

'Mad' rule on teeth of dead

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Exclusive By Richard Evans, North Wales Weekly News

TAX payers in Conwy county will have to stump up £1 million to pay for crematorium equipment to reduce mercury fumes from the teeth of the dead.

Bizarre EU guidelines mean the Assembly is instructing local authorities to halve all mercury emissions at crematoriums in Wales by 2008.

Silver fillings, known by dentists as mercury amalgam fillings, are made up of over 50% mercury, one of the most toxic substances on Earth.

Conwy's cabinet has decided to pay for mercury abating equipment which extracts the chemical before the fumes from the crematorium are emitted into the atmosphere via the chimney.

But although EU guidelines only stipulate a 50% reduction, Conwy has opted to spend enough money to cut all emissions as it is thought the law will become more stringent in future.

The authority must find the £1m by 2008 to pay for the equipment, despite cutting back basic services and increasing council tax.

Cllr Brian Cossey, cabinet member for the environment, said: "It's the EU going mad, it's so over the top.

"It's a lot of money to spend for relatively small emissions, and surely it would be cheaper to find better alternatives to mercury fillings in the first place?" Graham Roberts, a partner in Conchar's Funeral Directors on Woodland Road West, Colwyn Bay, said: "It seems an exorbitant amount of money for a problem so minimal.

"Presumably the problem has existed for the past 50 years since the crematorium at Colwyn Bay was built, and nobody has suffered.

"I think it's sad that we have to conform to European directives when they seem so ridiculous."

The average filling contains half a gram of mercury, which is enough to contaminate the eco-system and fish of a 10-acre lake.