



## **BRYN COMPOST LIAISON GROUP**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON TUESDAY, 21ST JUNE 2016 AT 2.00 P.M.**

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PRESENT:

Councillor N. George - Chair

Councillor:

W. David

Together with:

Residents: Mrs G. Davies, Mr J. Szura

Gelliargwellt Uchaf Farm (Bryn Compost): Ms J. Morgan, Mr R. Thomas

Natural Resources Wales: Mr R. Hughes, Mr A. Ward

Public Health Wales: Mrs T. Deacon

Environmental Health: Miss C. Edwards, Mr G. Mumford

Officers: R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Angel, H.W. David and J.A. Pritchard, local resident representatives Mrs A. Gray, Mr G. Mahony, Mr G. Reynolds and Mrs C. Woods, Public Health Wales representative Mrs M. Bowley, and Gelliargwellt Uchaf Farm representatives Mr P. Colley and Mr A. Price.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **3. MINUTES – 2ND FEBRUARY 2016**

The minutes of the Bryn Compost Liaison Group meeting held on 2nd February 2016 were received and noted.

#### 4. MATTERS ARISING

Reference was made to the previous meeting of the Group in February 2016, where clarification was sought on the timeframe between Natural Resources Wales (NRW) reporting instances of farming odours to Environmental Health, and follow-up action by Environmental Health Officers. Ceri Edwards (Environmental Health Manager) provided an update on this matter.

It was confirmed that from 1st January 2016 to date, 4 complaints had been referred to Environmental Health from NRW in respect of odours arising from slurry spreading activities at Gelliargwellt Uchaf Farm. Environmental Health investigated each complaint but took no action against the farm on these occasions. In response to a Member's query, Miss Edwards confirmed that some complaints were reported to Environmental Health on the same day that they were received by NRW, and some were reported the following day.

A Member asked whether any of these complaints related to the stirring of the slurry pit and Miss Edwards confirmed that the odours were attributed predominately to slurry spreading activities. Members were asked to note that NRW have visited the site on a number of occasions this year but that slurry spreading activities by the farm and any subsequent odour complaints have been infrequent.

A Member referred to the farm's previous method of breaking the slurry pit crust prior to it being stirred, which had caused the release of odour-creating sulphide gases, and to which a local resident had attributed as being the cause of his nasal complaint. The Member also sought clarification on the extent of the odours attributed to the breaking of the slurry pit crust, which had been described by NRW as being "offensive and strong".

Miss Edwards reiterated that this was an historic issue in that the farm has now introduced a new slurry handling system, where the liquid and dry components are separated which has eliminated the odour complaints previously associated with the stirring process. The Group were also given assurances that both NRW and Environment Health proactively respond in a timely manner to all odour complaints received via official channels.

Reference was made to the previous meeting of the Group, where discussion took place with Public Health Wales as to whether there had been an increase in ill-health within the local area as a result of odours from the Bryn Compost site. Tracey Deacon (Public Health Wales) provided an update on this matter.

Mrs Deacon explained that in line with a previous report presented to the Group, she had examined instances of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and depression within the local area. Preliminary indications are that any increased prevalence across these illnesses are generally in line with national trends, and **Mrs Deacon confirmed that she would circulate the latest data to the Group once it becomes available.**

A Member requested an update on the Composting Best Practice Document referred to at a number of previous meetings. It was explained that NRW are continuing to liaise with DEFRA (the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) as to a possible release date for the document. It was noted that the local Assembly Member is also actively seeking the completion of this document.

Reference was made to the movement of compost product from the in-vessel composting system (IVC) directly to windrows located within the quarry at Bryn Compost. This change of practice had been discussed at the Liaison Group meetings in September 2015 and February 2016. Members of the Group had stated at these meetings that they had been unaware of this change, and at the last meeting in February 2016, they sought further information from NRW regarding the implementation date for this new process.

Adam Ward from NRW provided an update on this matter. He confirmed that the new

practice had been introduced approximately 2 years ago (Summer 2014) which had coincided with a significant reduction in odour complaints. He also explained that the quarry location allows for more effective cooling of the compost product and that NRW are satisfied that the quarry infrastructure meets all regulatory requirements.

Members expressed dissatisfaction that they had been unaware of this new practice and queried whether planning permission should have been sought prior to its implementation.

Miss Edwards provided further clarification on this revised process. She reminded Members that NRW are responsible for the regulation of composting matters and explained that compost product has always been taken to the quarry at some point. Originally the final maturation stage of the composting process took place within windrows placed on a concrete pad adjacent to the IVC pad (which had led to many of the historical odour complaints). The fully matured compost product was then taken to the quarry for stockpiling.

It had been determined that once compost leaves the IVC building it would be better to move the windrows directly to a concrete pad in the quarry for the final maturation stage to take place. It was reiterated to Members that this process has been subject to trial and error over the years in light of a number of recommendations and opinions.

A Member queried whether planning permission was needed for the windrows to be relocated to the quarry. NRW Officers explained that windrows (which are also used to hold the final composted product) have always been located in the quarry.

A local resident Member disputed the timeline of events with regard to compost being moved to the quarry, stating that he had viewed an online satellite image of the site and had observed mounds of compost product located around the site. NRW Officers explained that such images are not necessarily up to date and should not be used as an evidential measure.

## **5. UPDATES FROM NATURAL RESOURCES WALES**

The Group were referred to the overview of odour complaint data for Bryn Compost between 1st March 2016 and 31st May 2016, which illustrated the number of odour complaint calls received each month by NRW and the number of instances where composting odours were substantiated. In total, Natural Resources Wales received 49 complaints during this period. 23 of these complaints were attended but no compost only events were confirmed. However, 8 of these complaints were attributed to a mixture of farm and compost odours, which were attributed to slurry spreading activities. The figure is almost half of the total volume of complaints that NRW received in the 5 months prior, and is a very similar figure to the same period last year.

The overview of data also highlighted the significant findings during this period. There was a small spike in complaints between 5th-6th January 2016, where the operator cleaned out cattle sheds and moved fully matured compost to the "common" ready for spreading. NRW responded to these complaints and substantiated odours from the cattle shed on the initial inspection but no composting odours. During the second response, the stockpiles of compost on the "common" were inspected but no odours were detectable when in close proximity.

There was a significant spike in complaints on 21st March 2016, where NRW received 8 complaints in one day. NRW found that these complaints were linked to land spreading activities that commenced that day. Complaints in April and May 2016 remained relatively low, although NRW determined small spikes in complaints on 13th April 2016 and 3rd May 2016, which coincided with the cleaning out of cattle sheds.

Discussion of the dataset ensued and a Member queried whether any slurry spreading activities were currently taking place. Jennifer Morgan of Bryn Compost outlined the preparatory process relating to slurry spreading, explaining that the slurry was currently being discharged from the slurry pit lagoon into the anaerobic digester plant (AD). An assessment was currently being carried out to determine how much slurry content remained in the lagoon. It was anticipated that the spreading of the resulting digestate substance would commence in mid-July 2016.

The same Member queried whether there would be an odour arising from the resulting digestate. Ms Morgan explained that samples were being carried out on the digestate, and confirmed that although there would not be as much odour as that generated from the raw slurry, there would be an odour of some description.

Mr Ward added that NRW are also involved in the monitoring of this AD process and confirmed that the monthly update reports that are circulated to local residents would continue. A Member commented on the usefulness of the reports and also remarked on a substantial improvement in odour complaints compared to the previous year. He expressed a wish to reach a position where there are no complaints at all and hoped the situation would continue to improve. Mr Ward explained that as the Bryn Compost facility continues to refine and improve its composting methods, it is expected that odour complaints will continue to decrease.

A local resident Member queried whether the spreading of fully matured compost in January 2016 took place on a public common. Mr Ward confirmed that this common is part of Gelliargwellt Uchaf Farm. This Member stated that she was very impressed by the Bryn Compost site visit that had been arranged for the Liaison Group (which took place in May 2016) and that she had noticed a marked improvement across the site. The Chair expressed his thanks to Bryn Compost staff for arranging the visit.

In closing, it was suggested that the frequency of future meetings be reduced to 6-month intervals. Following discussion on this matter, Members of the Group indicated that a period of 5 months would be acceptable to them, and it was agreed that arrangements be made to schedule the next meeting for October/November 2016.

The meeting closed at 2.44 p.m.