



BRYN COMPOST LIAISON GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2014 AT 2:00 PM.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. V. Poole Chair

Councillors:

H. David, W. David, G. Hughes and J.A. Pritchard

Together with:

Residents: Mrs G. Davies, Mrs A. Gray, Mr W. Griffiths and Mrs C. Woods.

Gelliargwellt Farm: Mr. A. Price, Mr P. Colley and Mr. R. Thomas

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

Environmental Health: Ms C. Edwards, Mr G. Mumford and Ms J. Rough

Public Health Wales: Mrs. T. Deacon

Officers: Mrs E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. Morgan, D. Bolter, A. Angel and Residents Mr J. Cuthbert, Mr M. Davies, Mrs P. Lapsa, Mr T. Matthews, Mr R. Matthews, Mr G. Reynolds and Dr. G. Richardson (Public Health Wales), M. Bowley (Public Health Wales), and H. Brunt (Public Health Wales).

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

The minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group held on the 28th October were received and noted.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Members referred to a previous enquiry in relation to bedding materials used at the farm and it was confirmed that the operator's permit had been amended to reflect recent changes in legislation which required only clean wood waste to be used. It was noted that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) would follow this up with regular audits of procedures to ensure that only clean wood waste was being spread.

A Member advised that the original concern had related to the potential risk that manure polluted by the use of inappropriate bedding materials could become incorporated into the land spreading process. NRW confirmed that the revised permit required the use of clean wood waste and this would be audited.

NRW referred to the communications circulated to Members in relation to the formal warning and enforcement notice issued to Bryn Compost and the subsequent 'briefing note' on its withdrawal. It was noted that following the receipt of new information from the operator and Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) regarding the estimates of food waste, the enforcement notice had been withdrawn pending further investigation. **NRW would now be reinvestigating all the data in relation to food waste volumes and would provide updates to Members as these investigations progressed.**

A Member referenced an email sent to M.S. Williams (Head of Community and Leisure Services) on the 17th January 2014 seeking confirmation on the amount of food waste collected and sent to Bryn Compost by CCBC. The email confirmed the difficulty in accurately calculating this tonnage as a separate entity as Caerphilly food waste is co-mingled with its green waste. However using the Torfaen model formula as a basis for calculating the food only element gave Caerphilly an estimated 5,000 tonnes of food waste. The Member had also, through the Assembly Member, requested data from Merthyr Tydfil Council on their food waste production levels and was awaiting their response.

The Member expressed his appreciation of the predicament facing NRW and the necessity of withdrawing the enforcement notice given the inaccuracy of the data. He acknowledged the difficulty in applying operational limits when input could not be accurately measured. The Member asked that NRW give consideration to stipulating actual tonnage in all future contracts. NRW confirmed that it would not be possible to stipulate actual tonnage as a condition but would work to achieve the best data set available.

The different waste combinations and ratio of food to green waste produced by the different local authority areas was discussed at length and the difficulty in establishing with any accuracy the spilt was acknowledged. NRW advised that there were three sources of data available when calculating the tonnage received by the operator. Firstly from the transfer note, then the data from the operators weighbridge records and finally from the local authorities 'waste data flow' monitoring report to Welsh Government (WG). It was noted that the 'waste data flow' system recorded a local authorities recycling activity in order to establish that targets set by WG were being met. This system could be used to determine what each authority sends for processing and NRW confirmed that they were trying to establish the total waste sent to the facility from as wide a data source base as possible.

A Member expressed her disappointment that after 18 months of investigation and legal consideration so little progress had been made. NRW recognised and shared the frustration of Councillors and Residents and emphasised their continued commitment to sustain improvements and drive down any further odour incidents.

4. UPDATES FROM NATURAL RESOURCES WALES

A breakdown of odour complaints from 1st January 2013 to the 31st January 2014 was distributed and the analysis methodology was detailed.

Members requested that the complaints data from NRW be distributed with the agenda to allow Members more time to consider the data being presented. **NRW agreed to forward the odour complaint data to the Committee Clerk for circulation with the agenda.**

The number of substantiated odour complaints was confirmed and Members noted a slight increase in the total number of complaints received in December 2013 and January 2014. However the overall trend was decreasing and NRW confirmed that they were continuing to work to ensure the sustainability of improvements going forward. Members were advised that no fundamental flaws had been found in operational practices during the peak odour incidents in July and August 2013 and there had been no obvious breaches of permit. In-depth audits of the site would now be completed on a proactive rather than reactive basis in order to ensure that operations were in line with the conditions of the permit. One audit had already been completed with 2 more to be scheduled. It was noted that any recent innovations in best practice would be used to inform these audits and the site informed of any new techniques to assist with the reduction of odours.

Members were advised of innovations in the collective sharing of best practice and it was noted that new draft technical guidance for the industry would be used to inform the audits being undertaken. For example new industry guidance showed that by maintaining air levels in the compost, the material was less likely to become anaerobic and odorous. This best practice consideration had been passed onto the operator.

A Member queried if this could have been the cause of the odour event experienced in July. NRW confirmed that they could not say for sure but it was a possibility. NRW confirmed that the composting process was being looked at from start to finish in order to ensure that working practices were being carried out correctly. However incidents that occurred outside operational hours made pinpointing the origin of the odour issues more difficult.

Members were concerned that despite there being no breaches of permit, there were still significant odour incidents being experienced. NRW assured Members that they were endeavouring to trace back all odour incidents however there was not always an obvious point of origin for the odours within the site operations.

Clarification was sought with regard to the number of substantiated complaints against the number of complaints received and reference was made to the increasing number of incidents occurring out of hours and whether this was forming a trend. NRW assured Members that all complaints were recorded, however an Officer would only be sent out to substantiate an odour event when a volume of complaints was received over a specific period. Due to the transient odour, a cluster of complaints would provide NRW Officers with the best opportunity to identify the odour and locate its source. **With regard to a possible increase in out of hours incidents NRW agreed to look at the data and inform Members of any trend.**

A Member acknowledged the improvements made in auditing and monitoring the site and welcomed the best practice measures now being incorporated into the site's operations. However concern was expressed at the length of time taken to establish this robust evidence base. NRW confirmed that as the industry developed so did best practice and therefore regulation also developed in line with those improvements. Working with country wide Environment Agency colleagues best practice had been sought out and then shared with the operator in order to secure improvements.

The Member also referenced previous concerns raised in regard to the accuracy of the data presented by location and referred to the data for Bryncoed Terrace which showed only 2 complaints. The Member was confident that more than two complaints had been made from this address and sought clarification as to whether complaints about locations other than the reporting address had been incorporated within the figures quoted. If these figures had not been picked up and included then the data presented did not illustrate an accurate representation of the issues. The Member emphasised the need to ensure the accuracy of the

data produced if a reliable footprint of the odour problems was to be established. **NRW confirmed that they would check the data and report back.**

Clarification was sought on the procedures for NRW Officers when responding to odour incidents and the process was fully explained for Members information. Members were concerned that out of hours incidents would be difficult to verify due to limited access to the site. It was noted that although access was restricted during this period it was possible to drive onto the IVC, however as the site would not be operational it would be difficult to pinpoint any failure in the process. The importance of residents continuing to report odour incidents was emphasised.

A Member raised a concern that calls from mobile phones to the help line were being charged at a higher level than from land-lines and that this could prevent residents from calling in. **NRW agreed to feed this concern back to their Call Centre.**

The Chairman closed the meeting at 14:58.