



BRYN COMPOST LIAISON GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2013 AT 3:00PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. V. Poole Chairman

Councillors:

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

Together with:

Residents: Mrs G. Davies, Mr M. Davies, Mrs A. Gray, Mrs P. Lapsa, Mr G. Reynolds and Mrs C. Woods.

Gelliargwellt Farm: Mr. A. Price and Mr. R. Thomas

Natural Resources Wales: Mr. J. Harrison and Mr. A. Carter

Environmental Health: Ms C. Edwards and Mr G. Mumford

Officers: Mrs E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H.W. David, G. Hughes and M. James. Residents Mr J. Cuthbert, Mr W. Griffiths, Mr T. Matthews and Mr R. Matthews and from Dr G. Richardson, H. Brunt and M. Bowley (Public Health Wales).

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

It was with regret that the Chairman informed Members that Councillor Mrs Anne Blackman had resigned from the Liaison Group. Members expressed their thanks to Councillor Mrs Blackman for her past contributions to the Liaison Group.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the start or during the course of the meeting.

2. MINUTES 28TH OCTOBER 2013

Clarification was given in relation to minute no. 3 on page no. 3 and Members were advised that this was in relation to 1 breach in July rather than a breach on the 1st of July.

Subject to the above amendment it was:

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group held on the 24th April 2013 be approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) confirmed there was no further progress to report on the ongoing investigation and the deliberations of the NRW Legal Team. However as a result of the continuing issues at the site a review of regulatory approaches and best practice had been initiated the outcome of which would be reported to the next meeting. Assurances were given that the time taken was within normal parameters for an investigation of this kind and was being progressed as quickly as possible.

Councillor W. David referenced an email received from Mr Jeff Cuthbert AM with regard to an odour incident on the 22nd July 2013 and his concerns that the exact source of the odour could not be verified, the email also referenced his concerns about the length of time taken over the investigation process. The Member apologised for not circulating this to the Liaison Group as requested at the last meeting, unfortunately it contained other information which prevented its wider circulation.

NRW acknowledged the issues raised and referenced the review of regulatory approaches and best practice currently underway. NRW gave assurances that they would continue to work to ensure sustainable improvements and minimise the impact on the surrounding community and expressed the same frustration as residents that these had not yet been achieved.

A Member sought further information with regard to the farm's practice of using recycled wood chip bedding from materials sourced on site and his concern that this could contain fragments of Melamine or Formica. This product when broken down was known to contain formaldehyde and should this make its way into the muck being spread on the land could lead to possible contamination. Reference was made to an email from NRW in this regard and assurances were sought that this practice had ceased. NRW confirmed that they were working with the operator to seek alternative bedding solutions but this was a complex issue and they did not have the necessary information to hand to properly inform Members of the progress made. However they would be happy to discuss further after the meeting. **It was agreed that NRW would provide further information on the present position to the Committee Clerk to circulate to Members.**

A Member referenced transportation movements onto the site and the data submitted to the Environmental Health Department. The Environmental Health Manager confirmed that the lorry timings noted at the last meeting had been within the conditioned hours of operation. Members referenced further lorry movements noted on Sunday's and concerns were expressed with regard to the origin of the vehicles entering the site. The Operator confirmed that these vehicles were sub contracted to local companies and were not originating from the areas detailed on the lorries. The Operator also advised that some of the lorry movements noted were deliveries to the quarry site, and as such were completely separate to that of the compost site. The Operator also confirmed that the use of wood chip/sawdust as bedding was a common practice in the farming industry, however he was working with NRW to find an appropriate alternative system. Members emphasised that their concerns stemmed from the incorporation of Melamine laminate in the wood chip, if the operator gave assurances that this practice had ceased then their concerns would be addressed. It was agreed that further discussions on this issue would take place after the meeting.

4. UPDATES FROM NATURAL RESOURCES WALES

A breakdown on odour complaints from 1st January 2013 to the 27th October 2013 was distributed and the analysis methodology was detailed.

The number of substantiated odour complaints was confirmed and Members noted a reduction in the number of complaints since the last meeting. NRW emphasised their commitment to reduce these numbers further and ensure the sustainability of improvements going forward. The level of complaints received against each of the different categories was explained and the variation in trends outlined. The impact of slurry spreading routines on odour levels was outlined and the number of odour events clarified. Members were advised that the regulatory review would analyse compost events, look at best practice and how to improve the management of the site. The complaints by location data was outlined and a general downward trend noted.

A Member requested further information on the July incidents and whether the origin of the odour had since been identified. **NRW advised that they did not have the information on each of the incidents in July to hand but would check and provide further information at the next meeting.**

A Member expressed concern that the level of complaints were dropping because residents had become increasingly disillusioned with the reporting/investigation process and the lack of progress being made. It was accepted whilst improvements had been made, the odours when present were far stronger than those previously experienced.

Reassurances were given that all possible efforts were being made to secure the best possible outcome for residents and the Operator was taking on board all of the recommendations made. In relation to the incidents experienced in July although the strength of the odour had been substantiated the origin of the problem had not been positively identified. Members expressed their concern at the failure to identify the cause of the odour, if the origins could not be verified then how could a repetition of the incident be avoided.

A Member noted that the total number of complaints in relation to the number of complaints not attended seemed to illustrate that quite a large number of calls were being left unaddressed. NRW acknowledged the concerns raised and advised that unfortunately they were not able to attend all incidents but did endeavour to attend and substantiate as many as possible.

A Member referenced the Urdd National Eisteddfod event coming to the area in 2015 and the impact that an odour incident similar to that experienced in July would have on a national event of this size. The Member as in previous meetings, expressed her concern that the long-term health effects of living with an odour problem of this nature were still not being considered. NRW assured Members that should there be any risk to public health immediate action would be taken however the bio-aerosol emission from the site were always well beneath the required parameters and as such formed no risk to public health.

A Member requested an update on the position of the proposed Anaerobic Digester facility. The Operator confirmed that he was currently in consultation with different companies in order to progress the development.

A Member requested that consideration be given to holding an open Liaison Group meeting at the Gelligaer Community Centre so that residents could be invited to attend and observe the discussions and deliberations of the group.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 16:06.