



Highfields Landfill Site, Walsall- Community Update January 2020

Introduction

This is the first in a series of updates which will provide residents with the latest information about our regulation of Highfields Landfill site. Keeping you up to date on our regulation activity is very important to us and we hope our updates will answer many of your questions.

What we do?

The Environment Agency regulate the environmental permit held by Enovert North Limited (the operator) for Highfields landfill. Within the permit there are conditions concerning the operations which the site can carry out including waste types and handling, emissions and monitoring.

Walsall Council provide a specialist monitoring, investigation and enforcement services with respect to air quality, contaminated land, noise and vibration. In this instance, they are supporting the Environment Agency who are the primary regulator. In addition, the Council's Public Health Team have a duty to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of the local population.

What you have told us

We receive complaints that mostly relate to odour. In response we undertake odour checks in the area and visit the site regularly.

The operator is informed about complaints (although we never release personal data, so they cannot identify complainants) and investigate in accordance with their site procedures.

Our actions

Since an increase in odour complaints from November 2019 onwards we have been visiting the site regularly to investigate the reasons for this. Throughout last year we had been working with the operator to ensure that the site operates to protect the environment and communities. We have been focusing on general compliance and engineering requirements at the site, though in light of the complaints we have changed focus to understand what the specific causes are. To this end we have used specialist equipment to locate specific sources of odour and various repairs have now been undertaken on the gas infrastructure, leachate (liquid produced by decomposing waste) tanks and leachate pumping, and the gas engine on site that is used to burn landfill gases. The Environment Agency have now agreed a comprehensive capping programme on the site which has started to seal the existing areas and we will also be undertaking a full gas audit with the operator that is currently scheduled for the first week of February.





Operator actions

The operator has committed to resolving the recent odour issues and has recently undertaken a series of measures to improve odour control. New gas wells have been installed, along with improved gas tight seals around certain infrastructure, increased gas extraction, added capacity for leachate (liquid) storage and improved capping following our visits.

The operator will continue to make further improvements over the coming weeks to reduce the likelihood of odours occurring, including capping to seal the older waste cells. This work requires good weather conditions and will take place as soon as practicable.

What is the health impact on local residents?

In response to concerns raised about health impacts, the advice of Public Health England [PHE] has been sought. Whilst we would encourage anyone with health concerns to see their GP, PHE have confirmed their position that living close to a well-managed landfill site does not pose a significant risk to human health (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landfill-sites-impact-on-health-from-emissions>) .

Our commitment

As part of our site regulation activities we will continue to carry out odour assessments during routine visits to the site, which will be both on announced and unannounced basis.

Enovert North Limited has confirmed that they are committed to the long term future of the site and compliance with their Environmental Permit.

Your odour reports

We operate a 24-hour incident hotline. Our hotline number is **0800 80 70 60**. You can use this number to tell us if the site is causing a problem. In order to gather reliable evidence we need reports to be timely and accurate.

Our response

We take any reports of odour seriously and ensure that they are fully investigated. When we receive a call to the incident hotline, an officer will decide on the level and nature of our response. As we are already aware that the source of odour is likely to be the landfill site, we will not attend all complaints, but our officers will continue to make regular and unannounced site visits.

Our engagement

To help our engagement with local residents, we will continue to provide updates via our newsletter. Our next update will be provided by the end of February 2020.

In future you will be able to view our community updates here-

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/highfields-landfill-walsall-information-page>

If you want to be added to the mailing list to receive an emailed version please email-

Engagement_WestMids@environment-agency.gov.uk.

If you do not have access to the internet please write to us at Engagement Team WMD, Environment Agency, Riversmeet House, Tewkesbury, GL208JG or call us on 02030251583

You can follow us on twitter at @EnvAgencyMids #HighfieldsLandfill as we will be tweeting about the work we are doing.

Thank you for taking the time to read this update.