

SABA TO RELOCATE WASTE BURNER, END SMOKE ISSUE

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Preparations have started to replace and relocate the current waste burner on Saba. The new location will be Tumble Down Land, an area below the Saba Electric Company (SEC) power plant, west of Fort Bay Road. The main reason for this operation is to solve the smoke issue in the St. John's village.

Waste will be burned only during the evening hours at the new location. This will reduce the visual impact of the installation at the harbour and the impact for passing ships at sea. A strict policy will be established to burn waste only under normal wind conditions. Further tests will determine whether the policy can be broadened to other wind conditions, or when the wind conditions are not normal.



A delegation from Saba inspected the open-air waste burner of Ragnar Original Innovation (ROI) in Canada in April. From left: Manager of Saba's recycling facility Arnold Hassell, Commissioner Bruce Zagers, Planning Bureau head Robert Zagers and ROI representative Anders Ragnarsson.

The Saba government stated that it is aware of the only possible risk area related to the new location, which is Tent Bay, located West of the harbour. Together with the relevant stakeholders, a plan will be made that will greatly reduce the possible impact smoke could have on dive operators that utilise the Tent Bay area in the evenings.

The new location will be used only for separation of waste and burning of non-recyclables. The collected recyclables and landfill material are brought to the current landfill. There will be no storage of any waste streams at the new location. As soon as the waste is processed it will be relocated to the current location for either storage or filling of land.

The two buildings with recycling equipment will be used to store recyclables. This makes it possible to

collect higher quantities of recyclables, which will reduce the cost of waste management.

A building will be constructed at the new location to protect the equipment from the elements. Visibility of the installation at the new location will be very limited. At the harbour the building is only visible from a distance at sea. As waste is not burned during the day, no smoke will be visible from the location. During the consultation on this project, questions were asked about possible interference with the development plans for the harbour. The location is not part of current or future harbour development plans.

The new waste-burning installation, which should be operational early 2019, will be significantly larger than the current open-air burner. This means that burning of waste will no longer be necessary on a daily basis, allowing more flexibility to establish a convenient burning schedule.

The installation will be designed and built by Ragnar Original Innovation (ROI), based in the United States. The company has developed a unique open-air burner which allows controlled and full burning of waste, minimising emissions. Johnson's Enterprises, an Aruban company which supplies waste-processing equipment in the Caribbean region, helped to make the complete system tailor-made to Saba's needs.

Considering the pros and cons, the relocation of the installation means a definite improvement, especially knowing that from this location the people of St. John's and the rest of Saba will no longer be affected by emissions from waste burning. This aspect was by far the most important goal of the relocation project.

It took some time to find a solution for a better place to locate the waste burner. This had to do with finances, as a budget was lacking. However, due to the damage caused at the existing landfill location to both buildings and equipment, relief funding was received from the Dutch government to ensure a full recovery.

With these newly-allocated funds, the Saba government is finally in a financial position to not only improve the burning equipment but to also relocate it. This would not have been possible without the incidental funding from The Hague.

Finding a suitable location was challenging: it had to be a location that was available in terms of land ownership and provided sufficient surface area. Also, the location had to be fairly easily accessible and not cause smoke issues in inhabited areas. Several locations were considered, of which two promising ones were eventually looked into.

An assessment was done by a regional air quality measurement and survey expert who, on the request of the Saba government, carried out air quality measurements during several tests at the locations and visually examined smoke routes via a drone.

An area below the SEC power plant, West of Fort Bay Road, called Tumble Down Land, turned out to be suitable. From here smoke does not reach inhabited areas in normal wind conditions. With the regular Easterly wind, smoke from this location moves directly Westward and then disperses at sea.

One of the areas where air quality was measured during the tests was the location where the harbour project, the renovation of the Western side, will be executed. There was no impact during the test burns.

The replacement and relocation of the waste-burning installation is one project in a broader master plan to improve waste management on Saba. In the coming years the public entity plans to implement measures to reduce waste in general and increase the total percentage of recyclables. Ultimately the amount of waste to be burned should thereby be reduced as much as possible.

In the short term, government is working on getting all garbage trucks repaired which will result in having a better garbage collection schedule. Once this is in place there will be a new recycling campaign. When there is more separation at the households and an improved collection service this will reduce the amount of waste being burned in the short term.

Saba is also following regional developments with interest. The Dutch Ministries of Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations BZK and of Infrastructure and Water Management I&W are currently assessing possibilities for regional cooperation, with waste processing centralised on St. Maarten. This would possibly eliminate the need for waste burning on Saba altogether.

It will take some years to further develop and carry out these plans. In the meantime, Saba wants to make sure to have waste processing well organised locally.

The projects for improvement of waste management are in large part funded by the I&W Ministry.

The Daily Herald.

◀ ZVK town hall meeting at Sunny Valley Youth Centre

Saba's harbour project preparations in high gear ▶▶

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