

We may never see incinerator study

● Michael Ryan protests outside the Harlescott incinerator in Shropshire

BY OLIVER CLAY

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AN ANTI-INCINERATOR campaigner has warned Runcorn residents that the results of a study into the health impacts of burning waste near homes may never be published.

Former Environment Agency worker Michael Ryan's fears came following an article in the magazine *Private Eye*, which said the preliminary results from a two-year research project are not due to be released until later this year.

The now-dissolved Health Protection Agency had commissioned the study to be carried out by Imperial College and its findings were supposed to be published last March.

Mr Ryan said that incinerator projects, including in Runcorn, have ploughed ahead without those in authority having any evidence to back claims about levels of risk to nearby residents.

He added that a 2008 *Times* interview with the HPA's new chief executive, Justin McCracken, a former ICI employee, who warned that 'infectious disease surveillance is much more developed than is our knowledge of chemical hazards', adding that 'nobody can claim that we really understand the threats.'



● Jane Ellison MP

Mr Ryan said this showed that the Government's own experts have admitted a shortfall in knowledge.

In September the *Weekly News* reported that Halton MP Derek Twigg had raised the matter of the delayed study in the Commons, as he asked health minister Jane Ellison for an update.

She said that the position of the HPA's successor Public Health England was that 'modern municipal waste incinerators are not a significant risk to public health.'

The backers of the Runcorn EfW plant maintain it is safe and complies with stringent regulations.

Mr Ryan said that according to his research, infant mortality has risen in areas downwind of where incinerators have been built in the past.

He said: "I used to work in the water industry.

"We used to check the water and if there was a



● Derek Twigg MP

problem we had a chance to stop it going out and people being ill.

"But with air pollution they just say 'take our word for it'. That's not good enough."

Dr Simon Bouffler, deputy director of PHE's centre for radiation, chemical and environmental hazards, said: "It was originally envisaged that preliminary results for this study would be available by March 2014 but because of the unanticipated complexity in gathering data this has been delayed."

"A paper with preliminary results is expected to be published in 2015."

"It is important to stress that PHE's position that well-run and regulated modern municipal waste incinerators are not a significant risk to public health remains valid, and the study is being carried out to extend the evidence base and to provide further information to the public on this subject."

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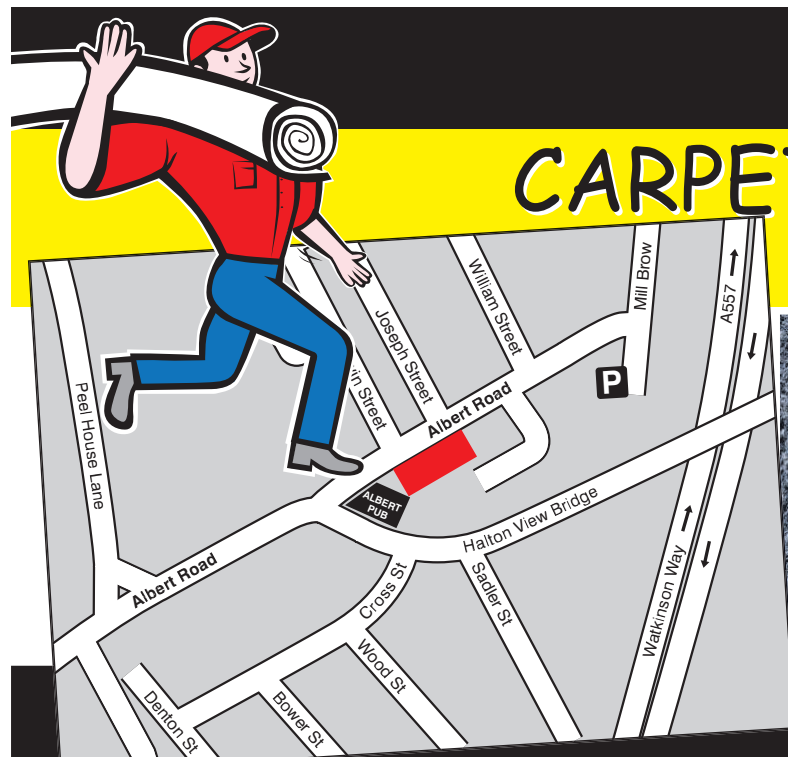
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