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for Environment  
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Mrs Sharon Hodgson MP  
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12 MAR 2013

*Dear Sharon*

Thank you for your letter of 5 February to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituent about the China ban and plastics used for gasification and incineration. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

China is banning the import of certain types of solid waste and reducing acceptable contamination levels of some other solid waste materials. These measures were implemented from the beginning of this year and affect the UK as well as countries in the European Union and elsewhere. The Industry is identifying alternative markets for materials affected by the ban, and there is evidence that exports to China are reducing and those to other countries are increasing.

If alternative markets have insufficient capacity to cope with the waste no longer going to China, producers may have to consider sending some of this waste to incinerators with energy recovery (energy from waste plants) or into landfill sites. This alternative option would be a last resort and an interim measure until new recycling markets are developed. Operators must always manage waste to minimise the environmental impact as fully as possible and follow the waste hierarchy. Where waste cannot be prevented or reused it must be recycled where practicable, before considering energy recovery through incineration or disposal to landfill.

All energy-from-waste (EfW) plants in England are regulated by the Environment Agency (EA), and operators must comply with the strict emissions limits set by the Industrial Emissions Directive, which prevents or limits pollution by emissions into air, soil, surface and groundwater. The operators must continually monitor emissions and inform the EA if there are any breaches of the regulations. The EA inspects such facilities regularly to ensure that the measures put in place are effective and applied. Therefore, any plastic waste entering EfW plants would be managed in a highly regulated and tightly controlled environment.

Yours sincerely,

*Thérèse*

**DR THERESE COFFEY MP**

