

Weymouth (and Portland) Civic Society
Presentation to Public Inquiry on 14 December 2023

Weymouth (and Portland) Civic Society has objected to the proposed development of a waste Incinerator at Portland Port at every stage.

We have approximately 120 members of the Civic Society and 150 volunteers supporting the two museums (Nothe Fort Museum of Coastal Defence and the Tudor House Museum in Weymouth) that we operate.

We pride ourselves on being open to new developments if they are good for the area, and we consciously do not adopt a stance of automatically opposing new developments.

We usually find a range of opinions about new developments across our membership. The Incinerator is, I believe, the only proposed development that every member and volunteer in our organisation has opposed.

Today, I would like to address the applicants' ^{suggestion} ~~claim~~ that the proposed development will be a benefit to local people and on balance cause ^{no} ~~no~~ harm.

The county of Dorset is extremely attractive to visitors and locals alike, as evidenced by the recent TV Series 'Dorset: Country and Coast'. The publicity for this series, which was narrated by Alan Titchmarsh, said that it would 'show the county's beautiful rolling countryside, its charming seaside towns and the world-renowned Jurassic Coast. We explore Dorset's most iconic sites, uncover lesser-known gems, and examine daily Dorset life through a variety of perspectives - from locals to holidaymakers and farmers to wildlife conservationists - and immerse ourselves in the sights, sounds and tastes of the region.'

Tourism provides a key part of Dorset's income and generates a significant proportion of its employment. The most recent figures that I could find show that approximately 10% of employment in Weymouth and Portland is in tourism and hospitality.

Two local features are particularly important in bringing visitors from across the world to Dorset:

- the Jurassic Coast which has UNESCO World Heritage designation
- the iconic Chesil Beach and Fleet Lagoon which have SSSI and international Ramsar designations

Both of these will be damaged by the proposed development.

The incinerator would be almost in the centre of the 95-mile Jurassic Coast which runs from Studland in the east to Exmouth in the west. Whilst Portland Port itself is excluded from the Jurassic Coast, this doesn't mean that developments should be allowed in the port which, by their scale and potential emissions, degrade the Jurassic Coast.

UNESCO has shown its willingness to remove World Heritage Site status from sites which no longer meet their criteria because of inappropriate developments. According to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, only 3 sites have been stripped of their designation in the past 50 years: one each in Oman and Germany, and Liverpool, which lost its designation in 2021. Surely the UK does not want to ^{add} ~~add~~ another lost site to this ignominious list? Two for the UK and two for the rest of the world? ^{and returning ash}

The 80 lorries each day bringing waste to be incinerated on Portland would thunder past the Fleet lagoon, inevitably increasing litter and ^{ash,} making the area less attractive to wildlife. These lorries will

Ⓢ Portsmouth capacity is 2 hrs from Portland, not the same!

also degrade the quality of life for people living on the small roads, Boot Hill in Weymouth or Portland Road in Whyke, that would be the route to the incinerator. Air quality, which is already poor, will be even worse for residents as well as for schoolchildren being educated at schools along the routes.

It is also worth noting that access to Portland is via Portland Beach Road which floods and is closed during heavy storms. This route is likely to be closed more regularly as sea levels rise due to the effect of global warming. This again makes the proposed location inappropriate.

The reason for the large number of lorries each day is because Portland is not where the vast majority of waste is generated. Over half of the population of Dorset is located in the urban centres of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole with only 3% of the population living on Portland.

Dorset does not have a good road infrastructure – it is one of the few counties in England that does not have any motorways. According to Google maps, the journey from Bournemouth to Castletown on Portland is about 40 miles but will take an hour even when the traffic is light.

Of course, this distance relates to waste generated within Dorset and it appears to be likely that waste will be also imported into Dorset for incineration further increasing travel times.

~~I believe that lorry drivers are unlikely to be employed from the Portland area because most journeys will start well away from Portland.~~

But the damage would not be limited to these examples. Locally, a significant amount of our physical heritage is linked to Coastal Defence and I have no doubt that sites such as the High Angle Battery on the Verne would be degraded by the presence of a massive incinerator at the foot of the cliffs.

Walking for health is a key plank of public health campaigns. The walks around Portland include part of the South West Coast Path and many walkers come to enjoy the walks along its cliffs. This is a growing, out-of-season part of the local offer for visitors. It is difficult to believe that the number of walkers, or the climbers practising on the smaller cliffs on the east of Portland, will not be reduced if the incinerator is built.

Conclusion

I hope that I have demonstrated that the proposed development would, contrary to the developers' assertions, cause significant harm.

It would harm the natural and physical environment and key local heritage sites therefore threatening employment in a key local sector whilst offering little in return.

It would degrade the quality of life for people living alongside the access roads, as well as for children being educated in schools along these routes.

Probably most significantly, it would endanger the area's UNESCO World Heritage site and Ramsar designations, which would be damaging not just to Dorset, but to the UK as a whole.

It is extremely important for the people of this area that the decision of the Dorset Council Planning Committee to unanimously reject the proposed development of an incinerator on the Jurassic Coast is upheld.

Chris Moyle (Chair of Weymouth Civic Society)