

**Date: 09/08/2021**

Ref: CAM1889

Dear Requester

Thank you for your request for information dated 08/07/2021 about waste incineration in Edmonton. We have dealt with this under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004.

**Response**

The council holds the information requested. However we are withholding some of the information because it is exempt. The answers to your questions are below. We have stated where we are withholding information and what exemptions apply. Please see the refusal notices at the end of the answers which explain how and why the exemptions apply.

It should be noted that some of the questions you have asked are not valid questions under FOI/EIR. However we will still address the points raised.

**1. Risk assessment of potential for stranded incineration asset.**

The NLHPP project includes a state-of-the art recycling centre, a new Resource Recovery Facility which will have capacity to manage 135,000 tonnes of recyclable material every year, including metals, plastic and wood. For the first time, north London residents will also be able to come to the site to bring in their recyclables to a new reuse and recycling centre. The project also includes an education centre called EcoPark House, in addition to the energy-recovery-facility or ERF which will replace the existing energy-from-waste plant.

**a. What are these costs and how is Camden Council seeking to protect residents from this very high risk?**

In terms of the sizing of the facility and the risk of the facility being a 'stranded asset' the Mayor of London's Environment Strategy is very clear that the NLHPP is required to provide residual waste capacity in the future, along with three other energy from waste facilities in London. To clarify, the Mayor's Environment Strategy states, on page 284, that:

"Modelling suggests that if London achieves the reduction and recycling targets set out in this strategy, it will have sufficient EfW [energy from waste] capacity to manage London's non-recyclable municipal waste, once the new Edmonton and Beddington Lane facilities are operational".

The new Energy Recovery Facility has been responsibly designed to accommodate a range of residual waste arisings in north London. NLWA is clear that this is an appropriate way to plan essential services for two million people.

**b. And how would the financial and emissions savings from the use of air-source heat pumps, as compared to the reliance on far more carbon-intensive energy-from-waste (which is demonstrably not "low-carbon"), be factored into this calculation?**

NLWA has a statutory responsibility to manage the waste collected by seven north London boroughs. The heat offtake plans for the plant are a helpful by-product of what is for NLWA a statutory responsibility to manage residual waste in the most environmentally beneficial way. The heat offtake proposals are being developed by Energetik, (<https://www.energetik.london/>), an Enfield company with proposals to use the heat from the energy-recovery-facility to heat the homes and businesses being built on a large local redevelopment project at Meridian Water, and potentially beyond.

The benefit for NLWA of having a heat-offtake is that it makes the facility more thermally efficient. It would be an inappropriate comparison to suggest that use of heat pumps in domestic dwellings is a cheaper alternative to the energy recovery facility since that suggestion would not provide any solution for the safe and environmentally responsible disposal of north London's waste.

**c. You said that you thought such an assessment had been carried out about 1.5 years back and that you would look for it. Could you please share this assessment as soon as possible so that residents may understand the Council's approach? If there is no such assessment, could you assure us that one will be carried out without delay, ideally before the summer holidays?**

We are not aware of an assessment being carried out comparing the financial and emissions performance of heating from energy-recovery compared to air-source heat pumps.

**2. Removal of plastics from incineration waste stream.**

**If the Council defers to the NLWA on such matters, please clarify how Camden Council's NLWA board members are planning to ensure that this critical commitment is made by all north London boroughs through the NLWA and if not, why not.**

The main way in which plastics are separated from other waste so that they can be recycled is via segregated collected systems. Camden, along with its partners in the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) and Veolia, delivers comprehensive recycling services throughout the borough alongside information, advice and support to ensure that residents can recycle as much suitable household waste as possible. This includes the collection of the six main 'dry recycling' materials (includes plastics); separate collections for food, garden waste and textiles, batteries and small electric items from kerbside properties (houses or converted homes); and ongoing campaign and project work on reducing contamination and improving recycling throughout the borough. To the extent that plastic remains in the residual waste, this is as a result of residents failing to take advantage of the many and easy recycling opportunities which are made available to them.

As a result of the contract for dry mixed recycling disposal, for which NLWA is responsible, north London residents have the opportunity to recycle their pots, tubs, trays and punnets at the kerbside. There are residents in other parts of the country who are not offered this extensive service. More information about recycling in north London can be found online [here](#).

A major concern is to minimise contamination in recycling. Contamination arises if residents put non-recyclable material in their recycling bins: this affects the ability of NLWA's contractors to get the maximum tonnage of recycling from north London residents. NLWA therefore works hard to raise awareness of this and help inform residents, so they put the right waste in the right bin. Success in this is important in maximising the recycling of plastic and other materials.

The Government has indicated that it is considering further measures which would have the effect of reducing plastic in residual waste. One measure is to regulate to introduce new "consistent collection" requirements. A further measure is the introduction of a deposit return scheme for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Consultations on these two issues have recently been held. We now await Government proposals as to the scope of measures for final implementation - which will enable judgements to be made as to the extent to which they will also reduce the volume of plastic in residual waste. On the deposit return scheme proposals, for example, all north London boroughs have argued for an "all in scheme" which would cover the widest range of containers and so maximise the likelihood of plastic being removed from the residual waste stream. However, other interest groups have argued for a more limited scheme, and it is to be seen what conclusions the Government will reach.

In addition to management of waste, all north London boroughs and NLWA take seriously the issue of waste prevention.

NLWA is pioneering new measures to encourage businesses to reduce plastic waste in shops. Its Low Plastic Zones, in shopping streets across north London, are the first of their kind in the country. They encourage businesses to sign a Charter of Commitment to reduce the use of plastics, and West Hampstead in the borough of Camden is one of the first areas in the country to achieve 'Low Plastic Zone' status.

This is coupled with investment in new recycling infrastructure. NLWA is investing in new infrastructure to increase the volume of plastics, and other materials, that can be recycled from borough bulky collections. A new £100m Resource Recovery Facility is being constructed now at the Edmonton EcoPark. It will have capacity to manage around 135,000 tonnes of material for recycling every year, for the benefit of all north London boroughs.

NLWA is aware of suggestions that large volumes of plastics could be extracted from people's bin bags. It has been proposed that a 'Dirty Materials Recycling Facility' could be used to this end. More information about the efficacy of these plants is provided below under question 4. As noted above, there are Government proposals for measures which could reduce plastic in the residual waste stream. Depending on whether and when such measures are introduced and how successful they are in practice, they would further reduce the benefits of such a plant.

**3. Monitoring of incinerator pollution and toxins. Please share Camden Council's plans for ensuring that:**

- a. **1) continuous monitoring of emissions (including dioxins, furans, metals, NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub>, and nanoparticles) is made possible through the placement of monitoring devices inside the smoke stack of the current and potential future Edmonton incinerators, including during start-up and shut-down periods, when far greater amounts of toxins tend to be emitted; and**

- b. 2) real-time data is published transparently on an accessible website, so that local residents may keep abreast of emission levels at all times. If there are no such plans, please clarify when and how the Council will ensure effective emissions monitoring, noting all planning on this issue to date and the Council's position on an appropriate emissions monitoring strategy.**

In 2020 a number of prominent parliamentarians in the All-Party Parliamentary Sustainable Resources Group, signed a report 'No Time To Waste', concluding that energy recovery facilities with heat offtake are the most advanced and sustainable solution for managing non-recyclable waste as the UK transitions to a Net Zero economy.

The report states "By sending the [residual] waste to EfW [energy-from-waste facilities], it is pushed up the waste hierarchy, diverted away from environmentally damaging landfill, and can support the UK's heat and power needs. At the same time, it helps to maintain a clean and hygienic waste service; something the public has come to expect; the need for which has been reinforced during the COVID crisis".

The NLHPP is an exemplar of this approach. The facility will be the first of its kind in the UK to be fitted with the most modern specifications, using the world's best technology to capture and carefully filter emissions, making it one of the safest and cleanest in the country.

The emissions control technology for the new facility will be so effective that, for the vast majority of the year, the ERF is expected to have effectively no impact on local concentrations of pollution. Other sources will vastly outweigh the clean and modern facility – including road transport and wood fires in people's homes. Edmonton in particular suffers from the impacts of the North Circular, with road transport being the biggest single biggest cause of local pollution.

The replacement energy-recovery-facility (ERF) will, like the current plant, contain continuous emissions monitoring sensors in the stack. The Environmental Permit for the new facility, which was issued in 2017, sets out the monitoring requirements – see Clause 3.5.5. The permit is available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/620311/Permit.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/620311/Permit.pdf)

If you have any queries about the emissions limits and the requirements set out in the permit these queries should be addressed to the Environment Agency.

LondonEnergy Ltd, who operate the existing energy-from-waste plant, and will also operate the replacement facility, already provide details of the average monthly emissions data on their website <https://www.londonenergyltd.com/community/emission-data/>

The permit sets conditions controlling the management, operation and the control of emissions from the energy recovery process, including the monitoring and reporting of emissions to all environmental media. Section 4.2 of the permit sets out the reporting requirements in detail. It is not a requirement of the permit for real-time emissions data to be made available on a publicly accessible website.

#### **4. Mixed-waste material recovery facility (MRF).**

- a. Please explain what steps Camden Council is taking to ensure that the NLWA is carrying out an evaluation of the potential impact of a mixed-waste material recovery facility (MRF) on site in Edmonton, as evidence shows that such facilities reduce the amount residual waste going to incineration by 40%–60%, while increasing recycling revenue by recovering, upgrading, and producing bales of recyclables (plastics, metals, drink cartons, etc.) for onward shipment to recycling facilities. The introduction of such a facility in Edmonton would call for a reassessment of the incineration need, as the facility would be likely to recover at least 40% of the black bag waste before incineration.**

North London's recycling is already sorted via a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF). This facility is operated by Biffa Waste Services in Edmonton and located immediately to the north of the Edmonton EcoPark. MRFs sort the recycling, which is collected by boroughs at the kerbside which, as referenced earlier, is one of the widest kerbside collection services in the country. MRFs do not replace the need for an energy from waste plant, which manages the waste residents dispose of in their residual waste bin.

NLWA is aware of suggestions that 'Dirty Materials Recycling Facilities', also known as 'D-MRFs', could extract some volume of north London's residual waste for recycling and remove the need for a new ERF. Experience shows that the majority of waste which passes through a D-MRF is only suitable for energy recovery. For example, plants in the Netherlands have typically extracted around 10% of the total waste for recycling. It is important to note that the Dutch waste system is very different from north London. Unlike north London, residents in Dutch cities are not offered extensive kerbside recycling collections. Instead, the focus is on collective recycling points known as 'bring banks'. The majority do not accept plastic. This is the main reason Dutch cities use 'D-MRFs' to extract some plastic from residual waste, and it would therefore be expected that the yield of plastic in a D-MRF in the Netherlands would be considerably higher than in north London. Despite this the results from the Netherlands indicate that even in that situation only around 10% of material is extracted - not the 40% claimed in the question.

Even when this waste is extracted, contamination is a key issue. A D-MRF can capture materials that are only suitable for energy recovery – e.g. plastics contaminated with food, chemicals, paint or cooking oil. This means that large volumes of the waste extracted for recycling cannot find an end market.

A further issue is cost. D-MRFs in the Netherlands are funded by a tax levied on manufacturers (€600 per tonne of waste). No equivalent system is available in the UK. The costs would instead fall to local authorities, at an expected extra £30-£60m per year. And none of this would avoid the need to build our new Energy Recovery Facility.

#### **5. EY report. Please share the full EY report on the NLWA's relationship with LondonEnergy Ltd. The report is mentioned in item 19 of the NLWA's agenda of 3 December 2020 (see <https://www.nlwa.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Agenda%20Pages.pdf>).**

We have considered your request for this report but conclude that it is exempt from release, i.e. that it is exempt information under Sections, 40(2), 41 and 43 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. Please see the refusal notice below.

**6. LondonEnergy NED remuneration. Please specify whether the non-executive directors who were appointed on 20 January 2021 are to be remunerated and, if so, how/how much. This question relates to Martin Capstick, Cllr Clyde Loakes, Cllr Rebecca Louise Rennison, Ursula Susan Taylor, Douglas Wilkinson, and Ian Michael Williams.**

Non-executive members of the LondonEnergy Ltd board who are in employment as local authority officers do not receive any remuneration i.e. Martin Capstick, Ursula Susan Taylor, Douglas Wilkinson, and Ian Michael Williams.

Councillors make declarations of interest in their respective boroughs i.e. Cllr Clyde Loakes and Cllr Rebecca Louise Rennison. Boroughs already publish registers of Councillors' interests. For completeness Councillor Peter Zinkin is also on the board of LondonEnergy Ltd.

As the information requested is already reasonably accessible elsewhere, under the respective Council's transparency policies, it is exempt under the absolute exemption in Section 21.

**Refusal Notice:**

**Section 40(2)**

The council has withheld this information under the absolute exemption in Section 40 (2). The information withheld is personal information because it allows a living individual to be identified. We have considered the legitimate public interest in disclosure against the interests of the data subject/s and concluded that disclosure would contravene the principle in the General Data Protection Regulation that personal data is processed fairly and lawfully. In the circumstances of the case disclosure would not be fair to the individuals particularly considering that Freedom of Information responses are public documents and published to the world and not provided just to the requester.

**Section 41**

This information is withheld because it is exempt under Section 41. This absolute exemption applies where the information was provided to the public authority in confidence. The information was received from a third party, EY. This information is covered by a common law duty of confidence and releasing this information would constitute a breach of confidence with both NLWA and LondonEnergy Ltd. In other words, if we disclosed the information the provider or a third party could take the council to court.

**Section 43**

The Council has withheld this information because Section 43(2) exempts information whose disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

The council is relying upon the higher threshold of likelihood that disclosure would have a prejudicial effect on the Council. The parties whose commercial interests are concerned are LondonEnergy Ltd, NLWA and the Council. The harm that would be caused to LondonEnergy Ltd by releasing the EY report could negatively affect the ability of the company to secure the most economic solutions in the open market and therefore affect the commercial interests and profitability of the organisation. Whilst LondonEnergy Ltd, is wholly owned by NLWA, the Authority has an interest in ensuring the company is financially secure in order to minimise the

financial risk and burden on Camden and other north London taxpayers. To release commercially sensitive information about the company would jeopardise that security.

In applying this qualified exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the interest in favour of disclosure.

**The public interest arguments for releasing this information are as follows:**

- Improving transparency in decision making.
- Ensuring value for money.
- To ensure accountability of the authority.

**The public interest arguments for withholding this information are as follows:**

- It is not in the public interest to disclose information that would be likely to damage the commercial interests of a company, as this could lead to financial problems for the company and/or job losses.
- It is not in the public interest to damage the council's or NLWA's commercial interests, as this affects how it spends public money and the services it can provide to residents and other stakeholders.
- Withholding the information does not prevent scrutiny of the council's actions and decisions.

We considered whether the presumption in favour of disclosure in the regulations overrides the decision to withhold and have concluded that it does not.

We have decided that the public interest in withholding/redacting some of the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

**Advice and Assistance:**

As advice and assistance, information on LondonEnergy Ltd can be found on their website at the following location <https://www.londonenergyltd.com/>

**Further Information:**

We do not give our consent for any names and contact details provided in this response to be sent marketing material. Any such use will be reported to the ICO as a breach of General Data Protection Regulations and the Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulations.

Why not check our Portal [Open Data Camden](#) before making a new request as your question may already be answered by a previous [FOI response](#) or in one of our many useful and interesting datasets.

**Your Rights**

If you are not happy with how your response was handled you can request an Internal Review within 2 months of this letter by email to [foireviews@camden.gov.uk](mailto:foireviews@camden.gov.uk) or post: Information and Records Management Team, London Borough of Camden, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE. Please quote your case reference number. If you are not satisfied with the Internal Review outcome you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office at [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

telephone 0303 123 1113, or post to Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. The ICO website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) may be useful.

Yours sincerely

**Philip Lewis**  
**Information Rights Officer**