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10TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS' CONFERENCE **ENVIROMANAGEMENT 2019 WASTE TO ENERGY**

**ENERGY RECOVERY • RDF • TECHNOLOGY
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LECTURER

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PRESENTATION

New community engagement techniques to avoid costly delays and gain public support for new EfW projects.

KEYWORDS

Community engagement, Public Relations, negative attitudes, positive support

ANNOTATION

As the EU pushes towards the delivery of a genuine circular economy, the need to avoid sending wastes to landfill will grow. This provides a great opportunity for the building of a number of new energy from waste (EfW) plants, particularly in central and eastern Europe. However, the technology still has an out-dated reputation that could cause widespread public opposition to new plants, resulting in costly project delays. The waste sector needs new, but proven, community engagement techniques to make the most of the opportunities, potentially saving project time and millions of Euros.

In countries where there has been limited experience of EfW technology, new projects will need more than a simple PR exercise. To change public attitudes, we must first understand the fundamental human behaviours that are the basis for opposition to the technology. Many of the arguments against modern EfW are outdated and inaccurate, but the internet is full of such arguments used by campaign groups to frustrate new EfW projects from Beijing to Birmingham. Communications techniques such as websites and public exhibitions have a role to play, but they must be supported with a community engagement process to reduce the promotional nature of traditional planning

ANNOTATION

applications campaigns. This presentation will show some of the Dos and Don'ts for community engagement so delegates can avoid the same mistakes made elsewhere around the world.

For efficient delivery of EfW projects a lot of work needs to be done before developers start talking about specific plans. Without such positioning, many communities simply see development consultation as a PR box ticking exercise that underlines the developer's vested interest. Establishing the wastes context, scale of the problem and benefits of avoiding landfill must be understood and accepted by a community before proposing an EfW solution. The sequence is vital to allow communities to understand, accept and potentially support the proposed technology.

This presentation will also show some new practical consultation techniques that facilitate objective community understanding that can gain public acceptance for EfW quickly. The presentation includes a number of case studies, including one which shows how we delivered planning approval and community support for a new EfW plant, without any significant public opposition, in less than nine months.

There is no easy 'one approach fits all', but this presentation will help delegates to develop their own more effective community engagement plans that could reduce public opposition while also enhancing the EfW developers' reputation in the process. This could not only save substantial amounts of money, but it may also save a considerable amount of project time so communities, and the environment, gain the benefit of this valuable technology far more quickly than would otherwise be the case.

LECTURER'S PROFILE

Originally trained as an environmental engineer, Paul has more than 25 years' experience in public relations, consultations and community engagement. A specialist in environmental communications, especially in wastes management and energy, both conventional and renewables, he has delivered communications consultancy across Europe, Africa, North and South America, Middle East and the Asia.

Paul led the environmental communications teams at two of the world's largest public relations consultancies, before setting up Proteus PR in 1996.

His track record combines high-level strategic communications consultancy, he makes regular presentations at conferences around the world, winner of commendations and awards, and has had numerous articles published on environmental communication issues.

Paul has worked in many sectors including energy from waste plants, renewable energy, conventional power stations, clinical and cattle waste incinerators, landfill sites, alternative fuels for cement kilns, chemical treatment works, hazardous waste treatment facilities, transport infrastructure, property development etc.

LECTURER'S PROFILE

Increasingly Paul has worked with organisations, including Governments, trying to improve understanding of environmental issues with external audiences including the general public. Paul is an award winning conference presenter giving presentations on environmental issues around the world and is an internationally recognised expert in wastes management communications.

Within the broader area of environmental communications, Paul has acted as independent facilitator for stakeholder dialogue on contentious environmental issues. Paul also makes regular contributions to training programmes and seminars on behalf of the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management, Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations. Paul was made a Fellow of the CIPR for outstanding services to the Public Relations Sector. He is also a member of the communications committees at the International Solid Wastes Association, based in Vienna, Austria, and the Solid Wastes Association of North America based in Washington DC, USA.

Paul merged a number of business interests together into the Proteus Communications Group in 2018, which provides clients with consultancy support in public relations, environmental communications, public consultation, community engagement, and communications training.

In 2019 Paul was made Chairman of Proteus CG based in the UK – which focuses on business in Europe and North America, and is also MD of Proteus Environmental Communications, based in Hong Kong, which focuses on Asian and Australian markets.