

## Renew boss briefs Councillors on proposed Westport waste-to-energy plant

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RThe News-Westport, Westport by Lee Scanlon, 29 November 2018

**Renew Energy has long term contracts signed for 75 percent of the 330,000 tonnes of waste it needs a year for a waste to energy (WtE) plant in Westport, says its chief executive.**



"We've had councils and private contractors say, 'hey, can we get on board with you guys?'" David McGregor told last night's Buller District Council meeting.

It was the first time councillors had been briefed on the plant. Mr McGregor's presentation took about an hour - 20 minutes longer than council had allowed - leaving little time for councillor questions.

Mr McGregor said the WtE plant would provide 50 full-time jobs and another 400 full-time jobs in off-take industries. Indirectly it would create 2500 jobs, he said.

"Why we really want to have industry come along for you guys, is the jobs. The Midland railway line would benefit because Renew would spend about \$9m a year raiing waste to Buller", he said.

The plant would also help retain Westport Port because some waste would be shipped in.

The Buller District Council would receive significant land and water rates over the planned 30-40 year life of the plant.

Mr McGregor said the waste would come from Canterbury, Marlborough, Nelson/Tasman and the West Coast. Reuse and recycling would be paramount.

The plant would target industrial, commercial, construction and demolition waste. It would not burn hazardous waste.

Renew would compact the waste in a purpose-built baler and wrap it in UV stabilised plastic about 3-4mm thick.

The baling would begin small scale, at about 60,000 tonnes a year.

Mr McGregor said waste in Europe had been stored for 15 years with no reported fires, leachate or odour.

"These bales are sealed and. within the first 30-40 days all the oxygen that has been trapped in them is gone so there's no fermentation taking place.

The bales have never heated to anything more than about 40degC." He told councillors the plant emissions would be more carefully controlled and monitored than those from Westport's former Holcim cement plant or Westland Milk Products Hokitika factory. He said the plant would burn waste at about 1000degC.

The furnaces would produce ash, which was not contaminated and could be used to make blocks, and fly ash which would be contaminated.

## Bioenergy in the news

Mr McGregor said Renew's partner, China Tianying, had bought an American company which had plasma technology and could turn fly ash into glass, but he later acknowledged it would not be economic at present. He said the fly ash would be taken to a hazardous waste landfill.

The only visible emissions from the chimneys would be steam on cold days, he said. "On a day like today you'd see nothing - you might see a steam plume."

If the 330,000 tonnes the plant planned to process a year went to landfill, it would generate the equivalent of 60,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The WtE plant would capture the CO<sub>2</sub> for horticulture. The best plants to grow would be big CO<sub>2</sub> users like roses, dahlias, medical marijuana and horopito.

A plant in Belgium, built in the 1980s, had beehives, chickens and vegetables growing beside it. The produce was regularly tested and staff ate it, Mr McGregor said.

Buller could show itself as being an environmental leader by being the first district in New Zealand to have a WtE plant, Mr McGregor said. The plant would generate 160Mwh of renewable electricity enough to power about 30,000 homes.

However, the power would only be cheaper for major customers who connected directly to the plant.

Householders would still have to get their electricity through Transpower and Buller Electricity.

Another 410Mwh of thermal energy would be available for adjacent users.

"That's about enough heat for one-and-a-half Westland Milk Products' Hokitika plants." Mr McGregor showed councillors slides of plants in the middle of cities such as Paris and Copenhagen.

He said the WtE idea had come from the Buller District Council's business development facilitator John Hill.

Renew had been encouraged by Buller Mayor Garry Howard and West Coast economic development manager Kevin Stratful, Mr McGregor said.

"We really appreciate that and the support we get from the mayors - all three mayors - and the regional council.

It's not because we're wanting a freebie." Mr McGregor did not reveal where Renew planned to put the plant. The News understands it's the Sergeants Hill area.

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