



BRYN COMPOST LIAISON GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 12TH MAY 2015 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor D. V. Poole - Chair

Councillors:

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

Together with:

Residents: Mrs A. Gray, Mrs G. Davies, Mr W. Griffiths, Mr G. Mahony, Mr G. Reynolds, Mr J. Szura

Gelliargwellt Farm: Mr P. Colley, Mrs J. Morgan, Mr R. Thomas

Natural Resources Wales: Mr J. Goldsworthy, Mrs E. Roe

Environmental Health: Ms C. Edwards, Mr G. Mumford, Mr K. Jennings

Officers: R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair opened the meeting and informed Members that Mr Ray Matthews, a former representative of the Group, had recently passed away. The Chair paid tribute to the diligent work carried out by Mr Matthews on behalf of the Group, and all present stood for a moment of silence as a mark of respect.

It was announced that Mrs Pat Lapsa had recently tendered her resignation as a local resident representative of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group. Members thanked Mrs Lapsa for her valued contribution to the meetings and wished her well for the future.

Mrs Lapsa's replacement, Mr Gerald Mahony, was welcomed to his first meeting of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group.

The Chair also welcomed Mr Kristian Jennings (who had recently qualified as an Environmental Health Officer) to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Angel, D. Bolter and M. James, together with local resident representatives Mr J. Cuthbert, Mr M. Davies, Mr W. Griffiths, Mr T. Matthews and Mrs C. Woods, and Public Health Wales representatives Dr G. Richardson, Mr H. Brunt and Mrs T. Deacon.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES – 13TH JANUARY 2015

The minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group meeting held on 13th January 2015 were received and noted.

5. MATTERS ARISING

A Member asked if the Composting Best Practice Document referred to at previous meetings was now available. Natural Resources Wales officers (NRW) explained that work was still being carried out on the document and therefore it was not yet ready for general circulation.

A query was raised regarding the meeting of 25th September 2014, where it had been agreed that information from NRW regarding the number of odour breaches and type of breach recorded against the Bryn Compost site for the current year would be forwarded to Members. This action had been marked as completed at the subsequent Liaison Group meeting of 13th January 2015. A local resident representative queried this information in that she had not received a copy, and it was agreed that a replacement copy would be forwarded to her.

Reference was made to the previous meeting of the Liaison Group of 13th January 2015, where a matter had been raised regarding the discovery of pieces of chipboard, laminated wood and MDF in the area surrounding the Bryn Compost site and farm. There were concerns that these types of wood were possibly being recycled and used for animal bedding (which is not permitted for use under current legislation) and NRW officers subsequently arranged to collect these samples from the local resident who had made the discovery and investigate the matter accordingly.

A Member explained that following a delay, he had now received a response from NRW regarding the matter. He explained that investigations had confirmed the presence of the unpermitted woodchip types in the fields surrounding the Bryn Compost site and farm. A Category 3 breach had been recorded by NRW and they had issued a warning to Gelliargwellt Uchaf Farm (the farm associated with Bryn Compost). The Member sought an explanation of how the woodchip came to be deposited in the surrounding fields, and also expressed concern as to the reasons behind this dispersal.

Mr Jon Goldsworthy of NRW explained that although he was happy to respond on the matter, he was uncertain as to whether it would be relevant to discuss it at this meeting, in that the issue related to farming activity within Gelliargwellt Uchaf Farm and not composting activity from the Bryn Compost site. Members reminded the Chair that he had allowed the query regarding the woodchip to be raised at the previous Liaison Group meeting and that NRW had agreed to respond accordingly.

The Chair gave leave for the matter to be discussed and Mr Goldsworthy explained that as a thorough investigation had needed to be carried out, the matter had taken several months to resolve, and he apologised to Members for this delay. Mr Goldsworthy explained that samples of the surrounding area had been taken to ascertain contamination levels and any impact on watercourses. The findings of the investigation were that there was a very low impact in terms of contamination to the surrounding area and no impact on watercourses. Consequently this incident was classed as a Category 3 breach which related to a low level of action required from NRW and which resulted in a formal warning letter to Gelliargwelt Uchaf Farm. NRW explained that a reoccurrence of such an incident could lead to a stronger enforcement action response.

Mrs Emily Roe of NRW added that there was a reasonable explanation for how this unpermitted woodchip came to be found around the site. She explained that the farm had been asked to cease the spreading of this type of woodchip in September 2014 following the introduction of new legislation. The farm claimed that the woodchip that had been detected since this time was a result of residue left in the bottom of the slurry tanks and which had subsequently been distributed during slurry spreading activities. Tests carried out on woodchip samples supported the farm's claim that this woodchip was historical residue.

A Member of the Group perceived the incident as a licence breach and suggested that robust action should be undertaken as a result. NRW officers clarified that the incident was not a breach of licence and explained that the term "breach" is used to categorise incidents investigated by NRW. The Member suggested that any re-occurrence of the woodchip incident should result in escalated action against the site, and explained that in his view, the spreading of the woodchip was a re-occurrence of a previous incident. NRW officers reiterated that this was the first incident since the company had been asked to cease the spreading of this woodchip. The Member was not satisfied with the response received.

Another Member of the Group sought clarification on the spreading on the unpermitted type of woodchip, and NRW officers explained that the product was not deliberately spread and had become mixed in with the other slurry as a result of the residue at the bottom of the tank. A Member pressed for a response from the Bryn Compost representatives in attendance, but the Chair explained that NRW had provided the response as they were the investigating party. NRW reminded Members that this was a matter for Gelligarwellt Uchaf Farm, not Bryn Compost, with the Chair reiterating to Members that the purpose of the Liaison Group was to deal with matters relating to Bryn Compost and not the associated farm.

The Group then turned their attention to the other matters arising and reference was made to the previous meeting of the Liaison Group on 13th January 2015, where it was agreed that Environmental Health would liaise with Bryn Compost to arrange for the possibility of odour releases around the week of the Urdd National Eisteddfod 2015 event to be minimised. Ceri Edwards, Environmental Health Manager, confirmed that she had contacted Mr Price of Bryn Compost and he had agreed to minimise odour-releasing activities around the event period (such as slurry/leachate spreading activities, emptying vessels and moving the windrows).

6. UPDATES FROM NATURAL RESOURCES WALES

The Group were referred to the overview of odour complaint data for Bryn Compost between 1st January and 31st March 2015, with all three months now displayed on the same graph. The data detailed the number of calls received by NRW, together with the type of odour detected if NRW officers attended the site in response to the complaint received. The recorded wind direction on the day of each set of complaints was also included on the dataset as a new feature. Where the wind direction was detailed as 'potential', this indicated that there was a potential for the odours to be coming from the Bryn Compost facility and Gelliargwelt Uchaf Farm directions. Where the wind direction was detailed as 'wrong direction', this indicates that the source of any odour could not have come from the Bryn Compost facility or Gelliargwelt Uchaf Farm.

Mrs Roe summarised the data over the three-month period and explained that a number of complaints were received in January but did not trigger NRW attendance under current procedures. A routine site visit on 20th January 2015 did not detect any odours. There was an increase in odour complaints at the beginning of February, and NRW attended site on these occasions and attributed the odour to slurry spreading activities. NRW also attended site towards the end of February following complaints and attributed the odour to slurry spreading activities from a neighbouring farm.

A complaint was received on 17th March 2015 and NRW attended but were unable to substantiate any odours that day. They had received notification that farming related activities that could give rise to odour were being carried out in that area, which could have dissipated prior to the officer's arrival. NRW also attended site on 20th March 2015 following a number of calls, and a transient odour was detected in the area, but the Investigating Officer was unable to find the source of the odour at this time. There were no compost odours detected by NRW during any of the site visits over the three-month period and Mrs Roe explained that this was an encouraging sign that compost odour was not causing an issue in the local area.

A Member raised a query in regards to the farming odours detected and the Chair reiterated that the purpose of the Group was to deal with matters relating to the Bryn Compost facility. A Member queried whether there was a seasonal pattern to the odour complaints, and Mrs Roe explained that NRW received a higher level of complaints in the summer period with the warmer weather.

A Member referred to the transient odour detected on 20th March 2015 and sought clarification on the definition of this odour. Mrs Roe explained that 'transient' is a phrase used within odour assessments and that it refers to an odour that is not persistent or long-lasting. Mrs Roe also explained that a different measurement is used to measure the strength of an odour to determine how offensive it is.

Members' attention was directed to the second graph contained within the meeting papers which displayed the number of odour complaints for Bryn Compost over a two year period between March 2013 and March 2015. Mrs Roe explained that the graph indicated an increase in complaints in the summer months and also during a period of warm weather in September 2014. Members were asked to note the decreasing trend line which indicated a decrease in detectable compost odours in the local community.

A concern was raised by a Member as to whether this decreasing trend line was a true reflection of a decline in detectable odour or whether there were other reasons for the decline, such as a lack of reporting by local residents. A Member who lived in the Nelson area stated that whilst there appeared to be a decline in the frequency of odours, there was a feeling that complaints were not being proactively addressed by NRW and therefore local residents were reluctant to report odours.

The Member elaborated further on this comment by explaining that she had made a number of odour complaints that had not been recorded by NRW, and another Member evidenced the next graph in the meeting papers which detailed the complainants by location and which did not include any in the Nelson area. **The Chair asked that the Member from Nelson forward the reference numbers for these complaints to NRW so that the matter could be investigated. He also requested that a report be brought back to the next Liaison Group meeting detailing the reason why these complaints had not been recorded.**

Members' attention was directed to the final graph in the meeting papers, which displayed the number of complaints over the same period (1st January 2015 to 31st March 2015), split into the location of each odour complainant. This graph was accompanied by a map showing the centralised location of where the odours were detected. NRW officers were pleased to note the comments of a Member from Penybryn who stated that he could no longer detect odours in the area.

7. REVIEW OF FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

At the previous meeting of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group, it had been agreed that a review of the frequency of meetings would be undertaken at the next meeting.

The Chair noted the consistent decrease in odour complaints and commented on the fact that there had been no compost odour complaints recorded by NRW in the first quarter of the year. With this in mind, he proposed that the frequency of meetings be reduced to every six months. Members referenced the increase in odour complaints over the summer months and felt that the meetings should be kept on a quarterly basis as a result. The Chair proposed that the meetings be reduced to every four months to allow NRW to produce three months' worth of odour complaint data at each meeting. This was agreed by the Members of the Group.

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 2.36 p.m.