



BRYN COMPOST LIAISON GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2012 AT 4:00PM

PRESENT:

Councillor D. V. Poole Chairman

Councillors:

D. Bolter, H.W. David, W. David, G.J. Hughes, S. Morgan and J.A. Pritchard.

Together with:

Residents: Mr G. Reynolds, Mrs C. Woods, Mr. W. Griffiths, Mr R. Matthews, Mrs G. Davies, Mrs A. Gray, Mrs P. Lapsa.

Gelliargwellt Farm: Mr P. Colley and Mr R. Thomas

Public Health Wales: Mrs M. Bowley

Environment Agency: Mr J. Harrison and Mr A. Carter

Environmental Health: Ms C. Edwards, Ms A. Brown, Mr J. Geer and Mr G. Mumford

Officers: E. Sullivan (Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A. Angel, Mrs A. Blackman and M. James; Residents: Mr J. Cuthbert, Mr M. Davies and Mr T. Matthews; Public Health Wales: Mr H. Brunt and Dr G. Richardson; Bryn Compost: Mr A. Price.

1. MINUTES 11TH JULY 2012

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group held on the 11th July 2012 be approved as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Members raised concerns with regard to the logging of complaints information by the EA call centres. Although complainants were being asked for their home address, operators were not requesting the actual location of the odour problem unless prompted. Mr Harrison confirmed that he would feedback the issue to EA colleagues and ensure that this information was captured for every call.

Members noted the assessment update from Public Health Wales appended to the minutes of the last meeting.

Members expressed concerns that they were no longer receiving regular feedback from the EA. Mr Carter confirmed that the recent increase in complaints had required him to be onsite for greater periods of time, constraining the amount of time he had to produce this information. However he appreciated the importance of providing regular feedback to residents and would ensure that monthly feedback reports were produced and circulated to Members. However due to his current workload it would not be possible for him to provide updates on an individual basis. Members reiterated the importance of receiving regular feedback. In order to facilitate this **it was agreed that the Committee Clerk would forward contact information for the Liaison Group Members to the Environment Agency.**

Members sought clarification as to the position of the materials log requested at the last meeting. Mr Harrison confirmed that the recording of input and out data was a requirement of the operators permit and would be collated for Members at the end of the present quarter. However the details of forwarding destinations were protected by commercial confidentiality regulations and could not be reported.

Members expressed concerns in relation to the impact of the site on public health and reference was made to links with Legionnaires disease. Ms Edwards commented that Legionnaires disease was generally associated with air-borne transmission of contaminated water droplets from processes such as cooling towers. Whilst she was aware of some press reports alleging links between Legionella and compost, she considered the risk to be low. Ms Edwards was not able to comment whether such links had been confirmed elsewhere. **Public Health Wales will research Legionella links with compost and report to the next meeting.**

Members were referred to the report from Public Health Wales (as appended to the minutes), which noted that the bioaerosol levels measured fell well below the suggested threshold levels and would not pose an elevated public health risk to residents. **Ms Bowley confirmed that Public Health Wales would bring a further report to Members to update them on the GP analysis trends.**

A resident expressed concern in relation to the dust and noise generated by the site and the adverse affect that this had on residential amenity. Officers confirmed that this particular noise complaint had been actioned by Environmental Health and procedural processes initiated. Ms Edwards explained that dust monitoring has previously been undertaken and that the results had not indicted there to be a problem. Additionally, the recent months had been the wettest on record and therefore dust problems were very unlikely. Additionally, the weather needs to be dry in order to monitor for dust. **Officers confirmed that they would again dust monitor during the spring/summer at the resident's home. Such monitoring to be undertaken, following a further complaint from the Resident.**

Members expressed concerns that MDF materials had been incorporated into the materials being spread at the farm. Mr Harrison confirmed that samples had been taken and an investigation carried out. As result, recommendations had been made to prevent the incorporation of potentially hazardous materials during agricultural processes. No further occurrences had been reported since the recommendations had been made to the operator.

Members expressed concerns with regard to the psychological impact of the site on residents and particular reference was made to instances of depression experienced by individuals living within the vicinity of Bryn Compost. Ms Bowley confirmed that local GPs had been approached last year and they had not noted any significant increase in demand or conditions. Mrs Bowley made reference to the report presented last year on GP data that stated Public Health Wales had also sought advice from the UK Expert Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution. This advice stated that 'single site studies of the effects of air pollutants on health are unlikely to have sufficient statistical power to confirm or refute assertions of effects and there is significant risk that the results of such investigations will be

impossible to interpret'. The merits of collating anecdotal evidence to support increases in or the deepening of depression sufferers was discussed at length. Members were advised that due to the wide-ranging factors that could potentially influence mental health, the small area, and the lack of a baseline data, the validity of such qualitative data would be questionable. Members felt that the psychological impact of the site required further investigation and requested that **Dr Richardson be approached to ascertain whether it would be possible to statistically/scientifically demonstrate a link between depression and the odour problems experienced by residents.**

At this stage in proceedings, due to a prior commitment Mrs Bowley gave her apologies and left the meeting.

3. UPDATES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Copies of the Bryn Compost monthly odour complaints analysis were circulated for Members information.

Mr Alex Carter (Site Officer) confirmed that the positive progress made during 2011 had unfortunately been reversed over recent months with an up surge of complaints received during July, August and September 2012. Members were advised that a marked deterioration had been noted, with 3 serious breaches recorded in February 2012, July 2012 and September 2012. An increase in substantiated complaints, on days when EA Officers confirmed odours, was also noted. Mr Carter confirmed that a formal investigation was underway into the activities on site during those periods and further information would be made available at the next meeting.

Clarification was sought as to what action would now be taken by the Environment Agency. Mr Harrison confirmed that due to the on-going investigation he was unable to disclose any information relating to the incidents until all the evidence had been put before the Investigation Panel and scrutinised against the permit. The Panel would then decide what action would be taken. Members were assured that the operator continued to work with the Environment Agency.

Members sought clarification as to how long the investigation would last and were advised that it would take several weeks but the Panel's findings would be known before the next Liaison Group Meeting. Members felt that this issue was too important to wait until the next meeting and requested that they be informed of the Panels deliberations as quickly as possible. **The Environment Agency agreed that once the Panel had concluded its investigation they would issue a statement to Members via the Committee Clerk.**

Concerns were raised in relation to the response times of EA Officers as Members felt that odours had often dissipated before Officers were able to reach the locations identified. Mr Carter reassured Members that Officers were getting out to the effected areas as quickly as possible. The EA was also monitoring odours at different times of the day and in different areas as a matter of course, not just when complaints were received.

A resident noted numerous dates when odours had been particularly strong during the evening and late at night and these instances were discussed at length. **The Environment Agency agreed to contact the resident directly with regard to these incidents.**

The Chairman was aware that the Group's new Members would not have visited the Bryn Compost site and to aid their understanding of its operations, **it was agreed that new Liaison Group Members would make arrangements for a site visit.**

Members sought and were given assurances that they would be informed of the outcome of the Investigation Panel prior to any statements being released to the press.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5:50pm