

**Speaking as an "Interested Party" at the Enquiry into
the Portland Waste Incinerator (ERF)
Thursday 14th December, 2023**

I am fortunate to be a resident of Weymouth living close to the Rodwell Trail with its views across the water to Portland and the proposed site of the waste incinerator. I enjoy walking or cycling along the Trail and over to Portland as often as I can, as well as water sports from the shore.

When I first heard about the proposals to build a waste incinerator near Portland Port, I was surprised because I had thought that Dorset was managing to deal with its waste pretty effectively and I imagined that no one would even consider building such a facility on the Jurassic Coast unless there was an overwhelming need for one that could not be met elsewhere in the county or the country.

However, I quickly became aware that there was, and still is, no overwhelming need for this facility, nor any ~~any~~ need whatsoever. It is simply a very lucrative scheme for the ^{powerful and} owners of the Port. I am not against capitalism or private enterprise but I do believe that major developments of this kind must deliver a public good, especially when the actual and potential harm that they will cause will be widely experienced.

I worry about the dangers to public health from the airborne emissions from the proposed facility. Particulate matter of this kind can not be confined to one spot - it will go wherever the winds and, in this location, the tides, carry it. Its effect will not be confined to human health either, as this place is home to many varieties of flora and fauna, some geographically unique. Also, the emissions from the vehicles - whether marine or land-based - used to bring the waste to the facility, and potentially to carry away the residual ash are concerning. The frequency of these transport journeys is itself a worry to local people but each one also risks a potential hazard should any of their toxic cargo be inadvertently lost in transit.

You could argue that the management of such risks and harms is inherent in any such large project, but what makes this one different is that it is not needed by Portland and Weymouth, nor by Dorset, nor even by England. It is not wanted by the local population and will not serve them in any way. In fact its presence can only be injurious to the principal commercial enterprise of the area, which is tourism. The presence of a large waste incinerator at the foot of the heights of Portland, its giant smokestack reaching almost to those heights, is not what the thousands of tourists who visit this area every year are expecting or wishing to see. They come for the natural beauty, relatively unspoilt by large man-made structures, the purity of the air and water, those same features that bring joy into the hearts of those of us lucky enough to live here.

I find it very disheartening that this appeal is even taking place, given the widespread public relief when the original application was denied. Those wanting to build and operate this facility have attempted to offer up small benefits to offset or mitigate the weight of harm and potential harm it would bring to our area, but all of these are insignificant in comparison to the good things that would be lost if this project were to go ahead and the detriments that would be caused.

The public's confidence in its ability to influence key decisions that affect our lives is at a low ebb and the cynics amongst us fear that the alacrity with which Portland Port sprang to

the current government's aid by making a berth available for its asylum barge was motivated not just by the obvious financial benefits to themselves but also for the political leverage they might hope to gain when this other money-making proposal came to appeal.

Finally, we in Dorset have worked hard and indeed have been succeeding in reducing the amount of waste that we produce - following the mantra of "Reduce, reuse, recycle," and it seems wholly ludicrous and counter-productive if we then permit the construction and operation of a waste incinerator in one of the most iconic and beautiful parts of our county, in order to dispose of the waste produced by other areas - even other nations - who have perhaps not worked so hard or been so successful in this regard. Will this be our reward for striving to protect our planet? Will this encourage us to continue striving to reduce waste? I doubt it, and what a dreadful wasteful shame that would be.

Thank you.
Gillian Pearson