

WASTE INCINERATOR IS A REAL BURNING ISSUE

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A New group was being launched today to fight plans for a huge incinerator for Bristol waste.

The Labour-led city council and neighbouring Tory-controlled authorities North Somerset and South Gloucestershire insist no decision has yet been made.

But Liberal Democrats, Greens and Friends of the Earth want to see the idea scrapped.

They were launching Bambi, Bristol Against Mass Burn Incineration, at the Council House, on College Green, at 1pm today.

The three councils are working together on a possible application for 50 per cent funding under the Government's private finance initiative. The money would be towards £180 million for a new treatment centre or centres to handle household waste.

From Bristol alone that is expected to amount to 90,000 tonnes a year, even after recycling has increased from 35 per cent to 50 per cent.

The three councils are keeping their options open, but an incinerator, possibly at Avonmouth, is preferred because it is tried and tested for this kind of large-scale operation.

But the Lib Dems, the Green Party and Friends of the Earth say its by-products would be toxic and an incinerator would have to be kept fed with waste coming from much further afield.

But not all members of Bambi are agreed about alternatives.

The Lib Dems favour a system of pressure cooking waste, with only carbon dioxide emitted, called pyrolysis gasification. This is the system already used to deal with medical waste at Ethos Recycling, in Kingsweston Lane, Avonmouth.

Northavon MP Steve Webb, the Lib Dems' parliamentary spokesman on the environment, was touring the plant today.

He said: "Building new incinerators on contracts that run for decades simply creates a beast that has to be fed.

"This could mean bringing in waste from further and further afield, simply to keep the plant running."

An online petition opposing the incinerator plans on the city council website has attracted widespread local support, say Bambi leaders.

Bath and North East Somerset Council, the fourth council in the West of England Partnership, backed out of the partnership's waste treatment plans last year.

Bristol's Lib Dems say pyrolysis technology would be better and cheaper than an incinerator.

They point to the success of the Ethos plant, which is already processing medical waste.

A further plant on the Avonmouth site will open in August, which will have the capacity to process 34,000 tonnes of household waste.

Earlier this year Councillor Mark Bradshaw said the council was a strong supporter of the pyrolysis and gasification technology.

But the local councils felt pyrolysis was unproven, and could not solely be relied on to deal with the area's rubbish, he said.

A city council spokesman said the incinerator would be able to handle six times as much waste as the pyrolysis plant.

The online petition can be viewed at <http://www.bambi-network.org.uk> or <http://epetitions.bristol.gov.uk> .