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Chris Cousins
Head of Planning Services
West Sussex County Council
The Grange
Tower Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RH

30/03/07

Dear Mr Cousins,

*Planning Application for Landfill at Rock Common Quarry,
Washington – **OBJECTION***

I am writing on behalf of Chanctonbury Landfill Action Group to object to a planning application by Veolia Environmental Services for a waste landfill site at Rock Common Quarry, Washington.

Chanctonbury Landfill Action Group (CLAG) was formed in March 2006 to campaign for a more sustainable and appropriate future for Rock Common Quarry. We have in excess of 1,250 members. Our reasons for objecting are set out in the enclosed report.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of CLAG, to commend the consultation process conducted by West Sussex County Council during preparation of the Draft Minerals and Waste Development Framework. This was an informative, two-way process involving a large number of stakeholders, culminating in area public meetings at which the process and challenges of waste planning were discussed. It contrasted sharply with the exhibition staged by Veolia which seemed to be more of an exercise in influencing without debate.

CLAG conducted a series of Open Meetings in February and March 2007 to explain the planning application to the many concerned residents. Two meetings were in Washington, one in Ashington and one in Amberley. A meeting held by Washington Parish Council followed on 15th March. All were very well attended. Veolia was invited to attend all these meetings but the declined to accept.

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Public opinion, however, *is* important. We took the opportunity to conduct an opinion survey of attendees at these meetings, which asked: (A) Would you like to see Rock Common restored to its original landform before quarrying started, along the lines proposed by Veolia *or* (B) Would you prefer to see Rock Common restored as a lake and nature reserve, in line with the existing planning permission? The opinion survey forms are enclosed. 161 people completed and returned the form. All 161 selected option (B).

Veolia's only public consultation was an exhibition in a room behind the village pub in Washington early last year. There was a clear attempt to mislead local people by suggesting that the quarry could not be restored to a lake, since they claimed the sides were unstable and would collapse. This is entirely contrary to the hydrogeological report which formed the basis of the ROMPP restoration plan, and which were considered in depth by WSCC prior to approval.

The existing ROMPP plan for restoration of the quarry was approved in 2004. It includes a condition that the site should be restored as a lake and nature reserve after sand extraction ceases, to serve as a valuable and attractive amenity, in return for the decades of quarrying already endured. Thirty years of landfill proposed by Veolia, however, is not an attractive option, and goes against the approved condition.

We would ask the County Council to draw the attention of officers and elected Councillors to the presence of inconsistencies in data between Veolia's Non-Technical Summary, the Planning Application (Volume 1), and the supporting Environmental Statement (Volume 2). We believe these, coupled with many mis-statements could give non-technical consultees a more favourable impression of the application at the decision and appeal enquiry stages, particularly with regard to impact on the local road network, noise and nuisance to nearby residents, risk to groundwater and nearby boreholes, visual impact, and the effect of the proposed use on nearby businesses.

Finally, such a large scale planning proposal as this raises questions about the corporate responsibility of the applicant as a custodian of the environment. There is much to be concerned about, since Veolia does not have a good track record in this regard. Currently, for example, Veolia is engaged in construction work in occupied territories in Palestine, which contravenes the Fourth Geneva Convention, rulings of the International Court of Justice in 2004, and the stated position of the British Government. In terms of a planning proposal for landfill in West Sussex, such things are significant if the corporate culture of the applicant puts commercial opportunism above all else.

Yours sincerely,

John Auckland
Chairman - CLAG