

Recycling 'adds to warming'

Burning waste locally may be the greener option, senior adviser tells the Government

By Louise Gray
and Gordon Rayner

RECYCLING could be adding to global warming rather than reducing it, a key government adviser on waste management has said.

Peter Jones suggested that an "urgent" review of Labour's policy on recycling was needed to make sure the collection, transportation and processing of recyclable material was not causing a net increase in greenhouse gases.

Mr Jones, a former director of the

waste firm Biffa and now an adviser to environment ministers and the London Mayor, Boris Johnson, also dismissed kerbside recycling collections in many areas as "stupid" because they mixed together different materials, rendering them useless for recycling.

He suggested that much of the country's waste should simply be burnt to generate electricity.

"It might be that the global warming impact of putting material through an incinerator five miles down the road is actually less than

recycling it 3,000 miles away," he said.

"We've got to urgently get a grip on how this material is flowing through the system; whether we're actually adding to or reducing the overall impact in terms of global warming potential in this process."

Mr Jones's outspoken comments come amid increasing controversy over household recycling.

Last month, *The Daily Telegraph* disclosed that councils in England and Wales were dumping more than 200,000 tons of recyclable waste

every year – up to 10 per cent of all the glass, paper, plastic and other materials separated out by householders. Thousands of tons of recyclables are shipped to China because of insufficient capacity and demand in Britain.

In some parts of the country, residents have to sort their waste into as many as seven containers, including food waste bins, which has helped councils to justify the scrapping of weekly bin collections.

Some town halls have admitted using anti-terrorism legislation to

snoop on householders who fail to recycle properly, but councils have so far refused to test the Government's bin taxes, under which people would be fined for throwing out too much rubbish.

But a collapse in the market value of recyclable waste as a result of the global recession means many waste disposal firms are having to stockpile paper, metals and plastics in vast warehouses because they are unable to sell it on.

Mr Jones's comments will add to the suspicion of many household-

ers that the Government's recycling strategy is in chaos.

He said: "In overall terms we are reducing our carbon footprint by diverting material from landfill, but we are in danger of losing those reductions through the wrong policy decisions."

Mr Jones suggested generating electricity by burning waste instead. Alternatively, organic rubbish could be pulverised and stored in vats so that it releases methane, which could be captured and used to generate electricity.