EIA would have, inter alia, to address the issues of ambient air pollutants.

The Community's air quality legislation also requires Member States to prepare plans and programmes to improve air quality where foreseen Community standards are

currently exceeded by a stipulated margin; these plans and programmes are designed to ensure that the standards are respected by the time they come into effect.

Of course all of this legislation must be enforced by the competent authorities in the United Kingdom in order to be effective and to protect the health of citizens. I would be pleased to hear from you again if you have any concerns regarding its application in relation to the projects mentioned.

Yours sincerely,



Margot WALLSTRÖM