



Bioflame: A waste incinerator in the National Park?!!



Bioflame is a technology company, based just within the National Park, dedicated to the development of a viable means of destroying waste coupled with the generation of electric power from the process. This has two significant benefits: reduction of landfill waste and electricity generation from renewable sources of energy.

Along with Yorkshire Forward and the Carbon Trust, the National Park Authority helped Bioflame develop its “clean burn” technology. In 2003, the Sustainable Development Fund awarded £29,000 towards environmental testing & analysis resulting in modifications that allowed the technology to meet full UK Waste Incineration Directive accreditation.

Then, in 2005, a planning application was made by Bioflame for a biomass renewable energy turbine on its site 2 miles north of Pickering, a market town on the edge of the National Park. This 10,000 tonne per annum waste wood incinerator was an unusual application for a National Park Authority and presented the North York Moors NPA with a real test case.

Local Opposition

From the outset, the plans attracted strong local opposition from residents and the district and parish councils. Their concerns ranged from increased traffic to potential fire risk, disposal of ash to possible disruption to power supplies, consequences of woodland clearance and noxious emissions. There was very little advance work on behalf of the applicant to explain the proposal to local people. The Authority subsequently undertook a rigorous and repeated consultation with local stakeholders. Even though the level of objection did not necessarily diminish, the Authority was able to address each key area of concern that was raised. The significant planning issues included:

The visual impact:

The site is located within an existing complex of buildings on an intensively farmed holding. The only part of the development outside of the building is the 3m chimney. Within the complex of farm buildings and broiler houses, the addition of a narrow 3m chimney was not considered to have a detrimental impact on the surrounding landscape. There will be no visible emissions or steam.

The Extra Traffic:

The Highway Authority estimated that the additional number of journeys will represent a 2% increase in the number of HGV's recorded at the main junction in Pickering. This was not considered significant and HGV's already access the site to serve the intensive farm - the increase would only be modest.

Emissions:

The site will not be able to operate, even with Planning Permission, unless an IPPC permit is obtained from the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency had no objections to the planning consent and reiterated the point that the emissions will be looked at during the IPPC process. Officers were confident that all the associated sources for pollution and outputs to the environment are covered by this licensing regime and thus there was no reason for refusal on these grounds.

The Fuel Source:

The only fuels used to run the generator would be oversized green municipal waste left over from local composting schemes, 2nd grade wood waste, brash and forestry thinnings and organic plant matter derived from agriculture or biomass crops. In the longer run the intention is to enter into contract with local farmers for the supply of energy crops.

However, questions were raised with regard to the availability of 'local' fuel sources. And indeed the Authority's Local Plan has a specific policy to permit small scale facilities for the disposal of waste, that do not damage the Park's special qualities, *only* where the materials to be dealt with arise predominately from within the National Park.

The then emerging North Yorkshire Energy Action Plan (August 2005) was able to confirm that Ryedale and the area of the National Park has the opportunity to create sufficient biomass to be available to power 50 such plants. Moreover, the scheme could be a valuable contribution to meet the regions renewable energy targets.

The Decision: Conditional Approval

Against ongoing popular opposition, the Authority took the difficult and brave decision to approve the Bioflame proposal. It was felt that the proposal was in keeping with local and national planning policy and that all of the concerns could be addressed through the attachment of conditions to the permission. The conditions will ensure that the system will be established and continue to run in a way that does not infringe on the local environment. For example, the type and source of the fuel to be used is limited (to either the Park or a radius of 10 miles from the site). An IPPC permit is required, the days and times of deliveries are restricted and an acoustic assessment is required prior to operation. Thus, even though locals may still oppose the development, the reasons for their objections will be circumvented through enforcement of the conditions.