



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Walleys Quarry Engagement Call

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Walleys Quarry Engagement Call

Participants

Clare Dinnis

Carl Moss

Suzanne Ward

Sarah Dennis

Ian Withers

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Dan. Good evening everybody. And thank you for joining us for this second session. So, for those of you who were with us last time, we're going to follow a similar format today. So, what that means is the team and I will give you a short update and then we'll open up to take your questions and hopefully answer those. Before I start just to keep you updated on our engagement. We also held a second session for local councillors yesterday, where we shared similar information to that that we're going to share with you today. And although we've been talking very regularly to Aaron Bell and other local MPS, we're also speaking to them collectively tomorrow. So, we're making sure that everybody has the same information. Now, when we spoke last time, we also said that we would minimise the use of this virtual approach.

And we would be looking to run face-to-face sessions as soon as possible that – that's still the case, but given the uncertainties around the government's COVID roadmap, we're planning to continue with this virtual approach for a little bit longer so that we can be confident. We can go ahead, regardless of what decisions the government made about opening up. So I can tell you now that as well as tonight, we've scheduled another session again in the evening, in a fortnight's time on Wednesday, the 23rd of June, we will share the dial-in details closer to the time, but that'll be on Wednesday, the 23rd of June and beyond that we'll then review when we know what's happening about the easing of lockdown, whether we do another virtual call, whether we do a face-to-face event along these lines, or whether we do perhaps a drop in event in the town through to the day. So, what I'm going to do now is I'm going to start with an update on the actions that have happened on site over the past fortnight, since we've spoken. And then there were three other issues that I want to cover that I know that there's been a number of questions about it, particularly on social media. So, we can address those straight off. And at that point, I'll open up to questions so that once again, we can spend as much time as possible hearing from you and answering the questions that you want us to be able to come back to them.

So, in terms of what's happening on site now, last time we spoke, I talked about the 60 to 70 actions that we had instructed Walleys Quarry Limited to complete by the 1st of June, we were onsite the following day and our inspections show that those were complete. We had also asked the company to what we did. We'd instructed the company to do a repeat surface emission survey, which is a survey that goes across the whole site that tells us what emissions are coming through the surface of the landfill. And we had asked them to consider bringing that forward so that we could test the impact of those actions as soon as possible. We understand that that survey has now happened is being processed. So, we expect to see the results well before the 25th of June deadline. One of the actions was about an outdated

gas management plan. We received that as expected from the – from Walleys Quarry Limited and the gas management contractor. And this is a really crucial part of the next step. So, the team have been working with them to review that plan this week, and we're on site with them. And we will be in a position to learn more about what that's telling us and what that needs, what actions are needed on that in the coming days. When we spoke about a fortnight ago, I also talked about the fact that the landfill is not responding to the measures we're putting in place in the way that we'd expect it to and recognise absolutely that that will be really concerning for you as a community. So, I sought to reassure people that this is despite us drawing on expertise from across the country and across the sector.

In fact, there's nothing that we're leaving unturned. We've got the experts involved in this to know what is causing those high levels of hydrogen sulphide and what we can do about it. And we've been looking to learn nationally and internationally about new and innovative solutions to help manage that. Really importantly, though, we're also pushing Walleys Quarry Limited, who is of course the operator responsible for the site to do the same. And since we last spoke, it has committed to using an innovative capping material, which will also help to suppress odour and dust, and generally put a temporary cap over more of the site. One of the other things that you may have seen on social media that we've done in that fortnight, since we've last spoken to you is meet directly with Councillor Derrick Huckfield, and also with Councillor Simon Tagg. So, I'm going to hand to Ian Withers who had that meeting with them to update on that.

Ian Withers: Thank you, Claire. Good evening, everybody. Yes, I met Derrick Huckfield last week. So, Derrick as some of you will know is the member for Keele, Knutton and Silverdale. And he, after our councillor session two weeks ago, had some things that he wanted to say to us. So, we met him in person to listen to some of his ideas and suggestion about why the odour is so strong. Councillor Huckfield has a huge wealth of knowledge about the site, the history of the site and how it's being operated for probably a generation as well as the local geology. So, it's very right that we take his view seriously, and that's what we're doing. And one of his particular interests is in leachate and the way that Walleys Quarry Limited managed leachate. Leachate for those of you who don't know is the liquid that forms in the landfill mass that's generated from rain water that falls on top surface water that's on the top of the site and any moisture that's in the waste, it's that percolates through the decomposing waste it becomes what we call leachate.

And Councillor Huckfield is quite right in saying that leachate management is absolutely, intrinsically linked to gas production and therefore odour generation. So, we are very interested in what he's got to say. So interested in fact that we will meet him again in the next few days next week, in fact, to talk about his views in more detail, and we will come back to you in two weeks' time, if not, before, to share with you any useful information that arises from that conversation.

As well as seeing Councillor Huckfield, Suzanne who's on this call and I also met Walleys Quarry Limited communications director. And that was really specifically about our interest in encouraging Walleys Quarry Limited to do much more in terms of communicating directly with you, with the community. Now, as a regulator of that site, we do have some limitations in forcing them to do that, but we think that this is something we need to do more, and we've

influenced the company to take much more of a prominent role in talking to you and keeping you updated. And we've explained that we'd like to see them doing that. We want them to explain to you what actions they're taking directly to you, to address odour emissions.

We want them to answer your questions and respond to your complaints. I have to say the company were – well, I was certainly encouraged by what they say and what they said to us. They – they've given us the assurances that they want to do more on exactly the things we asked about and a few of the things they intend to do and I'll list them. So one is that they want the routine site liaison meetings, which occur anyway and have done for a time, but they want to make them much more effective. Use an independent chair and use that as a forum to engage with community representatives much better. They want to set up a system. That's the first thing, the second thing is to set up a system so that the public can report odour directly to the company and get a response about what they are doing about that odour.

The third thing is to engage much more proactively and work with the local business community, as well as councillors and politicians. And they specifically talked about holding some open days onsite for business leaders in the locality, for example. The fourth thing is to improve their interactive content on their website. So, there's much more up-to-date information available to you and they are, I think, hoping, possibly as early as this week to publish a weekly update, along the lines of the one that we do, I think, already, but directly from the company for the community on a weekly basis. So those were encouraging signals and okay, that's all they are at the moment, but they are good things that they're talking about and we will continue to work with the company, put pressure on them and encourage them to be more accountable directly and more accessible to you, the community. Thank you, Claire.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Ian. And just to be clear on that, in giving you that update from the company, we're not making any apologies for the company or to where they have been that's for them to do. That's not what the Environment Agency is here to do. What we wanted to do is to make sure that we're clear with you, that we are feeding this back in the strongest terms that we are able to, as well as focusing on the things that are directly within our legal enforcement capabilities. So, the last thing I want to cover before we open up for questions, I know that there has been a lot of frustration around the fact that there are no apparent financial penalties for Walleys Quarry, for what's happening to yourself and the community, the wider community.

And what I thought would be worth doing is just being clear on where the Environment Agency is with this. So, the first thing to say is that, as I said before, our focus is 100% on action to resolve the problem as quickly as possible. And I make absolutely no apologies for that being our priority, and an absolute priority. Building a legal case for sanctions, whatever they may be, is something that takes time and resource. And at this moment in time, I believe it would be a distraction from resolving the problem for us to do this. That doesn't mean that it is not in our minds. And it doesn't mean that the evidence that we are collecting and the information that is being sought from the company is not part of that and is not being done with that in mind. We will reach a point where there is a focus for that, and that is a priority for us, but not until we've resolved the problem. In the meantime, though, there are some other impacts, financial impacts for Walleys Quarry Limited that other actual powers

allow, and which we are bringing to bear. So, we have talked previously, particularly with elected members about, the amount of funding that the Environment Agency has offered for putting resource into different regulated sites. And we've been really clear that since the end of February, we have substantially increased the amount of resource we've been working – we have working on Walleys Quarry. We have the capacity for some of that, not all of it, but the capacity for some of it to recharge that to the operator, particularly in relation to the regulatory aspects. We have been doing that, we've been maximizing what we are able to do, and we will continue to do it.

So, it means that there aren't any resource constraints in terms of what we are putting on to this. As the Environment Agency, we are doing everything we can. And that is something that is being helped by the company. The second thing to say is that the charges that are related to environmental permits, so the charges that any landfill has to pay to the Environment Agency for the permit they have are set by the government. They're not something that the Environment Agency has control over, but the work – the way that they work is that it is a basic charge that is related to the specifics of the permit. And then alongside that is an escalating charge that depends on the performance band, into which we put the company. And that performance band is determined by the number and the type of non-compliances. So, the number of non-compliances that we've seen during 2021 for Walleys Quarry means that they are a band E performer and their charges for this year will increase by about 50%.

Those aren't big amounts, but they are all of the things that we are able to do at a regulator. And I wanted to reassure you that we are bringing those to bear on the company, right? So, just before I open up to questions, I'd like to introduce the team I have with me today who are going to help answer those questions, Carl Moss, leads on our regulatory and enforcement issues. And Sarah Dennis is a part of his team, the technical expert, technical leader in his team. Ian Withers, who you've already heard from is leading our engagement with you, the community and Suzanne Ward has been involved in leading the engagement with partner organizations all the way through. Now, that's important because as with previous call, the previous call, we don't have partners with us to answer questions on their limits today. We are trying to address that, and we are hoping that we will have health partners with us on this – the next of these calls, so that they are able to give you that health advice. But as with last time, we will make sure that we take any questions we can't answer away and share those with those partners, right. So, I think Dan I'll come back to you. I can see there's some questions in the queue and we'll start hearing from people on the call, please.

Operator: So, the first caller on the line is Stephen Murray. Stephen, when you are ready, your line is now open. Please go ahead with your question.

Stephen Murray: Thank you very much. And thank you, Claire and team for stepping back into the lines down again. I would like to ask the following, with a supplementary, with regard to the impact on health, our PHE basing their assumptions on the monitoring data that the EA are providing in terms of the health effect, and the supplementary would be as the H2S gas accumulation in a well-insulated new property is going to be significantly higher than that present, again, do you believe that perhaps PHE are basing their assumptions on false datasets?

Clare Dinnis: Okay. Thank you, Steven. So, I'm going to come to Carl who is part of the regulators group, where we – PHE, but also Staffordshire County Council and Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, come together because, he can give you more detail, not only about our monitoring and what PHE are using, but also some of the other aspects of that. So, Carl, I'll come to you please.

Carl Moss: Good evening, Steve, thank you for your question. In terms of PHE health advice yes, it is based on the results of those four monitoring stations. But we are working with Newcastle on the line, Borough Council. They have handheld equipment that they are taking into homes in the area. And that data was shared with PHE last week. And we are in discussions as an air quality team, the agency, PHE and Newcastle underline on how we can relate that into PHE advice. And they are looking at that data going forward. There is a meeting to be arranged in the next week or so to start discussing the Newcastle information.

Stephen Murray: And if I may ask just one quick final question, have you carried out any toxicology investigations on the plants and trees on site at Walleys Quarry? And if not, why not?

Carl Moss: We haven't carried out any toxicology checks on the plants and trees. At the moment we're focusing on getting to the root cause of where the odours are coming from, whether that's something that we consider going forward that's something I'll discuss with colleagues from PHE and another part about this.

Stephen Murray: But you kind of accept the fact that that would actually give you a very good baseline and trace line both current and historical about what is in that landfill and therefore give you better guidance on what might be producing the large amounts of H₂S?

Carl Moss: My expertise doesn't go into that, but I can certainly get some information for you and come back to you.

Stephen Murray: Thank you very much.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Stephen. I know its worth saying as well, well, there is a host of monitoring around the site, particularly around the water quality. We are looking at what else may be needed in that space and particularly around water quality. I look into for some additional monitoring. Thank you though. Dan, can we go to the next question, please?

Operator: The next caller on the line is Robert Stevens. Robert, when you are ready, your line is now open, please go ahead.

Robert Stevens: Hi, I'd like to know if and when the council that's Newcastle Borough Council issue with the abatement notice, will you would advise the Secretary of State to allow it, or will you once again, side with the operator and allow us to be gassed?

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Robert. So, where the Secretary of State comes in, is not on deciding whether or not that abatement notice can be issued. So, if Newcastle Borough Council do decide to go ahead with that, that is a decision that they will take, and they will issue that abatement notice to the operator and the operator will have to decide itself whether it either appeals against it or whether it follows that abatement notice. So that won't be something that the Environment Agency has any say in. The issues in relation to Secretary of State are further, further down the line. It's for Newcastle to explain what they're doing with that process. But what I will say to you is that the – in terms of the

Environment Agency, working in partnership with Newcastle Borough, we've been talking to them about that statutory nuisance, option and about what they need from us about what the implications are for all the way through, since I believe Simon Tagg and Aaron Bell mentioned it, back in late February. So, the conversations we've been having about working together on that partnership has not been an issue in terms of that.

Robert Stevens: It then begs the question what advice will you give the Secretary of State.

Clare Dinnis: I will not be asked for that advice, Robert, because it is not for the Secretary of State to give an opinion on whether or not Newcastle can issue that abatement notice. They can do that without his blessing.

Robert Stevens: They can do that without his blessing, I didn't know that.

Clare Dinnis: They can, they can issue the abatement notice without the Secretary of State's say, the Secretary of State comes in later in the legal process on that, but is not something that the Environment Agency would directly be involved in in terms of the issuing, nope.

Robert Stevens: So, you wouldn't be issuing any advice to the Secretary of State regarding this matter?

Clare Dinnis: Robert I'm not going to say the advice that we're giving to the Secretary of State on Walleys Quarry, generally, you know, we need to keep that between ourselves and him, but we are not, and will not be in a position where we can, or I'll ask to give him advice on whether or not that abatement notice should go ahead. That's that something for the local authority and something they will do. So, Dan, can we go to the next question, please?

Operator: The next question will come from James Whitmore. James, when you're ready, your line is now open, please go ahead.

James Whitmore: Thank you. Hi, Claire and team. Thank you for taking my question. So, I live five miles away from the site and for the past six months on a regular basis, I've been woken up by a vile, toxic gas that's in my house. It wakes me up, gives me nausea, stomach problems, sore eyes, and a stinging runny nose. It actually happened last night as well. Today I feel and every day after it, I feel like I've got a bad hangover. Can you tell me why that's happening and how it can travel such a long way and still be as potent and what other chemicals are present in that gas apart from hydrogen sulphide? Thank you.

Clare Dinnis: Okay. Thank you, James. So, I am of course, very sorry that you're experiencing those symptoms. You know, none of us want anybody to be feeling like you are. I am –

James Whitmore: The actual moment that happens in the middle of the night is absolutely terrible Claire. It couldn't be more antisocial if it tried, if you could imagine you're fast asleep, you wake up and your entire house is a number six level stench. It feels toxic to breathe in. And once it's happened a few times, you then anticipating it every day. So, you're on your toes sort of thing. It's a really horrible thing to have to deal with. Sorry.

Clare Dinnis: – it's fine – I have spent the time hearing from yourself and the community and from others and reading the impact statements so that I don't underestimate how terrible this is for you to live with. We are not the health experts. We don't have the expertise in terms of health advice. And that's why I'm really keen that we get those bodies here on

these calls with us to be able to answer the kind of questions that you're asking. All I can say I'm afraid is to point you towards the advice they have given, and that they're asking people to report to GPs. What we can do, is to talk to you about the monitoring that we are doing and what we are making sure we are collecting in terms of air quality monitoring and passing it to Public Health England, and to the other authorities with those health responsibilities. So, Carl, can I come to you to talk about what the monitoring is collecting, please briefly?

James Whitmore: Hi, Carl, and if you could answer specifically how it can travel so far and what other chemicals are likely to be in that gas, other than hydrogen sulphide, please?

Carl Moss: Okay. James, thank you for you, for your question. In terms of, the air quality monitoring, it's obviously monitoring for, methane, hydrogen sulphide, and Sox and NOx and a few other substances. So that's what they're monitoring. In terms of the modelling of your position being five miles away, we're working on that information on how it, you know, how it's traveling those distances, the monitors we've got, the service and the site is that, at the fire station, and that is directly behind the one from Gallingle to see how it's moving in distances. But I have talked with our national air quality monitoring team and putting monitors, the kind of distances that you're talking about wouldn't be beneficial because we'd pick up lots of other background air, you know, air quality issues that may come from transport that is in the community. We have talked about the benefits of putting stations further away, but my advice is from our air quality monitoring expert, that it wouldn't be beneficial, but I do understand your concern living that distance away. And, you know, we are trying to get to the bottom of what and why it is traveling those distances and how it is traveling those distances.

James Whitmore: Oh, yeah. I'd love to know what it is and what that – what is in that plume and how it can do that. It seems like a magnificent feat to be able to travel uphill Gallingle and get into my house when it's so far away, you know, so I wish you looked, really have a look.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you. Thank you, James, thank you. Right. Dan, can we go to the next question, please?

Operator: So, the next question will come from Stephen McKean, Stephen, when you are ready, your line is now open, please go ahead.

Stephen Meakin: Hello. Thank you for allowing me a question, but I'm going to refer back to my original question on the last conference that we did, even I said that we gave you, not you personally, but the Environment Agency photographic evidence and statements regarding items that shouldn't have gone in there. Now, I do understand that you said to me that you wanted to discuss this with me personally as it wasn't probably, but I am still waiting for that call. Now, surely in 2019, if an investigation had been done properly then, we may not be in the position we are now.

Clare Dinnis: So, Stephen, I'm conscious that we haven't come back to you and that's because we want to have that information to come back to you and to have a proper conversation with you. And we'd like to be able to do that in person. We're focusing at the moment on what is happening with the site now. We have had, as I think I've said before, and has been reported in the state – in the local newspaper information given to us by whistle blowers. So, there is an investigation going on, we are still absolutely focused on resolving

the situation as it is at the moment. So, I apologise that we've not come back, but it's because we're prioritizing the work on site now, not because we've forgotten or because we're not going to come back to you. What we can do is give you a call on a range of time for that meeting so that you know when it is, and we've got that in the diary. But as I say, we will do that at a point when we're not going to be compromising what's going on now.

Stephen Meakin: I much appreciate it. And I'm sure the community would appreciate that, but surely, and please don't take this personally, somebody from your team should have contacted me sooner rather than wait for me to have to call again.

Clare Dinnis: Well, we have a lot of people who are focused on the site at the moment. So, as I said, all I can do is apologise for that Stephen, but we will come back to you and we will set that call up.

Stephen Meakin: Okay. Thank you.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you. Thank you. Dan, can we go to the next question, please?

Operator: So, the next question is going to come from Graham Eagles, Graham, when you are ready, please go ahead with your question.

Graham Eagles: Hello, and thank you for taking my call. One of the main things which nobody seems to understand even though it's been on every news channel. It's been on every channel on TV, radio. It's been spread everywhere. And it's – it has been said by the Environment Agency, as this landfill, with the amount of complaints and issues is the worst in the country. Now, we do believe there have been a number of landfills closed over time, shut down, suspended or whatever, but no action has been taken with this one. We just wondered why, why this is?

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Graham. So, this was one of the common questions that I answered like at the very front of the last call, but I appreciate it is still something that is difficult for folk to understand. I'm going to come to Carl to talk about the suspension, what you're talking about is the power that we have to suspend intake of waste into the landfill. We'll also talk about what's happening with other landfills around the country and why this is different in terms of where we use that power. So, Carl, can I come to you please?

Carl Moss: Thanks, Claire. Thank you, Graham, for your question. In terms of where we are with Walleys Quarry, we're working through the process of ascertaining sources across the site. So, either fugitive emissions, either leaks from the collection system or issues around with gas utilization plant. In terms of, the direct issue and this – the situation is the waste inputs that are going into the site at the moment are not the cause of the odours that people are experiencing. Where permits have been suspended in other parts of the country, there has been an identified root cause, so that, where those suspensions have taken place, those odours have been because of certain types of waste, certain activities on the site and the waste inputs have been directly correlated to those odours. So, we've been able to suspend, those sites have not been permanently suspended. They've been suspended for short terms. And the ones that I'm aware of are back in operation. So, there's not been, you know, a closure that's gone forward over a long period of time. With regard to Walleys, we are taking the enforcement action. We are going and doing that process of contain, collect and destroy. And that's why, because it's such a complicated process to get to the root cause of which

element of that process is causing the odour. That's why it's taking us the time to work through each part of that process. I hope, Graham, that answers your question.

Graham Eagles: Well, to be honest, not really because like Steve Meakin just spoke about the investigation, what should have taken place in 2019 didn't take place. So obviously you didn't find anything then in the quarry because nothing was searched for in the quarry, no investigation was taking place. And we do have that in writing from yourselves, and then the amount of waste, what's going on only since February this year, as wagons have been turned away, because that type of waste shouldn't have been going on.

Clare Dinnis: So, Graham, another really important part of this is that, so what we're saying is we do not believe we have the legal powers to be able to stop them taking waste into the landfill at the moment, because that is, it is not that new waste that is coming into the landfill that is the problem. And the really important bit here is if we did try and use those legal powers, and we were then challenged, that could then affect our ability to regulate other things on the site and to get the company to do other things to resolve the odours. So, I'm not afraid of legal challenge for the company. Absolutely not. We will do the things that are right to be done, but what I'm not prepared to do is to get into a position where we're not able to require them legally, to take the actions that they need to do to resolve the problem we've got at the moment, and unless something changes about the waste that is coming into the site, then that won't be appropriate. And our focus is absolutely on making sure we're resolving that problem that is there right now.

Graham Eagles: Well, like I say, the waste, what's going into the site now is probably all okay, because everything's all come above board. Well, it's what's gone in, in the past, really, that's the big issue, what wasn't investigated.

Clare Dinnis: And there is a routine. So, Sarah may be able to come in on this. There is a routine set of requirements that have been in place since long before this year, in terms of the inspection of what is coming in, in terms of the documentation about what is coming in. So, Sarah, I don't know whether you can speak about what the team did, there, please?

Sarah Dennis: Yeah. Hello, Graham. There are procedures on the site for all waste that comes to the site that has to be pre-accepted beforehand. So, they have to receive, or they have to know about all the information they received before it arrived, they have to accept this information and checks that have to be done on all waste when it arrives as well. We've gone through those procedures in detail. We've started as well more this year as well looking at the waste that's coming in as well. The waste that you've referred to that you and Steve have referred to, I have started to pull the information together for that for Carl and that why they can't speak to you. We do have the information on that particular waste stream. And we do know where it comes - where it did come from. It's just taking a bit of time for me to pull that together so that they're in a position to talk to you, but always it has to go through a proper pre-acceptance procedure and it has to go to acceptance procedure. So, what we do when we're onsite, only last week, we were doing checks of waste on site, checking up just the simple paperwork on the site, but it was - wasn't everything was described. And then actually requesting all the pre-acceptance information from those loads as well. So hopefully that shows you that they can't take anything. We do check it and we do check some of these unannounced as well, not just announced so they didn't know what load we wanted to look at last week. They were all loads that we happened to pick.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Sarah.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Graham. Thank you for your question.

Clare Dinnis: Dan, go on to the next question, please.

Operator: The next caller on the line is Ryan Johnson. Ryan, when you are ready, please go ahead with your question.

Ryan Johnson: Hi, Claire. Just going back to one of the earlier calls, he said he lives five miles away. I live on Gallingle. You know, I can see the landfill, because of the COVID, I've had to work from home. As you know, actually as most people in the local community have done and it gave us another previous smell and that is that the atmospheric that's terrible. Imagine what it's like inside the house, it's stale and it stays there, it doesn't leave. You can't open your window to let the smell out. They all sit there. So, imagine I have to work at home in my bed and I'm a prisoner in my own home. And you talk about all this about assurances but, you know, since the 30th April, we were told in a letter that, you know, what we were told is there'll be no more dumps. That was a lie, dumping has continued to happen, it's always a few weeks and then another few more weeks and a few more weeks, I might add that, like, what's going on. If I can't meet deadlines at work, I'll get fired, but you know, how come we have a bit more than an assurance? We need some guarantees.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Ryan. I think I've got the gist of what you said. I'm struggling a little bit with hearing you. So, the two things that I think I would say is I absolutely understand, I've stood at our air quality monitor on Gallingle and looked up at the waste. And I absolutely understand, you know, the physical presence as well as the odour that the landfill has, particularly on that side of the quarry. We don't have the legal permissions to do monitoring within people's homes. That's not something that would be legally entitled for us to come and do. And again, that's why we're working with partners and I'm aware that Newcastle Borough Council has done some monitoring in people's homes. I don't believe the results of that are finished or released yet, but that is something that they have been doing to try and understand, and be able to quantify the impact that you're describing that you and others are having to live with. In terms of the actions going forward.

And, I'll come to Suzanne in a minute on this, but I do just want to be clear. One of the reasons why we're doing these engagement sessions now is we are really conscious that we haven't been able to get out to people and to help you try and understand what we are doing and what some of the challenges are that we're facing and why things are taking time. The capping that was going to be done by the 30th of April was always step one. It was never going to give us the whole solution. It's absolutely true to say that we expected it to have more of an impact than it would do. What we're seeing with Walleys quarry is exceptional in terms of the amount of hydrogen sulphide that is being produced. And that is why, we are still in this situation and why it's hard for us to give you a definitive timeline, but Suzanne, can you just talk a little bit about our strategy please, of what we're doing and where we are in terms of those steps, please, and then Dan, we'll open your line so you can come back in.

Suzanne Ward: Thank you, Claire. I am sorry that you are really experiencing all of this at the moment, Ryan. I've worked from home and I can't imagine what it's like and having to deal with that all the time. So yes, as, Carl's already mentioned, what we've been doing is working with the company to look at all the potential places that we can have emissions from

the site, and we've been doing a step-by-step that we've done various steps, which we would never guarantee they would completely do it, but then we were expecting it to have some significant impacts. You talk about missing deadlines. We have set deadlines for the company and the company have met those deadlines, and we have gone through and have a look. What we are now doing is stepping out our three – our next plan, looking at what we will do over the next three months with the company. So, we are looking at what additional capping may or may not be required. We're looking at the gas capture, which use names is important parts of capturing it. And we are also looking at the gas utilization plan. So, we are looking now and turning our focus to that. And so that will put him out into the stage plan and looking at those steps, just to make sure that they actually do that. As part of that, we want to – we've asked the company to share with you the steps that they are going to take. So, you can understand what the company are actually doing, because as Claire has already said, it is the operator who operates this site. It is the operator who need to take these actions, we are just asking them and requesting they do them and asking them to do them quicker, but they have to be at the right quality.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Suzanne. I think Ryan's line has disconnected actually, unfortunately. And, for the recording, if you are listening back to it Ryan, I called you by the wrong name, so my apologies for doing that. But obviously if you do re-join and want to come back, then please press star one again, and we can take your call, but in the meantime, Dan, if we go to the next question, please,

Operator: The next caller on the line is Helen Vincent, Helen, when you are ready, your line is now open, please go ahead.

Helen Vincent: Oh, hello, Claire. Thanks for taking my call. Firstly, I mean, we're getting all these platitudes about, we understand what you go through. You really, really don't. I've had the – just to –just in the short term, I've had this since Saturday continually, so it's not just at night anymore. It's continually, it's a wall of gas in my house and it's been continual since Saturday. I've had – I can count on probably one hand, the number of hours of sleep I've had since then. I work from home. I can't open my windows. I work in a highly responsible job, which takes lots of concentration, which could in effect end up with me losing my job when I'm audited. It – I mean, it's just mental health, sleep deprivation, you name it. So, I really, really can't understand why you're giving this company, I mean, they say that the – that they're hosted by the community. Now we didn't ask for any of this and we can't seriously be expected to continue having this well any longer, let alone, maybe another year, whatever. And I don't understand why the whole thing can't be taken off them. If it was a school or a hospital it be put into special measures and it would be taken out to their control and someone who's responsible and has got the credentials to take over. So, I really don't understand what's going on here because we really can't go on like this. I can't go on for another week having no sleep whatsoever.

Clare Dinnis: So, Helen, let me start by saying you're right - I'm not there living what you're living through. And please don't think that my, you know, feelings for what you are going through as a community are in any way trying to belittle what you're going through. They are absolutely not, and your right I'm not there. And I'm not living with what you're living with, but the point that I wanted to make with it, and the bit that I've been trying to stress when I say those things and when the teams say those things is we do spend time reading the

comments that are made, reading the impact statements. I've spent time talking directly to people about the sorts of daily routines that you – I'm sure you and others are putting in place to cope with this.

And we don't underestimate, even though we're not experiencing it ourselves, we don't underestimate how difficult that is. And there is nothing that we are taking for granted in terms of trying to resolve everything. I do everything that we can to resolve this. We also have staff and colleagues, team members who live in the area and who have family in the area who are living with this themselves as well. So, I apologise if it has come across as patronising, because that is absolutely not my intention there. In terms of, one thing to stop this, one thing to resolve it and wanting to do that as fast as we possibly can. Absolutely. That is 100% of our focus. And that's partly why it's taken us until now to be doing these kinds of engagement sessions because as I've said, a couple of times now 100% of our focus is on stopping the problem.

We are using every single legal power that we have, to get the company to do that and to stop the odour. But there is not an easy solution. There is not a quick solution. And because of the exceptional way in which the landfill is behaving, because of the fact that the H₂S is continuing to be high, even though we are getting the company to do everything we would ordinarily do in this situation, even though we are looking for experts and bringing in experts from across the Environment Agency, who is the leading environmental regulator in this, but also looking to other parts of the sector. And we have a team nationally who are looking to draw on colleagues, internationally as well on this. We are still in this situation and I wish we weren't. I absolutely wish we weren't. I'll come to Suzanne to add a little bit on the question you asked specifically about whether we could take the permit away. There are some challenges around what would happen if the quarry – if the landfill ends up without an owner, without a body that owns the permit, but I'll ask, Suzanne to come in there.

Suzanne Ward: Thank you. Thank you, Claire. And thank you, Helen. In terms of the permit unlike a school or anything else, it's fair to say Walleys Quarry Limited own the site. So, as it stands, you can't just kick an owner off the site that they actually own. It is difficult to just take a permit off a company, but if we took the company – the permit off and a company went into liquidation, then you have nobody to do the work to stop the odour, to do the capping, to do all the work that we have talked about. And there is no legal basis for – to bring any other company in to do that. But we are – the work isn't just left in the hands of the company at the moment, because with the compliance work we are doing and the actions we're issuing them and making them do, we're in effect taking some of the choices they have out of their hands. So, we are forcing to have to do things, which is a little bit like you would explain, we go into special measures. So, we are telling them what they have to do on each review and each visit, which is different when a company is left alone to manage their business as they see fit. I hope that answered your question.

Helen Vincent: Yeah. I mean, it's still not solving the issue. And we've got a lot of – lots of really desperate people here, people on the edge, people who've had no sleep. My, I mean, my son has had no sleep. He's had to drive 20 miles to work, do a 12-hour shift. Is that safe?

Clare Dinnis: And Helen, I saw your tweet earlier. So, I think it was early on today. And I guess what I would say here is this is why we have, since the very beginning, been bringing

the health authorities in on this. And this is why we've been in those conversations, not just talking about the physical health, but also taking, – talking about the mental health and as you and others have described, not just the mental health of living with the odour when it's said, but also, worrying about the odour and when it's coming back, when it's not there. So, please don't think that those conversations aren't happening and that we're not asking our health partners about what we can do about that and how it can be used. Our focus is on the site, on its own, trying to address it as quickly as possible. And I absolutely understand that that is not as quickly as you would like, it's not as quickly as I would like, any of the team would like, but we are doing everything we can.

Helen Vincent: Okay. Thanks.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Helen, for your question. Dan, can we go to the next person please?

Operator: The next caller on the line is Angela Wint. Angela, when you are ready, your line is now open, please go ahead.

Angela Wint: Thank you. Good evening. And my call is a little bit like Helen, sheer desperation. I want to know will EA confirm who, if not themselves will be accountable and liable when the long-term health impacts start to manifest because they are manifesting. I personally suffer from MS and seizures, which I control very well. In the last six months my medication procedures have tripled. My seizures have by 60% become more aggressive and 60% longer. Two weeks ago today, my trigger points are headaches, two weeks ago today, I suffered a headache due to the smell yes, again, from the landfill. Subsequently two weeks down the line I have been admitted to a hospital. My seizures became so uncontrollable. I became so dehydrated, I have infection in my blood, in my urine, I became delirious. I believed that in three days in a week. This is the impact now it's having on my health and yet now I am terrified to get a headache. I can't open my windows. I can't recover at home and recuperate and get myself well. I don't open the windows. I'm terrified to get another headache. This surely can't be right, that my mental health I'm terrified at 53. I will have to give up my independence because I can't be left alone to suffer seizures like I did over seven days until – and I'm doing these calls and I was admitted to hospital. Who is accountable – who will be accountable for the long-term health impacts because they are already manifesting?

Clare Dinnis: So, Angela, as I said to the other callers, I don't want to be you to be in that position. As I said before, and I'm afraid this is not an answer that is going to help you directly because we need you to be able to talk to the health partners. We need you to be able to share that with them and we will be, we are, and we did share the recordings with them last time, we will share the recordings with them again. I'm not in a position to give health advice. That would be very irresponsible of me because it's not something that we have the remit or the expertise to do. I hope that you are aware and others on the call are aware that Staffordshire County Council on their website have a symptom tracker, which, they have asked people to record their symptoms and those kinds of things that you're talking about there, they absolutely need to know about. And that needs to be something that those surveys are taking account of. We are continuing to talk to the health partners to make sure that this is being logged and tracked and understood. And we've been talking

directly to Public Health England, not just at the local level, but at national levels about this. So, you know, we are doing everything we can as I said to solve this.

Angela Wint: But subsequently you didn't answer the question who will be accountable and liable because my health right now is going downwards so quickly, I won't be able to live alone. Who will pay for somebody to care for me at the age of 53?

Clare Dinnis: I'm sorry I can't answer that question. That would be something we'd need to ask the health partners so we can take that back to the health partners. But I can't answer that question for you because I don't have that expertise or that advice, I'm afraid.

Angela Wint: Okay. Thank you.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you. Can we go to the line of the next caller, please?

Operator: The next question will come from Audrey Young, Audrey, when you are ready, your line is now open, please go ahead.

Audrey Young: Thank you. My question is about all the breaches. Shouldn't they stop trading and sort the breaches out without taking more rubbish and waste? And also, again with me, it's my mental health in part. Four weeks ago, I took, I nearly took an over dose. I had to break down and that's because of the sleep deprivation and the asthma attacks that I'm getting from there. PHE talk about short term, but on a daily basis, it's a long term. And I'd also like to ask if any of you have actually spent a couple of nights in the area and in the local travel lodge, just to know what we're dealing with on a daily basis? Thank you.

Clare Dinnis: Audrey, thank you for your honesty. And I am really saddened to hear that. I'm going to come to Carl, and perhaps Sarah to talk about the non-compliances and what we're doing now. As I said we've got staff who live in the area, we've colleagues and family who live in the area and a number of us have been – some of those on the call have been onsite multiple, multiple times. I genuinely, I do, as I said to Helen, take the point that unless we are there, we do not know what you are going through. There is nothing that we can do more than we are doing; there is nothing about this that we're not accepting how bad this is for you, which would leave us additional lever to pull. I promise you, but I'll come to Carl and then Sarah to talk about what we're doing.

Carl Moss: Thank you, Claire. Thank you, Audrey for your question. And, I'm really sorry to hear what you're going through. In terms of the breaches, we've issued, what we call CAR (Compliance Assessment Report) forms to the company on numerous occasions. And I think, Sarah will be able to tell you how many occasions this year we've done that. The way that the regulation works is that we highlight to them their non-compliances and they have the ability to come back into compliance. The issues that we discussed earlier, the inputs of waste that we've got at the moment are not directly related to the odours, its materials that are degrading in the ground. So, we do not have the legal powers at the moment to suspend the inputs to the site or close the site. So, for where we are using all the legal powers, all the legislation that we've got to bring pressure to bear on the company, to put the measures right on site. So, Sarah, do you want to add to that?

Sarah Dennis: Audrey, as Carl mentioned, when we go onsite or we do a review of any data that comes in, we issue a compliance form to the company. This year, so far, we've done 21 visits and we've reviewed 11 different sets of monitoring data or data on engineering and

emissions reports that the company provided to us. And on those they have the 10 breaches recorded. For each of those breaches that they don't, I assure you, they don't just get recorded on a compliance form and left. There are actions from those, some of those actions might be agreed while we're on site. Some of that might be the way we require them to submit action plans afterwards. And the dates for those are all dates that we either require them, or we set them, or we require them to set to us what dates they are going to complete things by, every single one of those actions is followed through. We have a detailed action list from that compliance work, even if it's just actual questions, we ask them on emails, and we have regular technicals for the operator to go through that compliance list and that action list to ensure everything is followed through. Most of the actions, as you know, most of the compliance scores we've issued so far, they have completed the actions. One was, we issued two non-compliances on a compliance form before we issued the notice required of capping. So that work was done. There was a previous compliance form as well, related to surface water onsite. They pump that down, that was done. So, there are just some examples, but I assure you, none of them are left and we do follow them all up.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Sarah. And thank you Audrey for the question and, I mean, this goes for all of you who've talked about the difficulties you're suffering, but I do hope that you're getting support from medical professionals in this. So, thank you. Thank you for your question.

Speaker: We are not, no we are not. We are not getting anything.

Clare Dinnis: I'm sorry, I don't – I'm guessing that somebody's there with Audrey's line. So, in terms of the –

Audrey Young: Yes sorry, it's my partner because obviously he see me go through this.

Clare Dinnis: Absolutely.

Audrey Young: And that's why, obviously our tempers flare, because I'm on my maximum medication now, and he's just worried that next time, what will happen sort of thing.

Clare Dinnis: – I absolutely, understand and it feels this is inadequate saying it Audrey, but all I can say is to seek the help of medical professionals and to reassure you that we're doing everything we can to get health advisors to be able to join us on these calls, we will do everything we can on that. Thank you. Okay. Can we go to the next question, please Dan?

Operator: The next question will come from Christine Eason, Christine, when you are ready, please go ahead with your question.

Christine Eason: Hi. Thanks again for taking these calls. I'm going to struggle to put what I want to say into words really because I'm rather confused about what's been said, overall, but I'm still wondering whether you're able to tell us clearly, what is actually going on in that landfill that is causing these problems? Last time we called, you said that you were investigating it and you're investigating it, but still, I don't think I know that I've heard you say this is what has happened and this is why it's happening. And then we can understand a bit more clearly why you're doing what you're doing. I still don't know that you know what's going on. That's my question.

Clare Dinnis: Okay. Thanks. Thank you, Chris – Christine. I – so what I explained last time

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Christine Eason: Can I just say I'm shaking as I'm speaking to you now, I'm so perplexed and I'm shaking with nerves and with anticipation and confusion. I just wanted to say that.

Clare Dinnis: – and I think I can hear that in your voice, Christine and I – I am sorry that you're feeling like that. What we want to do with these calls is to be able to give you all the information that we've got, that we can share. We are doing everything we can to take the problem away as fast as we can. And I know that in the meantime, hopefully we can help you by sharing with you what is happening, what we do know and what we're investigating on the things we don't know, so that we can help to give you that information. And at least, you know where we are with it. So that's what we're trying to do with these. And I do hear that in your voice. So, Carl, can I come to you to explain what we're doing about particularly the campaign capture and destroy in terms of the actions on the site and Walleys quarry is behaving exceptionally, please?

Carl Moss: Thank you, Claire. Thanks for the question, Christine, and I'll try and put it in terms that I can get the message over to you. When waste is put into a landfill, it goes through a degradation process. H₂S is usually produced in the early stages of that degradation. We're seeing unusual levels in terms of degradation of the waste at Walleys Quarry. We suspect that is due to gypsum materials. This is usually associated with things like, plaster board. And we're looking at the processes in terms of the generation of gasses on the site. In terms of the measures we're asking the company to do in term of putting seals on the surface of the site. That is what we do with all landfills that are causing odours, through this phase where landfill gas is out odorous. We're asking the company to improve their collection system so that would be putting more wells into the degrading material. Those would be eight wells, shallow wells, surface wells, make sure that they're collecting the methane and the hydrogen sulphide. And then that collection system would be going to what's called a gas utilization plant, where there are scrubbers and flares and engines to use the gas or destroy the gas. And the issues that we've got here is that, that infrastructure is under constant review. And we are talking to the company about reviewing that process in terms of the destruction. So –

Christine Eason: Can I ask a question?

Carl Moss: – yeah sure.

Christine Eason: Are you suggesting then that the infrastructure is not compliant, is not capable of doing the job or hasn't been at some point capable of doing the job, or there's been some kind of element of neglect in the maintenance of that structure – those structures?

Carl Moss: Well, the issues this evening is that you're all experiencing odours beyond the boundary of the site. So, the issue there is the plant and equipment they've got on the site is not doing the job that it's expected to do, so they need to look at that and they need to improve those phases. So, the capping, the collection, the wells and the depth of the wells, and look at the spacing of those wells and all that kind of stuff. And then also the equipment that scrubs the gas, flares the gas and destroys it and, you know, from my point of view, that – that's where the company needs to move quickly. We are pressing them on a regular basis to move that forward.

Christine Eason: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

Carl Moss: I hope I was able to explain that in a clear way.

Christine Eason: Well, it's an answer, and it's an answer that makes sense. And, you know, yeah, so thank you.

Clare Dinnis: And thank you, Carl. And thank you, Christine. And Christine, just to add a little bit on those questions specifically on the gas management, I said at the very beginning that this was – that we had just had that gas management plan in for the company and that the team are working with them and auditing that now. So that might be an area of focus right now for us.

Christine Eason: Okay.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you. Thank you for your question.

Christine Eason: Thank you.

Clare Dinnis: So, Dan, can we go to the next one, please?

Operator: The next question will come from Jade Beverley, Jade, when you are ready, your line is now open, please go ahead.

Jade Beverley: Hi, Claire. Thank you for taking question. It's really similar to what Helen and Angela have already said regarding the health side effects. I live less than a quarter of a mile right across the road from it. Suffering nose bleeds, sore throat, sore nose, very little sleep, also on my medication for my mental health. The questionable weekend towards the end of February, I was actually rushed in hospital thinking I was having a stroke, I'm 31. So as you can appreciate it wasn't something that was expected. Luckily, they diagnosed me with something less serious called hemiplegic migraines. And they actually confirmed at the hospital that they are age-related. And also, I've got two young boys here, especially my four-year-old who is suffering constantly. He's having nose bleeds on a daily occurrence in the house, suffering with his asthma. He was sick that bad last week. But he was crying, he passed out on the floor in the bathroom telling me that he hates the quarry and, make it stop mummy and I just feel like I'm useless where they are and I don't think people are taking into account the long-term effects of it. I don't know. I feel like to be honest; there's been a lot of things pointing to then different directions regarding Walleys Quarry. And they're just trying to tick a lot of boxes at the moment but I just want to know what's it going to take for more action to be done? I know obviously you are doing more, but I still don't see a lot personally, for myself and for other people's children being done and I feel like what's it going to take for more action to be done? Is it going to take somebody's mental health to decline, it'll just be a lot and we can't deal with it any longer or somebody to die from the effects?

Clare Dinnis: So Jade I'm sure you've probably seen it on social media. I've received letters from some of the school children, and I know how those made me feel and I can't imagine how that might then make you feel as a mother of children who are living with that. I don't want you to be in that position. None of us want you to be in that position. I think the point I need to give you again, in terms of, if your own health and the symptoms that you've suffered from and what your experience is, please do make sure that you're using that staffer to counter cancel symptom tracker, because that information is what those health partners need to give them that evidence to supplement what we're doing in terms of their quality monitoring and to be able to understand not just what the theoretical impacts might be, but

the real impacts that you are all living with. And I do know that PHE are taking very seriously the mental health impacts as well and I believe the symptom tracker asks for those to be recorded as well. I do understand that it's really hard to believe that we are doing everything we can here. All I can do is keep giving you these updates, keep telling you what we've heard from people, and making sure that, we are letting you know, everything that's there. And we will keep doing that. You've absolutely got my commitment, regardless of what the COVID regulations are, if we have to keep doing it this way, whatever we do, we will keep giving you those weekly updates and we'll pick doing those, so Ian perhaps you'd like to comment on that one, please as well.

Ian Withers: Clare, I was just going to make the observation to Jade and to Audrey and to Angela and anyone else who hasn't spoken, but has acute worries about health. I mean, Clare has said very clearly that there are other partners who are exactly the right people to talk to you about those but I just wanted to make an observation that, I know I speak for my colleagues and Clare and the team that none of us will not be moved to our core by what we've heard from you around the way you're suffering. I make that observation because I've joined this team from another part of our business. I'm not from the West Midlands but I have visited to do some of the work that Clare has spoken about. I've spent time in Newcastle under Lyme over the last few weeks, and I've experienced the odour for myself. So I know a little, a tiny snapshot of what you're going through. And what I will say is what I've seen in terms of the work and the effort that the team are doing, it absolutely is because of the things that you've reported to us and the fear and anxiety and worry that you have about your health and everything that's being said on this call. And I suppose I'm just offering a very honest view that I've come into this team and seen people absolutely breaking their backs to try to get to the bottom of this issue and doing what we can only do within our powers, which is to regulate the operator as far as we can and if we can do that, that is our biggest contribution to making a difference to your health worries, your children and the concerns about your children, your communities, and I've seen that happening and I just, I can't speak any stronger about what I see my Environment Agency colleagues doing to try and get this sorted. And I know it's not quick enough for any of you, but we are working to the absolute limit of our power – even if that is invisible to you. I know it's behind the scenes and with COVID, we haven't been able to demonstrate that to you well enough, which is a real shame, but I just want to absolutely promise to you that we are working as hard as we possibly can within the rules that we've got to work in and within the law that is available to us to try and get to the bottom of this problem. And I just say that with all my heart.

Jade Beverly: Well I appreciate you for saying that but it's like for a lot of people, there's just no escape from it. I mean, my boys don't go to school it's just always there, it just isn't an option at this moment in time.

Ian Withers: And that's exactly why we're trying to work at pace to do this. And I know, again, we have to stop that, but if we move too quickly with this operator, it'll backfire because we've got to work within the regulations that we've got but I promise we're doing everything in absolute recognition of the sort of things you've reported Jade and others have said.

Jade Beverly: Yeah, I appreciate that as well. A lot of it is I suppose a lot of people do feel the same way and so we're going to do one thing is a sudden release and we do that. We fill out this form, or we fill out this questionnaire, this health questionnaire and that sort of thing and then once we've done that, we'll say, Oh, they're going to do something more. And then well maybe we go doing this one. Now you need to fill on this and need to fill this in on the website. And certainly the last two weeks have been absolutely unbearable here. And I appreciate that you've always been so responsive but I've got to the point where I don't even want to sign up anymore or email to report it, because I just feel like it's not ever going to get sorted.

Clare Dinnis: So Jade, thank you. You've been really honest with what you've told us there. And as Ian said, that's absolutely heard. I do understand that frustration. We are going to keep telling you what we're doing. We are keeping the push to do this not just as fast as we can, but to see where we can do this faster and one of the things we're also working and talking to partners with is about making that reporting easier and less intensive for you so that we can at least try and take some of that away. So thank you for your question and Dan I think perhaps we can go to the line of the next caller now, please.

Dan: Of course, the next caller on the line is Richard Morgan. Richard, when you are ready, your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Richard Morgan: Yeah so thank you. Just been listening to the questions that have been raised and the feedback's been given, your colleague mentioned about, potential root cause of the hydrogen sulphide being the generated via the introduction of the materials and the gypsum specifically. Did he mention that the first stages of the degradation of gypsum yeah, I'd like to know what's the period of degradation of gypsum? Obviously I mean I understand that gypsum was found in landfills in 2005. So we're looking at 15 years ago, you know, what is that period of degradation, suggesting that, when was this gypsum last deposited, assuming that that period of time isn't the first stage of degradation? You've talked a lot about, investigations you're doing, the monitoring you're doing, I understand that, I'm quite confident that you're doing all that, but looking at the root cause, going back to that gypsum scenario, when you start looking or have you started looking at, what's been deposited historically in that landfill, the operator will have records of where waste has been deposited. You've got waste transfer notes in place. Has any gypsum being deposited or identified from the operator, has been put into that landfill? I'd like to know an answer to that one. Then the last question I've got is as well, what is the end game of this as well? What is your end game? You do all your tasks. You do everything you can. Is it going to be a case of we can't do any more now, we're walking away from it. We're just left with this blight on the city and the town for the next, however long this horrendous stench goes on for? So those are my couple of questions. Yeah.

Clare Dinnis: Yeah thank you, Richard. So, the end game is that the landfill is in compliance and the odour is not causing a nuisance. We can't promise you that it will be gone because that's not something which is possible with any landfill but we are absolutely working to bring this back into compliance with odour not being a nuisance and with a clear plan for it not to becoming a nuisance again until that site becomes -- well, not becoming a nuisance again and looking at that end point of the landfill site, but in terms of the hydrogen sulphide, let me come to Sarah who can explain not just the sulphide bit but also there's been something

different over the last few years in terms of the chain of the waste industry and where gypsum is coming from. So, Sarah, if you could explain that please.

Sarah Dennis: So, hello. As Clare said that you used to see a lot going into landfills, so skip lorries with bulky waste usually just in skips, so that's changed over the years now. So if you were looking for something like Gypsum or plasterboard waste, that's easy to see. And some of the loads that have been rejected more recently have been things like sheets of plasterboard, like quite blatantly within skips and within loads that have been rejected. We've seen over the past few years, the waste that goes to landfills has changed. We see a lot more now. Waste goes to a transfer station. It's sorted to take out material that can be recycled; wood, metals, those kinds of things and then a lot of that waste is now shredded and it's shredded into what we call fines. Some of that is related to a landfill tax issue, which we obviously don't regulate that, it's a HMRC issue but obviously you can't see what's in waste that's been shredded and if a transfer station wants to hide something in waste, that's obviously a lot easier to hide something in waste when you shred it. So when you look at that, you're not going to see whether there's a piece of plasterboard in there or not. It's not as easy as that now. So I would suspect that find has likely contained plasterboard waste. That's something we've seen and we've thought about at other landfills, certainly across other landfills we regulate in this area and with Midlands area, we've started a whole piece of work, a campaign looking at those finds and by the time it gets to the landfill, they are required to do testing. The procedures that the company has got have been up recently. They've included more testing of those finds but the root of this is back at the transfer stations and it's there where we started putting more focus, how are they managing transfer? How are they managing plasterboard waste? Now we have got some sites where there's plasterboard in and nothing coming out. So that's quite an easy, obvious one, where is it going? Other than those, is where and how they're managing it? The landfills themselves, we would expect them to go to these producers or they'll actually audit the sites, like any supplier would to actually understand what they are taking.

Richard Morgan: Yeah but you did mention that you have turned round a deposit of waste coming in that was recognizable gypsum, is that correct?

Sarah Dennis: The Company actually refused those. They were sheets of plasterboard. So those were those that they turned round --

Richard Morgan: And was that on the basis of the Environment Agency representative being onsite or?

Sarah Dennis: We weren't onsite at the time that recent loads were rejected but they did provide us the details of them with the producers. And those are all being followed up. There were seven loads but across six different producers. A couple of those or I think three of those were actually within our own West Midlands area and they have been followed up quite firmly. The others, one is over in Wales. We've passed that over. And the others are in other areas of the Environment Agency. So, we are also making sure those areas do follow that up as well. How long it takes to degrade? The level of hydrogen sulphide tends to drop off, we find maybe over a couple of years but that's a rough estimate and that's really going to depend how much is in there and how quickly that waste started to degrade.

Richard Morgan: Yeah. So a couple of years compared to 15 years is a pretty short period of degradation.

Sarah Dennis: Yeah. I don't think this is from old waste. This is more likely from new waste and you mentioned reviewing documents of old waste. Yes, we could look at old documentation but I don't think we'll find documentation that says this is a load of plasterboard if someone wanted to put that in there --

Richard Morgan: Is that not suggesting that something's being hidden maybe and is there a point in time you start doing some investigations into the actual body of the waste to try to identify hotspots of anything potentially? Is that a process that you go down as part of the investigations?

Sarah Dennis: We don't go digging into it now where --

Richard Morgan: No, yeah you can't obviously dig in with an excavator but you can bore a hole. You can drill into the waste and take samples?

Sarah Dennis: There are bore holes drilled. It's something we have talked about where gas wells are drilled. There are actually gas wells drilled so there's a potential there to actually collect samples when the next lot of drilling is actually taken. We are looking at samples of waste itself and to analyse that ourselves, so the waste that's being deposited.

Richard Morgan: Well, no that's not been -- you just said yourself, there's waste going in there it's not the problem. It's the historic waste that's gone in there. So you need to go and get, obviously you need to go in deeper samples, don't you really, to get to the root cause of it?

Clare Dinnis: It's something that we talked about. The risk is at the moment that what we don't want to do is to start uncovering even with drilling and boreholes, we don't want to start uncovering the waste that we are spending all of the company's energy and time capping and putting in place. If it is something that we need to do in the future then, we will look at a safe way to do that but at the moment, the focus is not on that. I think the bit to just add to what Sarah said is that the waste industry is a series of different parts that happen all the way from when anyone of us makes a decision about where we're going to get rid of waste from a house, particularly. If we're doing building works with plasterboard through different processing stations, and we're not as an organization, the Environment Agency is not just looking at what could happen in with the landfill sites. We are looking at those various different stages and making sure as Sarah said that where we're finding something, we're taking action all the way through, so that we can get to the right place with this.

Richard Morgan: Okay. Well, I appreciate it. Thanks for your feedback.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Richard. So Dan, I think, we've got quite a number of questions queued, which we will take, those people who had their name taken and have got questions queued there, thank you for that, but Dan perhaps can we just tell people who may not have raised their hand yet, how they can log a question and then we'll go to the line of the next caller?

Dan: Absolutely. So we want to thank you for your questions so far and realise that there may not be enough time on this call to answer everyone's questions. So we have set up a Slido facility that is now open. This is a way for you to post questions to us, that we will

provide answers to outside of the call either by directing you to frequently asked questions or providing a more detailed, specific answer in direct response. The Slido facility also has a few questions posed by us that we would like your feedback on. This is to help us ensure these sessions are useful to you and give you the right information. Please take a minute or two to go to the polls tab on Slido and answer the questions there. Your feedback is really valuable to us. The Slido page can be found online at www.Slido.com that's S-L-I-D-O.com or on the Slido app and today's event code is 049318. That's 049318. You'll be able to ask questions through the Q&A tab and following the onscreen instructions. So ladies and gentlemen, you can continue to press star one to enter the question queue on the phones. We do have several callers on the line. The next caller that we'll hear from is Darren Warren. Darren, when you are ready please go ahead with your question.

Darren Warren: Hello there. I've got a couple of questions. I just wanted to know, you said that it's not new waste going in that's the problem but on the basis that you've also talked about handling of the waste, isn't there an, or could it be that actually waste that's gone in the last few months, that's now quite small and is reacting with the waste, so is that sort of the issue? And the second question was just on the gas monitors. Carl earlier said that you were pressing on the landfilling on a regular basis. Clare said you really just had the plan but if you look back over your updates, I can see that a plan was requested on the 18th of March. So has it taken that long to get a plan in or is this a second viewing of the plan or a third plan based on the capping not working?

Clare Dinnis: Okay, thank you Dan for those. I can assure you this is not our first gas management plan. Absolutely not, it's a part of their permit that is updated but I'll let the team come back to you on that. I think in terms of the new waste coming in, we've spoken just now about the issue of knowing what is coming to those transfer stations. This is not just an issue within the West Midlands. This is an issue across the country. We know that in some cases, operators within the waste chain are choosing to go outside the law, and to hide materials like gypsum in their trommel fines and we are working at all stages in that to try and identify that and to make sure that where that is happening, they are incredibly clear that there are penalties for doing that. But you asked some specific questions about here. So we have got some more measures in place that we are requiring Walleys Quarry to do specifically about the waste they are taking on. And then also we can give you a better update on the gas management plan. So Carl, can I come to you please?

Carl Moss: Yes. Thanks Clare and thank you Darren for your question. As we've said, this is an interesting process. We have asked the company to do things. They have done those things and they've completed them and as you're aware, the landfill gas and the H₂S is still traveling beyond the perimeter of the site. So we've asked them to do more work, which then gets them to submit an additional plan of where we are at the moment. And we said earlier in the call that the actions that were asked to be completed by the 1st of June, we were on site and they completed those, but the company has bought themselves their own surface emissions survey equipment which they have been using and that has prompted the company to go into the marketplace and source a material called Posi-Shell and they are going to temporarily cap the 17½ thousand square metres of the flanks at the site, predominantly on the Eastern and Western boundary. So, when that's completed and if we were in a face-to-face situation, I could show you plans of the site. That will predominantly only leave about

35% of the site without any capping material on. So, the company has issued an order to the provider to do that work. So that will be happening very soon. And in addition to that, we have approached the company for the plans in terms of their gas Wells. So, we're talking to the company in the order of a further 20 wells on the site, whether that be deep wells into the depths of the site, shallow wells or surface wells. We're in discussions with the company and are asking them to state timescales of when they will be installed. They came to us with some initial proposals and we've gone back to the company and we're talking to them about them doing that quicker and I've already visited the gas utilization plant and the fact that they need to look at their scrubbing mechanism and their flaring mechanism and their destruction mechanisms, they've got in that gas utilization plant, where they've put plans to this for that and we've said you need to speed up that process. So, I don't know, Sarah is there anything you want to add to that explanation I've tried to answer Darren's question?

Sarah Dennis: No I think that's fair Carl, as you said, the action plans we've had have all had different completion dates and once one is completed, then it is moving onto another one as well. So, we do have areas of the site now with, the permanent capping on areas, with temporary capping on and then areas that they're proposing to put a bit more a novel material on. So it is a sort of progressive one where we're doing one action plan and then we are moving on to the next thing as well. And then we have got a focus now looking much more at that gas utilization plant and the pre-treatment and the capacity of that plant.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you Darren for your question there and to Carl and Sarah. So, Dan can we go to the next line please?

Dan: Of course, the next question will come from Andrea Horton. Andrea, when you are ready, your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Andrea Horton: Hello everyone. Good evening. Thank you for taking my question. At the start of the call Clare, you mentioned that Walleys has been placed in, I think you said Grade E as an operator because of the non-conformances with their permits and you said that there was financial penalties for that obviously, because they have to now pay more for their license to, the permit license. I think you said 50% more. I've got a couple of questions. Is E the worst grade? I'm thinking like back at my O level days, is that the worst grade that an operator can possibly have? And the second question is, from my point of view that seems like a financial incentive for the Environment Agency to keep them at E because you're getting more money off them. Could you tell me what else you do with the money and is that correct? Is my assumption correct there?

Clare Dinnis: Yeah. Okay, so I'm going to ask Sarah to explain the banding system and how it works, but I guess I want to say before then, the amount of money that we get for them, for the charges that are there and then the 50% increase does not come anywhere close to what we are spending on our regulation of them and our work around them. And that's not just something since this year. It is something we have been regulating this site more intensely for a number of years here. So, there is absolutely no incentive for us financially to keep them at lower banding. We also measure then we report every year on the numbers of companies who are in all of the different bands and we are required to make that public and it is seen as a poor performance of the regulator as well as those who are regulated if they are in lower bands. So, please be assured that that is absolutely not what is happening here, but Sarah, could you explain the banding system please, for us?

Sarah Dennis: Yeah the way the banding system works, on the 1st of January each year, every site is effectively in a band A. So they start from scratch. Every time we issue a compliance form and it might have a permit breach on it then those breaches effectively add so many points up. So, our breach system goes from breaches of one, which is significant down to more minor or admin breaches down to a level four. Each one of those has 70 points. So if this site has had a category two breach and it's had a number of category three breaches, those points, so a category three breach effectively, they get four points on it. Those points are added up on the annual year from January to the end of December and the total of those points at the end of the year determines what band they fall into. If they have no breaches, obviously stay in band A and then it goes into the – slightly scale down. The lowest band is actually Band F. At the moment they're in Band E which means they've got number of points. The points are added up to, I think it's just over 60 points. To go down to a Band F would be, it goes quite significantly down and that goes down to about 150 points. The charge you mentioned, as Clare said it's not significant, the site pays somewhere in the region of 20 to £25,000 a year. As a Band E, they'll be paying 50% more of that so it's not significant. The amount of charge that they pay a year if normally should reflect the work that we do. So a normal landfill charge would basically fund four visits and audits and about three or four report reviews, even with the additional charge that the Walleys will incur, that doesn't fund the amount of additional work that we've done at this site this year. We've done over 20 visits already this year, whereas normally that would be sort of four visits. So hopefully that would explain how that banding works.

Andrea Horton: Okay sorry to interrupt you, but does that mean that they are now paying that extra charge or does that come into force at the end of the year, or next year?

Sarah Dennis: That is the next year. So the banding works from January till the end of December, and then the actual next fee is added onto their next financial year. So their compliance band for this year – yeah their compliance band for 2021, so this year, will input how much they will actually pay us in the financial year for 2022/2023. So they're not actually almost paying us that yet. They'll be paying us that almost next year. That's just the way the system works.

Andrea Horton: So they start again in January because –

Sarah Dennis: Yeah every site starts in an A on the 1st of January each year and then the bands are added up over the year, so yes, whatever the site ends up with at the end of the year is what they'll be charged on the basis of next year and then they restart January the 1st again as a Band A.

Clare Dinnis: Sorry Andrea, right – sorry to interrupt you Andrea. Just to be clear I also explained at the beginning that some of the additional works that we're doing specifically in relation to the situation we're in at the maintenance, we are legally able to charge them for, and they are being billed for that on a monthly basis at the moment. So, that bit is in there. I'm not going to tell you they're large amounts, but they are absolutely governed by the government in terms of what we are able as a regulator to charge. And we are maximizing that so that we are charging them as much as we can within that.

Andrea Horton: So that's good to hear. I mean, from my personal perspective, I spent £250 on an air purifier and that is just small fry I know, compared to what probably what

you're paying but I would like to think that they are actually funding this because obviously we're all suffering, yourselves as well, you're having to do a lot of extra regulation, which is over and above what you would normally do and I would like to think that somewhere, somebody is actually getting some money back on this, thank you.

Clare Dinnis: And this is a question that some of your local councillors asked us about yesterday and we were clear that we aren't able to require them to fund anything beyond the actions they're doing on site and those penalties that we've talked about but we did suggest that it was something that local authorities could have a conversation with them about. So that's not for us as the Environment Agency but those conversations are being had.

Andrea Horton: Okay. Thank you.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you Andrea, could we go to the next question, please Dan?

Dan: The next question will come from Christina Tinsley. Christina, when you're ready, your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Christina Tinsley: Good evening. Thank you for answering my question. My concern is the situation seems to be getting worse rather than getting better, and especially with the thought that we've got warm weather now, it's been impossible to open any windows. I have a lung condition I've had to purchase two air purifiers and now, because we can't open the windows and the house is hot, we've bought an air con for me as well. Is there any provision, looking at these cases where people have received compensation due to the landfill? Is this only in cases where the landfill has actually been closed or are there other provisions for people to receive some sort of compensation? I know it's never going to compensate for the health effects that everybody is suffering from and if there is compensation, where does it come from?

Clare Dinnis: So Christina, this would be something that, my understanding would be it'd be for individuals or a group of individuals to decide to take up with the company. It's not something that the Environment Agency has expertise or a role in, in deciding on or facilitating. I believe that there are some cases where it has happened in the past. I've been told that previous operators of Walleys Quarry have paid compensation. Others of you may well have lived locally at the time and know whether that's the case, but unfortunately I can't give you advice on that because it's a civil issue and it would need to be something that was taken through those kinds of legal routes I'm afraid

Christina Tinsley: So it doesn't come out from a route of prosecuting the company, then they are bound to compensate people. That isn't the case then?

Clare Dinnis: So I'm not clear what any sanctions that might come with the statutory nuisance that the local authority is talking about it might have. So, that would be a question for them, but in terms of the Environment Agency, any monies that the company was fined through a prosecution case would go straight back into the HM Treasury. They don't come to the Environment Agency. They don't go to individuals, I'm afraid so that's something that goes straight into central government.

Christina Tinsley: Okay. So you'd have to take a private case against them?

Clare Dinnis: I believe that's the case. Yes.

Christina Tinsley: Supplementary question. Can I just ask why is it always worse at the weekends? I mean, I know it's not the problem with the seven days a week but you can almost set your clock by the think, at 10 o'clock on a Friday night and it continues uninterrupted and a lot from social media of have also said this. Every weekend, it's terrible for the businesses in Newcastle. Is there any reason why it should be worse at the weekend?

Clare Dinnis: So, Christina this is something we've been asking ourselves. We know that there are weather related conditions that's why it would be worse at night, but there isn't a reason which is typical for landfills as to why it would be worse at the weekend but Carl I know it's your team who's been looking at this. Can you come in here please?

Carl Moss: Thanks, Christina for your question. I haven't got an answer for you in terms of understanding why it's worse at the weekend. What I can tell you is; ourselves, Newcastle, Public Health England, we've got now, quite a lot of data since the monitoring stations have been out there, we've got lots of complaint data. Timings, locations, topography levels of complainants and whatever and we have a team now coming together to look at all that data and analyse the information. And I was only looking at some work that one of my colleagues did in terms of putting all that data to see the correlation that we can get to what the root of the cause is. So, I'm sorry to say, I haven't got an at this point in time for you. What I can say is there's a team of individuals across partner organizations focusing on this and trying to call so that we can identify the root cause and answer that question.

Christina Tinsley: Okay. Thank you for your answer anyway. Thank you very much.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you, Christina. And Dan can we go to the next question please?

Dan: The next question will come from Paul Brogard. Paul when you are ready, your line is now open. Please go ahead.

Paul Brogard: Hi. I just want to talk about distance. I know we've covered it a bit already. I'm two and a half miles away, it's actually 2.6 miles away and it's been worse than ever in the last say two weeks. It's just been horrific every night getting a battering. I would like to know a bit more about what you're doing regarding distance, because I don't feel like there's a clear answer or a clear strategy to work out why it's traveling so far. I can only think that it's something to do with the amount of gas produced at the site which leads me to think about like gas wells. I want to know how the gas wells work. I mean, it seems like somebody just presses a button and gases the whole town out and then that's that. I would like to know about those two points and also as well we've listened to you. We've heard what you've got to say and we've heard about what you're going to do to them, their breaches, how are going to deal with it and I'm talking now from a point of view where it's just getting worse in my house, it's worse. It's not getting any better. So after listening to everything you've said and everything that we've gone through, it feels like we've had to push you really, really far, to actually get to the point that we're at now when, this has been like a three or four year issue. I know that back in 2018, it stank round here and two and a half miles away, but it didn't happen very often but it happened. How are we supposed to have any faith in anything you say given that the evidence that we are looking at as residents is that it is just getting worse? And I can appreciate that a couple of these points have been answered before that perhaps you could elaborate or repeat them for me because I'm really confused.

Clare Dinnis: Okay. Thank you, Paul. So, I'll come to Carl and Sarah to explain about the, the, the gas wells but before I do, I think perhaps what I'll say is that when we started the process of being able to talk to people directly, one of the things that I heard loud and clear is that the community does not feel confident on the work that we have been doing with the operator and on the site over a number of years and, absolutely we have to correct that and we have to do everything we can to show you what we've been doing, to keep talking to you and to start to rebuild that trust and I absolutely understand that it's not going to be a quick process and it's something that we need to earn from you. Sarah spoke about the normal kind of funding that we would ordinarily get for a site like this. The Environment Agency has been doing much more work than that on Walleys quarry for a number of years so for sort of three, four, five years before we got to that point at the beginning of this year. So this is not something that is new. We've had complaints actually made against us by the company that they believe that we are over-regulating them and we have decided not to listen to those complaints. We've had other –

Paul Brogard: They made that complaint against you, that you were overregulating them?

Clare Dinnis: We've had complaints that we were asking for too much and it was an unfair amount of regulation. The regulators code that the government requires us to abide by is really clear about the balance of fairness being on those who are regulated and we've had suggestions that we're not in that place. So, this is not something new. We have been doing this for years. And something changed in December, January. Something changed in terms of the evidence that we've got around the complaints and that was both about the distance which they were coming from but also about the number of complaints, but also something was vastly different in the air quality monitoring that we've done this time, compared to the two previous air quality studies. And that's caused us to escalate our work and our resources even further and as Ian said, we've been bringing in Environment Agency staff from other parts of the country to help us and to supplement this. So, I hear what you're saying, that you don't feel like you've seen that but our job now is to show you what has been happening and to try and give you that confidence, but Sarah, perhaps I can come to you and Carl you may want to come in as well about the gas wells and how they work because that was something that you asked us about, wasn't it, Paul? So let's come to Sarah and Carl.

Sarah Dennis: The way gas wells work is as the areas are completed or while they're being completed, wells will be drilled down into the site and you may have seen before that there's a photo on our website of a drilling rig there. They drill slotted pipes all the way down to the base of the site. They are connected by pipe work all the way around to a ring main, that's all connected up to the gas plant.

Paul Brogard: Yes so I know how a gas well works, so I'm talking about the details of the gas. I want to know how it's like. How it works. When do they release it? Is it automatic or does someone control it? That's what I want to know.

Sarah Dennis: Oh okay. No it's not released or anything. The gas is actually all connected up to the gas utilization plant that has to run continuously. So on site, there are two engines at the site the company run. They can run two engines at any one time. And then the extra gas they've got goes over to a high-temperature flare. So all the gas that's connected is managed through that gas utilization plant, that runs continuously 24/7. If the engines go down, there are those two flares on site and its flare capacity has to be there to ensure that it

can continue to manage the gas. There is also then an escalation process should one of those flares go down. There's an escalation process to bring in another flare to be able to run. If the power goes off there's also generators that can actually run that gas plant as well. So there isn't a time or there certainly shouldn't be a time when there is no gas control for the gas that's collected from all that pipework to go through and as the amount of gas collected increases, then the capacity of that plant has to be increased to ensure that's all there. So it is either all destroyed under a high temperature flare or it is utilised in engines which is then used to produce electricity which is exported off site. Does that answer your question?

Paul Brogard: Sort of yeah. Okay would that explain why, it says like the previous lady said, you can almost like clockwork, on Friday come say 10 o'clock or whatever it is. So would you think that's because of the fact that it's been active all week, there've been people working people, dumping and sorting, do you think that's why it comes at the weekend because of the activity during the week?

Sarah Dennis: No as Carl said, I mean that's something we are looking into because people have said that, but that seems to be worse at the weekends but the new waste that's put on during the week, that will take some time to actually break down and start producing landfill gas.

Paul Brogard: It doesn't agitate the gas or anything that's going on underneath?

Sarah Dennis: No, you've got extra weight on it but it shouldn't make any difference to actually the gas and it certainly shouldn't make any difference to how the gas utilization plant is actually managed. So that's something that as Carl said before, is something people have said. So something is that we do need to look that more to see why is that feeling that people feel that it is worse at weekends and we have seen some of that in the complaint numbers as well?

Paul Brogard: Yeah because I live 2.6 miles away and obviously when it comes to having to open the windows, you have to check the wind direction and so if it's going in your direction, no chance, you can't open the windows. You're stuck in the house with the windows shut. So the other day I went to look at the wind and it was going sort of southwest which is for me in the safe zone, you can open the windows. I opened the windows and it stank. So you've got quite a wide triangulation of gas traveling in a way that isn't – and I don't believe that anybody is anywhere near finding out what the hell is going on with their distance. And I need more reassurance. I don't work my bum off to pay a mortgage so that I can live like this. It's just not on. So someone needs to get the finger out and work out why the hell it's traveling so far. It's going up to the hospital. I'm not far from the hospital. And it fills up a whole hospital, maternity units, intensive care, this is important and I feel that you really need to start working faster to work out why that's happening because I haven't had a satisfactory answer yet so that's what I wanted to say.

Clare Dinnis: So thank you, Paul. So I think we'll, Paul I'm conscious, we need to hear from some others. And I absolutely hear what you're saying. What I will say is that we are working as fast as we can. We are pushing the company to go further. I do accept your frustration there and I promise you that both the areas of distance and what is happening at the weekends are things that are absolutely on our list team to be able to answer to you. And as soon as we can, we will, but for now we'll go on to the next question, please Dan.

Dan: The next caller on the line is Sue Sidebottom. Sue, when you're ready, please go ahead with your question.

Sue Sidebottom: Hello. Thank you. Really it's following on from the last few calls about the gas management because, I'm just interested and I did miss the first few minutes of your call. So it may have already been answered. Has the amount of gas that's being collected, increased or decreased over the last six months compared to last year? And the fact is that the gas management plan is already part of this whole process all along so anyway, and now we're six months into this year and it's now just sort of being really focused on. It would have seemed an obvious thing to me to be looking at it and scrutinizing it much sooner than it appears to have happened and has it been audited and have all the checks and all the maintenance on that plant been done as it should have been done, which is already in their management plan anyway. Yeah that's sort of the way that I'm thinking at the moment. Could you provide the answers that?

Clare Dinnis: Thank you Sue, yes, absolutely. So Sarah, Carl, can I come to you to talk about like the site at the moment and what's happening in terms of the auditing that we have been doing but also, Carl, perhaps you can talk about whether we're getting the increased volumes and concentrations of gas, so Carl let's come to you first.

Carl Moss: Okay so thank you Clare and Sue. Thanks for your question and I'll try and answer it as simply as I can. In terms of the gas generation, the company required to model this in terms of what they expect that volume of fill will produce. Then that utilization is based on that model. They have an extraction rate that we expect them to extract based on that model. In the early part of this year, that extraction rate dropped. The reasons for that, we identified that some of the wells were not connected to the system. We pressed that with the company, they connected those wells and they drilled further wells and their gas extraction has been back up to what their model told us, that they should be extracting from the sites. Picking up the dispersion issue in terms of the gas utilization plants, normally, an independent company, or in the past, an independent company has come in and audited that plant and its emissions. Picking up Paul's point from earlier, we need to involve our air dispersion modellers for my air quality team at head office. The odour team are working with us and we need to do that around industrial processes and we've got many experts in the Agency that do that work so we can understand the point that Paul was making. The wind is blowing in a particular direction and we thought it was safe. So, we need to do that work and we're thinking of insisting the company put continuous monitors on the gas utilization plant and that's the direction of travel at the moment.

Sue Sidebottom: Well, can I just ask, since they were allowed to increase the amount of waste that's going in, it's obviously going in quicker. I thought modelling then increased as in how much gas would be collected or does it not work that way? And how does that modelling compare this year to last year because obviously they're not capturing enough now because there's more gas being produced because it's going off site. So surely they should be made to be adjusting that modelling to capture more gas and are the flares working? Did they install this new flare that they were supposed to be installing?

Carl Moss: So, that's all the process that we're going through. Those are the discussions that we're having, with the company this week and going into next week. So, the modelling is part of discussions that we're having with the company associated with those additional

challenges. So I can assure you that that is one of the many focuses of attention that we've got with the compan

Sue Sidebottom: The peak of the hydrogen sulphide is something - I can't remember the dates, it's something like 20 to 27 or something where it like reaches its peak and we're nowhere near that yet. And it's absolutely horrendous now so what's it going to be like then? Or is it 20 to 24? I might be wrong about the 20 to 24, but there's a graph which shows the peak of when the hydrogen sulphide would be at its peak and then it should start dying down. Well, the state that we're on at the moment, it's going to be just absolutely unbearable if it was 20 to 24, when it should reach that peak.

Carl Moss: That situation is based on, when the peak of landfill gas will be produced. Where we are is the measures on site in terms of the infrastructure is to control those emissions, so they know when the peak generation of landfill gas will look like from their model and the equipment and the landfill onsite. It has to be in place for them to deal with that situation or that generation or that volume of gas.

Sue Sidebottom: Well, they haven't done it up to now have they? You're forcing them to do it now. It should have been from the source, so has something been missed in all of this?

Clare Dinnis: So Sue, I think the point, the distinction here is that we've said the landfill is not behaving in the way that we would expect it to and that is partly about the levels of hydrogen sulphide that it is generating. So the modelling that was done, in relation to the original permit, and then in relation to the increased tonnage for the permit was absolutely for all of our best knowledge, about how landfill is behaving, about the levels of hydrogen sulphide that would be generated. And that's what those figures that you're talking about are, related to. The work that we're doing at the moment with the company around the gas management plant in particular is to make sure that we understand that it is capable to deal with what is actually happening in the landfill right now, which is different to what we had expected and what we've seen before. Until we know what is in there in terms of the gas management and until we have got something in place that we know is bringing the site back into compliance that will continue to be our focus. At that point, we will then have to look at it and say, okay, so how do we make sure this is sustainable going forward? How do we make sure, and by sustainable, I mean, sustainable for the community that is living in the area and the environment of the community in the area. And if, and I am absolutely speculating here, but if that requires a change in the permit and if that requires a different set of rules or instructions or permit conditions around the gas management or around monitoring, then that's absolutely something that we will look at and we will bring in, but at the moment we don't know that and we need to focus on controlling the gas that is coming out from there.

Sue Sidebottom: Yeah. Well, I appreciate that. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Clare Dinnis: Thank you Sue. Alright so I'm conscious, we've gone beyond the time that we had said and as I said, we will continue to answer the questions, but I think Dan, we've got two more questions registered in queue, so can we go to the next one of those please?

Dan: Next caller on the line is Enzo Chin, Enzo when you're ready please go ahead with your question.

Enzo Chin: Hi Clare, thank you for taking my calls. You keep saying the new waste is not the source of the odours but then still the offsite measurements; it correlates with the operations of the waste taking. I wonder so why did you say it is not the source or what measure did you use to determine that and how did you explain the offsite measurement, the correlation between this waste and the operation onsite.

Clare Dinnis: Okay. So, Enzo your line was breaking up a little bit there. I think what you're asking us is what is the evidence that we're drawing to compare the new waste is not the problem given what we're seeing with the air quality monitors offsite. So yeah, thank you. I just wanted to make sure I'd got the question right there. I mean, we know that landfill gas comes as the waste decomposes and we've talked about and we've speculated on what it is that is causing this. We've said that we think the most likely situation is that there has been gypsum or some other high hydrogen sulphide waste that's gone into the site that is now decomposing, which is causing these high levels of hydrogen sulphide. As Sarah explained, ordinarily, we expect for hydrogen sulphide to come in the first kind of couple of years of that decomposition. So we think it is something that has gone in that kind of relatively recent time there. We don't have the evidence to show that new waste going into sites is causing the problem and that's why we haven't acted to suspend the permit, but what we have got, what we have done and what we will continue to do is absolutely to give ourselves and you, the reassurance that those additional inspections are being required at Walleys Quarry onsite about what is going in and that we are doing those inspections onsite. And Sarah talked about them being announced and unannounced but also further up the waste chain. So, as it goes through the different elements I described as the waste chain, we know which of those legitimately have those high hydrogen sulphide materials in them and we know where those are going and we can track that too.

Enzo Chin: So sorry but then you say there's no evidence on this, but how can you explain the fluctuation of offsite measuring? Of course these two months, I mean it should stay constant if it doesn't change?

Clare Dinnis: So the site, as its decomposing in there, it's generating more gas, Perhaps Carl can I come to you to talk about the gas generation and how that's happening?

Enzo Chin: Oh yeah that would be great, thank you.

Carl Moss: So, there are many variables with regard to the situation that the monitors, picking up. There's temperature variation, there's wind direction variation, pressure variation and that's what's contributing to the fluctuations.

Enzo Chin: But then for daily, I think for weekly, should be average? I mean, what you're saying, the temperature or wind or these are based fluctuations, and what I'm asking is these weekly fluctuations or monthly, long-term fluctuations?

Clare Dinnis: Right. So, in terms of the air quality monitoring, what frequency are we looking at for the fluctuations in gas there? Is that what you mean Enzo?

Enzo Chin: I mean you report this percentage of odour every week, right?

Clare Dinnis: Every week yes.

Enzo Chin: And that's where it fluctuates?

Clare Dinnis: So we report it every week but the air quality monitors record it much, much more frequently than that. So Carl, I think they take data continuously?

Carl Moss: They do. Yeah so sorry Enzo. Yes they monitor, 24 hours a day, and then the data is cut into the 30 minute mean, the 24 hour mean, and all that and what we base the information on, because, we were asked to give an indication on a weekly basis in terms of when it brought up the annoyance threshold. The best way we could report that in a way that was understandable was a percentage of the week. There are graphs for the whole period that week, so there'd be times of the week where it's below the annoyance threshold and then there'll be peaks that go through that annoyance threshold and what we've done to make it understandable is, average that time so that we can give you a percentage of the seven day week where it would involve that annoyance threshold. That's how we've done it. That's the best way we can do it on a weekly basis because normally we wouldn't use this data till we've had a monthly set of data that we could verify the data. We were asked to produce weekly data and having to use raw data to produce those weekly results rather than the monthly rectified data that's involved.

Enzo Chin: Yeah. Sorry. I totally understand how you do the data. I mean, you can see this March, it keeps decreasing in March, its trend is decreasing, if you say the wind or temperature fluctuation, so then this trend of decreasing in March for example.

Clare Dinnis: Okay. So, I mean there are, as we said, a number of different factors around the air quality. I think what I'm understanding, Enzo, apologies, but as I said we're struggling with the line but I think what you're saying is that you think the air quality, was better in March when they weren't taking new waste and that -- okay. So, my apologies, I haven't understood that but as Carl said, there are lots of different variables, both in terms of what's causing that but also in terms of the legalities that we are able to use in relation to weather, which conditions on the permit we are either enforcing or choosing to suspend. What I can assure you is that although we have said to you all the way through, we do not think it is appropriate for us to suspend waste taken into the quarry and that absolutely is still our position. That is not something that we are not revisiting and we are not checking and looking at all of the time and if we do think there is a case where, new waste is causing that issue, then we will absolutely take action and there's nothing that will stop us doing that. If we think we've got the legal case to do that. In terms of the air quality monitoring, one of the reasons why we had initially said three months was because that gives us a time to have those trends. We've gone to the end of August, so that we will have all four stations in place for three months, but we are obviously getting to the place now when the data from the end of May has been through the analysis process. We will have the first three months of data, so I understand what you're saying now. Apologies for the issue on the line and we'll -- no, not at all. And we'll take that away and that'll be one of the things that we look at, okay?

Enzo Chin: Yeah thank you very much, thank you.

Clare Dinnis: Okay thank you Enzo. Okay. So, we had one more caller in the queue but I am told that they've disconnected their lines. So, given we are nearly sort of 20, 25 minutes beyond where we said we would be, we will call it to a close there. I would remind those of you who are still on the line, if you have questions that you wanted to ask us, if you go to www.slido.com and enter the code 049318, you can log your question there. What we're doing with those questions, we won't have any personal details, so we won't come back to

you directly on them but we are making sure that they are covered in Frequently Asked Questions, or that they're covered in the information from today. We will make the full transcript from today available on the Walleys Quarry website to the Environment Agency, as soon as we possibly can and also make the audio recording available. I'm aware that it took us quite some time to make the audio recording available from the last one. There were some technical issues but I hope that we will be able to do the next one quicker. And we will run another call like this, on, the 23rd of June, Wednesday the 23rd of June. It will be a similar time to this. We plan to do it in the evening. That's the feedback that we've had from people but we will publicise the time and the dial in details closer to the date. So thank you for your patience today and for all of your questions, I really appreciate them and, we will talk to you again in a couple of weeks, and I'll hand it back to you, Dan.

Dan: Thank you all for joining today's call. You may now disconnect your lines.