

EiP Statement of Dr Paul Johnston, Greenpeace

Remediation of buildings

The remediation plan for buildings likely to be contaminated with explosive and related chemical residues evokes significant concerns. It is proposed to decontaminate buildings by packing them with combustible material and then firing them. This seems to be a strategy grounded in a different era and borders on the irresponsible. Although this technique has been used at other sites in the UK, this has not been recent. In the UK, combustion of waste materials by the construction and demolition sectors is limited to clean off-cuts of timber. Otherwise, the lighting of a fire for the purpose of disposing of waste is, rightly, regarded as a criminal offence. In addition such an approach may well violate UK obligations under the terms of the Stockholm Convention to minimise unintentional generation of persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

The uncontrolled combustion of buildings in this manner is likely to lead to the generation of various products of incomplete combustion (PICs) as well a secondary combustion products (SCPs). In addition to such organic chemicals, mobilisation of toxic trace metals could also take place, with both organic and inorganic chemicals being released in vapour form or in association with fine particulates. The possibility exists that asbestos fibres could be mobilised in significant quantity from roofing or cladding materials should portions of these be left inadvertently *in situ*.

Contaminating substances could be dispersed over a wide area and a long distance depending upon ambient conditions at the time of firing of the building, and the resultant plume grounding point. The generation of toxic ash will create a commitment to disposal in a secure landfill.

It is probable that this method of decontamination has been selected very largely on cost grounds. It should be recognised that it is cheap simply because the technique externalises the environmental costs on the surrounding communities and countryside.