

Cabinet Meeting: Monday, 04 August 2025

Question from: Dave Pugh

Question to: Councillor Durrans, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Services and Communities

QUESTION

I did not receive a satisfactory answer to my question concerning the Sowerby Bridge incinerator and the recovery of energy from the drying plant.
To remind you of your planning decision conditions:

“the incinerator can only be operated during the operational hours of the drying plant. The incinerator shall not be operated in the event that the Drying Plant is not available for use”.

To remind you of my question “If the dryer is not available for use at night how will energy be recovered from 18:00 to 07:00 to meet the R1 status?”

Your answer was: “CVSH is currently undertaking investigations into the energy recovery process”

After eight years of deliberation and thousands of pages of documentation and as both planning permission and an Environmental Permit have been granted by the council, I can't understand why you do not have a clear coherent answer about how energy will be recovered at night whilst the incinerator is operational.

If the council has the expertise to grant Planning Permission and an Environmental Permit for the incinerator why can't the officers explain to the public how this fundamental part of the process works?

Response

Planning Permission was granted by the Planning Inspectorate, not by the Council as stated. With regard to the R1 status, the Inspector saw fit to apply the following condition to planning permission ref 17/00113/WAM:

Condition 8: Before the first operation of the SWIP hereby approved a scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to demonstrate that electrical generation and/or heat recovery systems have been installed with the capability to meet equivalent energy outputs per unit of waste derived fuel input that meets or exceeds the equivalent of the R1 energy efficiency index . The SWIP shall be operated and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme to ensure that it continues to meet this R1 energy efficiency index and maintains Recovery status.

For clarity, Condition 6 states:

Before the first operation of the SWIP hereby approved details of the Drying Plant and the connections to it from the SWIP shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Drying Plant and the connections to it shall be completed in accordance with the approved details before first operation of the SWIP and shall be maintained as installed. The SWIP shall not be operated in the event that the Drying Plant is not available for use.

Condition 8 has been discharged by the LPA, Condition 6 has not. Note that Condition 6 does not state that the incinerator can only be operated during the operational hours of the drying plant, as suggested. It is assumed by Officers that the sentence **The SWIP shall not be operated in the event that the Drying Plant is not available for use** means that the Drying Plant is to be properly connected and fit for operation. The energy output of the system therefore depends on how much fuel is being fed into the SWIP overnight. It may only be a nominal amount to ensure the SWIP remains at the right operational temperature and does not require restarting with diesel, which would ultimately have a bearing on the R1 score. The approved document is theoretical and only shows that the SWIP is capable of meeting the required energy outputs. The second part of the condition requires that the SWIP shall be operated and maintained in accordance with that document. It is this that would be investigated if it was thought that the condition may be in breach.

Condition 7 states:

Before the first operation of the SWIP, a scheme for its connection to the National Grid for the export of electricity shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The connection shall be completed in accordance with the approved details before the first operation of the SWIP and shall be maintained as installed. The SWIP shall not be operated in the event that the connection to the National Grid for the export of electricity is not available for use.

The working assumption of Officers at this point in time is therefore that when the Drying Plant is not being used energy will be fed into the National Grid.

With regard to the Planning situation none of these conditions are currently in breach as the SWIP is not yet in operation. Further details are obviously due to be submitted so it is not the case that the LPA should be in receipt of all of the information required to be submitted by the Planning Inspector, nor is it required to be fully cognisant at this time as to the future operational state of the facility with regard to its R1 status. Until a breach of the approved document becomes apparent there is nothing further for the LPA to consider.