

Environmental Protection Agency

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ORAL HEARING
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Recd From: Bryan

Mr Maurice

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I have not made any statement in regard to the number of municipal waste incinerators which may be developed. Such developments are matters for local authorities, in the context of their statutory responsibilities under the Waste Management Acts, and for commercial decision by the private sector.

The Government's policy in regard to waste management is clearly set out in the programme for Government. It is firmly grounded in a continuing commitment to the waste hierarchy with a renewed drive towards the achievement of international best practice in the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste. There is a commitment to meeting our national objectives and EU obligations through an increasing emphasis on technologies for mechanical and biological treatment, MBT, of a growing volume of municipal waste. This will significantly reduce the future need for incineration capacity. My Department has carried out detailed projections of municipal waste up to 2016 taking account of continued progress in our recycling performance. These show that MBT capacity of between 900,000 and 1 million tonnes per annum will enable Ireland to meet its landfill diversion targets under the EU Landfill Directive while reducing the amount requiring further treatment to about 400,000 tonnes. MBT capacity of between 1.3 million and 1.4 million tonnes will enable us to meet the more challenging programme for Government target of sending only 10% of all waste to landfill.

As provided for in the programme for Government, my Department is initiating a major international review of waste management policy which will in part focus on how best to advance the use of the full range of technologies available for waste management. I am confident that we can rapidly move away from a position where incineration is regarded as the only viable solution for waste management to one in which we can exploit a much broader range of technologies to meet our targets in the most environmentally benign way possible.

Deputy Phil Hogan: The Minister mentioned two incinerators on an RTE programme. Perhaps he did not mean to, but he mentioned that two incinerators would be sufficient. However, there are seven incinerators going through the planning process at the moment. The Minister has obviously taken the view that incineration is no longer a problem. He could have instructed the local authorities to review their waste management plans to eliminate incineration as an option under the section 16 notice which he sent out during the summer months, but he chose not to do that. Will the Minister indicate how the MBT capacity of 1.3 million to 1.4 million tonnes will be achieved?

Deputy John Gormley: Let us be very clear about what was actually said. I listened one morning to the Deputy's party leader quoting me directly, if you do not mind, as making reference to incinerators. What I actually said was that we would require thermal treatment for 400,000 tonnes of waste. The interviewer then came to the conclusion that 400,000 tonnes was the equivalent of two thermal treatment plants, which it is. I was also accused of actually naming the locations of the two incinerators as Carranstown and Cork. Again, I did not do that. If the Deputy listens very carefully to what I said in an interview on "Prime Time", along with his colleague, Deputy O'Dowd, he will hear that I outlined in some detail how this could be achieved. If we start off with a figure of about 3.2 million tonnes, which is the amount of waste we will have, this can be reduced if we achieve a recycling rate of 50%. The Deputy will agree with me that this is where we ought to go and that we can achieve 50% recycling. In fact, we can go much higher than that, particularly in towns such as Dublin. In this way the amount of waste can be substantially reduced.

The figure the Deputy keeps repeating is 1.3 million tonnes. I am intrigued by this and I have consulted my officials on this matter, because the figure I have mentioned consistently is 1.7 million tonnes.

Deputy Phil Hogan: I am referring to the amount of waste that will be treatable by MBT.

Deputy John Gormley: The Deputy has, perhaps inadvertently, come across a figure of 1.3 million. I investigated in detail where the Deputy may have obtained this figure. It is the MBT capacity that would allow us to go further in dealing with waste as we would only have to send about 10% to landfill. The figures are available and they have been well thought out. The Department has done good work. When the international review is concluded we will have even more precise figures for the Deputy.

Deputy Phil Hogan: The Minister did not answer the question I asked. I have no difficulty about the figures he mentioned. What he said was that 1.3 million to 1.4 million tonnes of waste would be treatable by MBT. That is what I am referring to, not the total amount of waste we have to deal with, which is 1.7 million tonnes. I

accept that figure, although it may be closer to 2 million tonnes. I asked the Minister how he intends to do this. What system will be used? He has obviously thought this through. How much waste will be treatable using the MBT process? How will it be done? People need to know what this process entails and whether it will be in the public interest.

The Minister has stated several times that incineration is out of the question, but he has done nothing to stop the plans from going through the planning process. He has stated in the past that they are a danger to health. That was mentioned in his submission to An Bord Pleanála about the proposed incinerator at Poolbeg. If he reads it he will see that the Green Party stated that incinerators were damaging to people's health.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy is not allowed to quote during Question Time, but I am anxious to bring the Minister back for a final reply.

Deputy Phil Hogan: Surely I am entitled to bring the Minister's memory back to reality in terms of what he said in the past, as he is now in a position to do something about it.

Deputy Denis Naughten: Mature recollection.

Deputy Phil Hogan: I ask the Minister again to answer the question I asked.

Deputy John Gormley: It is regrettable if the Deputy believes all those things. The Deputy's own party in Fingal County Council actually voted for the incinerator in Poolbeg peninsula.

Deputy Phil Hogan: Does the Minister want to be reminded of what he said in the Poolbeg submission?

Deputy John Gormley: That is the inconsistency that I have to deal with from members of the Deputy's party. I do not know where they are coming from in the matter of waste management.

The figures are very clear. We can treat 1.3 million tonnes through the MBT process. I have been to Austria, where I saw how MBT can work. It is not a high-tech solution, as is often thought — it is actually quite low-tech. Black bag or grey bin waste is sorted and compostable materials are removed. Recyclable waste is also removed as, unfortunately, many people continue to put recyclable waste into the grey bin. In fact, through MBT an effective recycling rate of about 80% can be achieved. That is the point of it. These MBT sites should be situated at landfill sites, which is how it is done in Austria. After separation of the components I mentioned, we can obtain a refuse-derived fuel. That is the point I was making in my interviews with regard to the 400,000 tonnes of waste for thermal treatment. When I mention thermal treatment I am talking about co-firing or co-incineration. As the waste can be used in cement kilns, I have already had discussions with some cement factories about this. It makes sense and it is the way to go.

Sustainable Development Strategy.

36. Deputy Joanna Tuffy asked the **Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government** the steps his Department is taking to ensure that local authorities, in drawing up their next county development plans, will specifically climate-proof those county development plans and, for example, allow no building on flood plains; and if he will make a statement on the matter. **[28711/07]**

Deputy John Gormley: Development plans, prepared by local authorities under Part II of the Planning and Development Act 2000, provide the over-arching strategic framework for development within their areas, ensuring that all development is sustainable from an economic, social and environmental point of view. As such, the development plan must offer clear guidance on sustainable development policies and objectives, both national and local, which address the full range of sustainability issues such as climate change, waste management, transport, urban development, sustainable communities and the use of natural resources.

In June 2007, my Department published Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities. The guidelines state that it is imperative that the objectives and strategies set out in development plans are compatible with the Government's commitment to reducing energy consumption and modifying the impacts of climate change. Development plans should be consistent with the objectives of national initiatives that will address energy and climate change issues, such as the National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012, which builds on the commitment to sustainable development set out in Towards 2016 and the National Development Plan 2007-2013. Moreover, the conclusions in the EPA state of the environment report and other evidence on environmental quality and trends should inform the drafting of development plans and be reflected as appropriate in their objectives and implementation.

The guidelines state that flood risk should be considered at relevant stages of the planning and development process and the aim should be to ensure that existing flood risks are either reduced or addressed and that new development does not individually or cumulatively give rise to new flood risks. My Department, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works, is preparing more comprehensive guidance on flooding and the

2016

Projected Municipal Solid Waste Generation - 3,384,429 tonnes
Projected Recycling - 1,652,209 tonnes

Residual Municipal Solid Waste

1,732,220 tonnes

EU Landfill Directive Target	Programme for Government Target
Landfill 823,562	Landfill 338,443
Mandatory Diversion of BMW 499,762	Mandatory Diversion of BMW 499,762
+ Associated Diversion of Other MSW 408,896	+ Associated Diversion of other MSW 408,896
= Total Quantity MBT Treatment 908,658	+ Additional MBT to reach PfG Target 485,119
	Total Quantity MBT Treatment 1,393,777
<u>MBT Outputs</u>	<u>MBT Outputs</u>
Material Recycling 27,260	Material Recycling 41,813
+ Elimination Through MBT Process 236,251	+ Elimination Through MBT Process 362,382
+ Stabilised Biowaste 236,251	+ Stabilised Biowaste 362,382
+ Requiring Thermal Treatment 408,896	+ Requiring Thermal Treatment 627,200

FIGURES ON WEB OCT 2007