

DRAKENSTEIN WASTE TO ENERGY PROJECT – FIRST PRESS RELEASE BY THE DRAKENSTEIN ENVIRONMENTAL WATCH (DEW)

Following upon a public outcry against plans for vast amounts of Municipal waste to be incinerated adjacent to the Wellington Golf Course, an Association has been established to investigate precisely what the Municipality has in mind and whether or not there are more environmentally friendly ways of dealing with waste from the Drakenstein region.

The Association will be registered both as a Public Benefit and as a Not for Profit Organization called the 'Drakenstein Environmental Watch' with the appropriate acronym 'DEW'

The Management Committee of DEW is hard at work gathering information about the proposed project and comparing this with what is happening in the rest of the world. It has undertaken to keep the public updated of its work. This is a first press release by its Chairperson, Advocate Alan Nelson SC.

"Drakenstein is one of the most beautiful places on earth and those of us that live here owe it to our children and to the generations that follow to preserve the environment to the greatest extent that we possibly can. We need to take cognizance of any hazardous activity that poses a threat to the fauna, flora and people living in our area, many of whom are extremely poor and already live in a compromised environment.

There is little doubt that the proposed incineration plant could potentially pose such a threat. That does not however mean that DEW should take up arms and emotively oppose the proposed project. What is needed are cool heads that carefully and objectively evaluate all of the relevant facts before jumping to conclusions.

That process has begun but is unfortunately being hampered because the Drakenstein Municipality has failed to make available the relevant documents despite repeated requests by DEW's Vice Chairperson, Caron Potocnik and a court application is on the cards to secure these.

The Municipality has offered to meet with us and we will be taking up that offer but we need to do our homework first and for that we need all of the relevant documents. We would like to see what other options the Municipality has considered. For example:

- Has the Municipality applied its mind properly to the recycling and composting of waste which is fast becoming the preferred option for reducing landfill problems in other parts of the world?
- Why has it decided to bring vast quantities of waste (up to 300 tonnes per day ie 60 truckloads) into Drakenstein from other municipal areas to be burnt on the doorstep of the Western Cape's Town of the year?
- What is going to become of the huge stockpiles of contaminated ash residue that will flow out of the incinerators on a daily basis? (Estimated to be in the region oftonnes of Ash per day – enough to cover a rugby field ...cms in ash every day!)

DEW is extremely concerned about the potential pollution of not only the air but also of the Berg River and the land and its produce. The livelihood of many people in our valley depends on the wine and fruit export industries. We need to for example consider what the effect will be of a fine layer of ash on grapes inspected by an overseas buyer. Even the perception of pollution and contamination will

probably suffice to send them elsewhere. There are many schools in close proximity to the intended incinerator. Are these children and any of the other residents of nearby areas under threat?

One of DEW's major concerns is that the Drakenstein Municipality has already granted certain contractual rights to a third party to implement and operate the incinerator. I think it is of crucial importance for all of us to appreciate that if the plan goes ahead, this hazardous activity will in future be in the hands of an outside company intent on maximizing its profits. This probably explains why the company has asked the Municipality for a commitment that no recycling or composting is to take place and for permission to bring in waste from elsewhere. The idea is obviously to pass everything through the incinerator in order to generate as much energy as possible! This is contrary to international best practice where recycling and composting are regarded as the best way of resolving landfill problems.

DEW has established a number of sub-committees each of which has undertaken to investigate different aspects of the proposed incineration plant including procurement; engineering; air pollution; health hazards; schools; agriculture; tourism; labour; business; real estate. DEW is calling upon other interested persons to join in making sure that the proposed waste disposal plant is indeed in the best interest of our residents and is the best available option.

Interested persons can contact DEW's Secretary Christine van Wyk at mailbag@fcbgroup.co.za