

CISION

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251 36-3



# 'Public needs more time to talk about future plans for waste'

By Petra Barnby

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**THE organisation of a public consultation into the future handling of the region's waste has been slammed by Assembly Members and councillors.**

Hyder Consulting has been employed by the Welsh Assembly to run the consultation into the North Wales Regional Waste Plan.

As part of the consultation, Hyder Consulting put on a seminar for groups selected by Flintshire Council at Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Mold, earlier this month, but two AMs have complained, saying it was not properly publicised, with only 20 people attending.

Assembly members Mark Isherwood and Carl Sargeant are asking ministers for an extension of the consultation period, which is due to end on Monday.

Mr Isherwood, who agreed with Mr

Sargeant, is calling on local protest groups to set up petitions in a bid to get the consultation period extended, and to hand them in to the Welsh Assembly.

He said: "I have received letters from groups across Wales asking for the date to be extended. They are saying it is being conducted in a way which means most people don't know about it.

"A group of residents from Caerphilly have submitted a petition and I have been told that if other groups hand in their petitions to the Petitions Committee at the Welsh Assembly before January 12, they will all be considered.

"I would strongly urge groups in North Wales to send petitions. Public consultations on issue after issue are carried out without the public being aware of it and without them having a chance to have their say."

Mr Sargeant believes the end date for the consultation period is anti-social.

He said: "The consultation will fin-

ish on Christmas Eve, which is strange.

"The seminar about the document was poorly attended because people didn't know about it.

"Consultation is not just a word, it's about engaging with people and their communities. Constituents need to know what we are doing strategically with our waste in the future."

The North Wales Regional Waste Plan consultation document has been open to public scrutiny since October and Mr Sargeant believes more should have been done to engage the public's

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interest, on what he calls a "big issue"

He said: "The environmental impact of waste disposal is a huge debate that is happening across the globe.

"To me, it is valuable to have discussion and input from local people about what we do with our waste.

"I have recently had discussion with companies that deal with waste and they haven't been privy to this document.

"Let's slow this procedure down and let's do the right thing for the people of Flintshire."

A spokesman from Buckley-based protesters, the Local Issues Action Group, said: "We are very unhappy about the lack of consultation with the wider population of Flintshire for whom this plan has far-reaching and wider implications in terms of health and environmental problems raised by waste treatment and landfill. In conjunction with our AMs we are requesting an extension to the consultation period of eight to 10 weeks.

"To support this we are submitting a petition to the Welsh Assembly Government by January 12 to request

an extension."

Buckley councillor Arnold Woolley, who attended the seminar, said: "It was certainly nothing like any real attempt to engage with public opinion.

"If the previous meetings Hyder Consulting has put on were to audiences of the selected and limited type that I was part of, this is a propaganda exercise on behalf of thermal treatment processes, which they were recommending as a way of dealing with future waste. It is nothing like the public involvement that it should be.

"The only message I could take out of the meeting was that the economy was more important to defend than either public good health or even sustainability."

Victoria Bond, senior waste management consultant at Hyder Consulting, gave the talk at Theatre Clwyd.

She said: "Hyder Consulting were appointed to deliver the consultation of the Regional Waste Plan 1st Reviews for North Wales, South East Wales and South West Wales, on behalf of the three regional waste groups. The consultation period is 10 weeks for all stakeholders to respond to the consultation.

"Further attempts to engage the public have included postal surveys and an online survey. Posters and leaflets have been distributed at meetings and displayed in public buildings with the help of all local authorities in Wales."

To see a copy of the document, go to [www.ourwasteourchallenge.org](http://www.ourwasteourchallenge.org) or call 02920 925202.