

Work on Duleek incinerator to begin in August

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By Ann Casey

Construction work on the highly controversial waste incinerator at Carranstown, Duleek – Ireland's first commercial incinerator – is to begin next month, almost a decade after it was first proposed.

The €130 million incinerator, which has been bitterly opposed in a 10-year battle by the local community, will take two-and-a-half years to build and will process 200,000 tonnes of waste each year.

Indaver Ireland announced this week that the construction of waste-to-energy facility at Carranstown – Ireland's largest solid waste infrastructure investment – will now begin in August.

The contract to build the facility will be awarded to an international consortium, which will be supported by an Irish construction company. During the two-and-a-half-year construction phase, an estimated 300 people will be employed, with a further 60 jobs available once the plant is operational in 2011.



The incinerator facility which is to be built at Carranstown, Duleek.

The incinerator project was the most controversial planning application ever to come before Meath County Council with more than 4,000 individual objections to the original planning application and a petition against the plan signed by 27,000 people.

Among the original objectors were former Taoiseach John Bruton, An Taisce, The No Incineration Alliance, local councillors and Northern Ireland Unionists.

Planning permission for the development was granted by Meath County Council in 2001 and, the following year, An Bord Pleanála heard a large number of objections during a lengthy oral hearing but gave the project the green light in 2003 against the advice of their senior planning inspector James Carroll.

A further planning application to expand the incinerator was approved by An Bord Pleanála last year. Indaver had applied to increase the plant by one-third, enabling it to take 200,000 tonnes of waste a year, rather than the previous total of 150,000 and to increase the proposed height of the chimney stack from 40 to 65 metres.

A licence to operate an incinerator was granted to the company by the Environmental Protection agency in 2005 and, last year, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the company, following a lengthy legal battle against the proposal by local resident, Eric Martin.

Objectors have claimed that the incinerator could have a devastating effect on local health, the environment and on local farms. They say that incineration produces toxins that are detrimental to the health of communities and flies in the face of any real environmental waste management strategy.

They have argued that incineration creates a major disincentive for the reduction and recycling of waste as incinerators need to be fed large volumes of waste to remain viable.

Concern has also been expressed that the World Heritage sites at the Boyne and Newgrange will be overlooked by a giant smokestack attached to an incinerator.

However, Indaver says the facility has been designed to meet stringent operating and environmental standards and will generate enough electricity to power over 20,000 homes, or every home in Drogheda and Navan combined.

The company cites the World Health Organisation which describes incineration as an "environmentally acceptable form of waste treatment".

Before work starts next month, Indaver hopes to set up a community liaison committee in conjunction with Meath County Council.

The company is writing to local residents this week about their plans and will hold a Construction Information Evening from 2pm to 6pm at the Boyne Valley Hotel next Wednesday at which the Project Team will be available to discuss the construction phase and any suggestions, queries or concerns about the development of the facility.

Commenting on the announcement, Indaver's Managing Director, John Ahern, said that the commencement of construction in Meath represented a seminal moment in the economic and energy debate.

"In economic and energy terms, this announcement is hugely significant. We now enter a new period, where our economy and our environment can realise the benefits of waste-to-energy.

"At a time when we face economic uncertainty, record energy prices and impending EU fines, Indaver is making a positive contribution in Ireland," he said.

Jackie Keaney, Irish Project Director, Indaver, said more than 400 similar waste-to-energy facilities were operating in Europe today.

"Each of these facilities is generating renewable energy, mitigating climate change and diverting waste from landfill, just as we will do in Meath. Our facility will generate enough renewable and sustainable energy to meet the needs of 20,000 homes – the equivalent of every home in Drogheda and Navan combined – and provide an alternative to landfill, the major contributor of greenhouse gases from the waste sector," she said.

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