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Our ref JPR/10.42
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19th March 2007

Dear Caroline

Ref: MEP Condemns Plan to Dump Ash at Beauty Spot

While we recognise that our proposals for Radley lakes have raised a number of issues and concerns, some of the points that you have raised in a recent news release simplify a very complicated situation and, as a result, contain a number of inaccuracies. I hope that by addressing these mistakes you will be able to better appreciate why the option to fill Lake E (Thrupp Lake) was chosen.

For example, you say that we have ignored opportunities to convert the ash into construction materials. You should be aware that Didcot A Power Station operates a £3million state of the art plant that can reprocess up to 125,000 tonnes of ash a year for sale into markets in the construction industry. Didcot A was the first power station in England to install such equipment. However, Didcot A produces more ash than there are markets for and so some must be disposed of.

Furthermore, this is neither the "cheap" or "easy" option, as disposing of ash in landfill costs npower money, whereas we are paid for the ash that we recycle.

You also suggest that we have failed to examine alternatives to filling Lake E. However, before we made the decision, I can assure you that we investigated other available opportunities. No local landfill sites or disposal routes were appropriate and to transport the ash to other sites would add to local congestion and pollution, but even this would not provide the 24 / 7 ash disposal the station needs.

Your colleague Chris Goodall suggests in your news release that the disposal of waste ash in this way would not be countenanced in Germany, however he is mistaken. In both the UK and Germany we dispose of ash in much the same way, it is the classification systems that differ. For example, in Germany, filling mines, old quarries and gravel pits, such as Lake E, is classified as recycling, whereas in the UK it is classified as landfill.

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I acknowledge that you may not approve of this scheme, but Lake E really is the only sustainable option for the disposal of PFA from Didcot A. The alternative is to significantly reduce and even halt generation at Didcot A, impacting upon the local economy and the security of the nation's electricity supply.

We have filled and restored former gravel pits at Radley for over 20 years with great success, which has helped the whole site to gain County Wildlife Status. Every effort will be made to cause as little disruption to the environment and local people as possible during the ash disposal works. Once completed, we will embark on our most comprehensive restoration plan to date, with the area being restored to create a flourishing nature reserve with public access.


You may also be interested to know that npower is contributing heavily to the development of clean coal technology and is also one of the UK's leading renewable energy companies, dedicated to generating electricity using sustainable, environmentally-friendly resources. We have a wide ranging portfolio that includes both onshore and offshore wind farms, hydro plant and co-firing biomass – a carbon neutral energy generation method that has recently been launched at Didcot.

However, at present renewable energy cannot meet the total UK demand, so the nation needs a diverse mix of generation including renewable, gas and coal.

I hope that I have been able to provide some of the facts behind what has been a very tough decision for npower. I also hope that this has reassured you and addressed some of your concerns.

Given your interest in this issue, and probably others associated with power generation, I would welcome the chance to meet with you at the station at a mutually convenient time to discuss them. If you feel that would be of value, then please contact me. In the meantime, if you would like any further information about Radley then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours sincerely



John Rainford
Site Manager