

Dear Roy Gerstner,

The Government has responded to the petition you signed – “[Ban new waste incinerators and revoke permits where building has not begun](#)”.

Government responded:

Government will only back waste incineration projects that meet strict conditions. New facilities will have to maximise efficiency, and support net zero and the move to a circular economy.

On 30 December 2024, Defra published the Residual Waste Infrastructure Capacity Note (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/residual-waste-infrastructure-capacity-note/residual-waste-infrastructure-capacity-note>) and an accompanying statement (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-crack-down-on-waste-incinerators-with-stricter-standards-for-new-builds>), which set out that government will only back new waste incineration projects in England that meet strict new conditions. Proposals for new facilities will have to maximise efficiency and support the delivery of economic growth, net zero and the move to a circular economy.

The Government encourages those developing waste incineration facilities (at all stages in the process) to consider forecast changes to future capacity, demand, and the Government’s circular economy opportunities, in light of the evidence published in the Capacity Note.

The Capacity Note, and the latest Local Authority Collected Waste statistics (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results/local-authority-collected-waste-management-provisional-annual-results-202324>), show that there are areas in England where large amounts of non-recyclable household waste is sent to landfill, which has a greater negative environmental impact. There is a continued need to divert non-household wastes away from landfill. In this context, waste incineration plays an important role in diverting residual waste from landfill; but it should not compete with efforts to increase waste prevention, preparation for re-use, or recycling.

Waste incineration facilities require planning permission and an environmental permit to operate. These processes are separate but complementary. The planning system controls the development and use of land in the public interest. Planning guidance is

clear that decisions must give consideration to important issues, including air quality, transport, and whether a location is appropriate for that development. The environmental permitting process considers the safe operation of a facility itself, not whether the location is suitable, or whether there is a waste management need for the specific type of facility.

It is important that we do not retrospectively impose modifications on, or revoke, a planning consent or environmental permit that has already been granted. To do so would undermine confidence in England's regulatory systems and harm the investment we need to deliver economic growth.

Waste incineration facilities that hold the necessary permissions will only be constructed if there is an established waste management need. If a development cannot secure a long-term contract, it is highly unlikely that it will receive financing and proceed to construction. Defra has no evidence of waste facilities being constructed without the security of waste supply contracts.

The best way to reduce the need for waste incineration is to reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste we produce. It is therefore essential that we move away from our linear and unsustainable "take, make, throw" model. In light of this, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has set our transition to a circular economy as one of Defra's top priorities, delivering on the Government's manifesto commitment. An expert Circular Economy Taskforce is supporting the Government to develop a Circular Economy Strategy that will focus on promoting efficient and productive resource use, supporting economic growth, delivering green jobs, minimising negative environmental impacts and accelerating the nation to Net Zero.

The Government has already taken action to improve levels of recycling. As of the 1 April 2025, Simpler Recycling obligations for workplaces came into force. This means that the same set of materials – paper, card, plastic, glass, metals and food waste – must now be collected from every business and relevant non-domestic premises. This requirement, along with garden waste, will apply to every household in England by 31 March 2026, with kerbside collections of plastic films introduced by 31 March 2027.

The Government has made progress with delivering Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging, which will begin later this year. This will incentivise

packaging producers to reduce their material footprint and use more recyclable packaging.

The Government is also bringing forward the delivery of a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers, taking our recycling rate to 90 percent for these containers by its third year of operating. This model exists in over 50 countries around the world to proven success, and it will launch in October 2027. Together our packaging reforms will lead to 21,000 new green jobs and support more than £10billion of investment in recycling capability over the next decade.

The Government's approach will reduce waste to landfill and boost the economy, while ensuring the waste incineration facilities that we do need maximise benefits to communities. This will help us deliver on our Plan for Change in a decade of national renewal. This is no small task - but by working collaboratively we will make this shift to keep our resources in use for longer, reduce our carbon emissions, encourage investment in critical infrastructure and green jobs across the UK.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Click this link to view the response online:

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/710486?reveal_response=yes

The Petitions Committee will take a look at this petition and its response. They can press the government for action and gather evidence. If this petition reaches 100,000 signatures, the Committee will consider it for a debate.

The Committee is made up of 11 MPs, from political parties in government and in opposition. It is entirely independent of the Government. Find out more about the Committee: <https://petition.parliament.uk/help#petitions-committee>

Thanks,

The Petitions Team
House of Commons