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ONYX – THE COMPANY BEHIND SELCHP INCINERATOR

Onyx, the owner of SELCHP incinerator (South London Combined Heat and Power), is the waste division of the French multi-national Vivendi. Onyx had a revenue of 5.2 billion euros in 2000, approximately 60% of which was generated from industrial contracts. The company operates waste collection, processing and disposal services in Europe, the US and the Asia Pacific region. Onyx currently operates 83 incinerators around the world and plans to expand into India and Taiwan.

In the UK, Onyx operates SELCHP, the Tyseley incinerator in Birmingham and, as of August 2001, the Sheffield incinerator.

In addition to winning the Sheffield waste contract 2001, Onyx also won the waste contract for Bromley. Waste materials in Bromley, which cannot under the company's limited plan be recycled, will be sent to the SELCHP incinerator.

Onyx has plans for three incinerators in Hampshire. One, in Basingstoke, is already under construction. Although both Portsmouth and Southampton councils denied Onyx planning permission for incinerators, the company successfully appealed to central government to have these decisions overturned.

Despite the squeaky green image Onyx attempts to present, it has been named one of the worst polluters by regulators in more than one country.

Referring to the company as "waste mis-managers", the Environment Agency listed Onyx as number two in its March 1999 Hall of Shame table for highest fines incurred. Onyx's Tyseley Waste Disposal was fined £95,000 after losing two radioactive sources during demolition work at its Tyseley incinerator.

In California in 1999 Onyx operations were found to have emitted 3.2 million tons of toxic chemicals into the air, land and water, resulting in the US Environmental Protection Agency naming the company as the worst polluter in California that year.

More recently, in October 2001, Onyx pleaded guilty to illegally depositing controlled waste at an unlicensed landfill site and breaching its "duty of care". Onyx representatives refused to be interviewed by the Environment Agency about this incident, instead accepting responsibility for the incident in a letter. The company was fined £5,000 plus costs.

In the same month in the US, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection fined Onyx Environmental \$48,000 for environmental violations.

These and other fines in various jurisdictions pale into insignificance compared to the SARP scandal. In May 1998 on two separate occasions, the Onyx-owned SARP chemical waste treatment plant sent clouds of acid fumes billowing over Killamarsh.

An Environment Agency investigation of SARP revealed widespread falsification of reports and breaches of its licences. Fines of £378,000 resulted. Public protest, a parliamentary debate and the subsequent investigation led Onyx to close the acid treatment plant and incinerator.

Vivendi

Onyx is a subsidiary of the French multi-national Vivendi. Formerly known as Generale des Eaux, Vivendi was one of three large companies that dominated privatised water supply in France.

Vivendi now owns Universal Studios, along with major publishing, recording, telecom and internet companies around the world.

Vivendi's Environmental division consists of Vivendi Water, the largest privatised water supplier in the world, Onyx, the largest European and third largest global waste company, Dalkia energy suppliers, and Connex rail operations.

Vivendi owns nearly 250 companies spanning every continent except Antarctica, from water supply in Australia to incineration in Asia to television in France to computer software in the US.

There are more than 30 Vivendi subsidiaries operating in the UK where the company has recently acquired a substantial share in BSKyB. A Vivendi/ Connex train out of London Bridge station will carry passengers past the Vivendi/ Onyx SELCHP incinerator. Other subsidiaries include Bristol Water, Yorkshire Cable and Pyramid Property Services.

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