

Transcript of Facebook Q & A event 25/08/2022

PRES: Presenter

ML: Marc Liddersh

MJ: Mike Jenkins

PRES: Hello there and welcome to another Facebook Q&A with the Environment Agency. Today, we'll be looking at the questions you have submitted on the August questions thread. You may have noticed that we now have subtitles on our video, and we've done this to make it more accessible for people who wish or indeed me to read our content rather than to watch and listen. This means we will be recording our responses to your questions on the morning of the Q&A, and this enables us to present the latest information to you, but to add the subtitles before uploading to the group. As ever Marc Liddersh and Mike Jenkins are with me, they are Project Executives with responsibility for the regulation of Walleys' Quarry. I just like to remind you though that maybe some questions, which were not able to answer for legal reasons, some, which may fall outside of our regulatory remit and some, which we may group together when they are on a theme.

So, first question this month is Louise. Louise writes, I have a serious allergy to perfumes, which can cause me to struggle to breathe and to suffer burn, like, loss of skin. When are you going to stop Red Industries discharging huge constant cloud of perfume into the air environment? Surely any type of air pollution outside of the site is a breach, in addition, I understand Red told you they'd stop doing this and then if it continued, it would continue it would be another breach of their permit. She goes onto say please also note that people have tried to post photos of this particular smog and the clouds of dust coming from the site but have not been able to do so. Please advise how we can send you evidence that you would register as a complaint.

Let's go to Marc first off.

ML: Thanks Neil and thank you Louise for that question, so I'll come to the part asking about the photographs being submitted first, so many of you use our online reporting form and we did look at the enabling of attaching photographs to that form. But, unfortunately, this functionality just wasn't available to us to be able to do that however, you can attach photographs to emails and we would encourage anyone that does have photographs that they wish to send to us, once they've made a report to send them through to our e-mail address which is enquiries_westmids@environment-agency.gov.uk. So, if you do have photographs, please do send them through to that email address. Just as note, please do not use that email address to make reports of any odour incidents that you do want to tell us about. Please utilise the current reporting systems that we do have in place, which is either the online form, which you can find online on the Citizen Space page, or you can ring in on through to our hotline number, 0800 80 70 60 number.

Now in response to the perfume smell that Louise raised that as we've mentioned in the previous videos, landfill deodorisers are industrial vapour-based systems. Now the products that are used within these systems and the one at Walley Quarry are using is a non-toxic food grade bio-gradable product which is mixed with mains water and that is safe for both animals and humans, the name of the product is called ODR. It's an odour neutraliser which is manufactured by a specialist company. Now, the odour neutraliser system that is used or the vapour that is used by Walleys Quarry there are two fragrances that have been used and are being used. One is called Cotton Fresh, and another one is Cherry. Now, our officers when they have been out on site conducting their offsite odour

assessment tours, before they go onto site and inspect, they have smelt that kind of fresh washing odour outside the site perimeter. But what they have detected has not been considered a cause of offence to the human sense and also just to bring back the point about the actual complaints about the mist as well. We obviously, when we were first notified of this spoke to the operator and they did take subsequent action for the use of those odourises. They did, re- position parts of that system and that they have also turned down the actual system pressure itself and since those actions have been carried out, we certainly see no further reports of mist and complaints coming to us.

PRES: Ok, thank you Marc, next up is Deborah and Deborah writes to say, what dialogue have you had with Staffordshire Police re- continued professional development surrounding environmental rules and regulations and what we the dates please?

Mike we will go to you.

MJ: Thanks Neil and Deborah thank you for the question. So, we explained our role as the Environmental Regulator to Staffordshire Police to facilitate working together as category one responders which we do under the Civil Contingences Act of 2004. During Multi- Agency training events we have opportunities to explain our roles and our responsibilities to the police and other partners, but we have not provided continued professional development on Environmental Regulation to Staffordshire Police.

PRES: Ok, thank you. Tracy is next and Tracy says I never got my question answered about the hidden cost of this disaster. People have been to see Consultants, GPS' etc over physical and mental health problems caused through the pollution, people having to buy allergy eye drop, nasal sprays, and antihistamines amongst other things. Charities, she says are having to provide mental health support alongside the cost of involving so many other agencies such as Public Health England. When will the full cost of this disaster be calculated and shouldn't someone the EA or Red, she says, do something to help the cash strapped NHS because of all the extra costs that have been incurred?

Marc, back to you on this one please.

ML: Thanks Neil and thank you Tracy for that question. Now, as the question is based all around kind of health this is not a question the Environment Agency can answer. In terms of where Tracy's referenced organisations such as the NHS, GP Practices and Consultants. The Environment Agency does not hold information about cost relating to health issues that are incurred by those other organisations. We will look to share your question Tracy, with those partners that we are working with that do carry the responsibility for health., but you may wish to contact them yourselves. The right partner to contact would be the UK Health Security Agency or UKHSA who were formerly known as Public Health England and then there is also the Director of Public Health that sits within Staffordshire County Council but may also be able to assist with that question.

PRES: Ok thank you Marc. Simo has been in touch in as well and he says, why when you visit do all the lorries hide until you leave which we all know is true, why don't you look for them and make them come?

Mike, what have you got?

MJ: Thank you Simo for the question. So, we as the Environment Agency, do not have the power to require lorries to be driven to the site and generally road traffic matters for the Police we do appreciate it when people tell us about lorries that they've seen in the area that intelligence can be really useful in forming our work but as we've already stated, we cannot comment on matters which may be subject to an investigation.

PRES: Ok, thank you. On to Darren now, bear with me, that this is a quote been taken off Facebook, but it will become apparent. So, Darren says, just a question last week said, drilling for four days I think from Tuesday, and this is something he wrote on Facebook, but it will become clear he says if that's the case why did the A34 bottom of Newcastle and near Clayton stink as bad as ever this morning. He says it stinging his eyes and his nose of his throat as he was driving, and he says it's not like I could open a window to let the stench so what is today's reply to the vile stench escaping or venting still? As I say Darren has been posted within the group.

Marc's got more information on this for us.

ML: Okay, thank you again Neil and thank you Darren for that. So, I believe that Darren is referring to post that we put up on Facebook on the 26th of July indicating that drilling for additional gas wells was taking place that week we posted this as an information piece, as we tend to do to keep the community informed of any planned activities like this that are taking place at Walley's Quarry. We issued the advice as we felt there would be the possibility there is always the potential possibility of odour being raised when this type of activity is carried out particularly when they are drilling into cells, that obviously already contain waste. With regards to the actual time of the event itself we always look at our MMF data and look at numbers of reports that also come in from the community as well to see if there was any increases and any causes of those emissions. We will always look to refer those back to any activities that would have been taking place at the site at that time.

PRES: Thank you. Louise next up, she says: EA can you stop calling this an odour when they are vile toxic gases that are harmful to health. A lot of which we can't smell doesn't even start to take into account what the dust particles from this mountain of hell are doing to us. So, are you going to change your language to acknowledge and confirm this then?

Mike lets go to you please.

MJ: Thank you and Louise thank you for the question. So, we refer it to odour because that is what the conditions in the environmental permit cover. Odour is how various chemicals are perceived by humans. So, the Environment Agency is able to monitor specific as chemical that the human nose can detect. So, for landfill sites, like Walley's Quarry we monitor for Methane and Hydrogen Sulphide as they're commonly found within landfill gas. We consider the elevated levels of Methane and Hydrogen Sulphide in ambient air, a reliable indicators of odour pollution from landfill sites. We also monitor for different sizes of dust so PM 2.5, or Particulate Matter with an aerodynamic diameter 2.5 microns then PM 10's which are particular matters with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 microns as well as this total suspended particulate. We also report on the dust monitoring within our monthly Air Quality Monitoring Reports which we publish on our Citizen Space webpage, and we share data with the UK Health Security Agency, the UKHSA which provides a monthly health risk assessments which again we also publish. The July 2022 monthly Air Quality Monitoring Report shows the level of Particulate Matter is low, the levels currently cannot be compared to any UK Air Quality Standards yet. And it's for PM10's, some PM 2.5 are both annual. This means comparisons can only be made at the end of the calendar year. If you do experience dust pollution, as you do with odour than it really should be reported it to us in the same way so using our online reporting tool or a phone call to our 0800 80 70 60 number. Thank you.

PRES: Ok, thanks Mike. Next up its Michael and Michael has written to say: How many breaches are on the public register for 2022 so far and he says, please break this down into the numbers in each CCS category.

Marc you've got some information on this one for us.

ML: Yes, I have Neil and thank you Michael for that question now Michael obviously we're aware that since you posted that question you have been in contact with us again with some further points around the CCS scoring. And we've actually received other questions from members of the community regarding CCS scores and breaches. So, what I'm going to suggest Neil here is that it's going to be better for us to actually take the question that Michael has asked along with his subsequent post to us and those other questions that have come from the members of the community and we will do one of those explainer videos that we've done previously to cover this topic. So, therefore, we can answer not only just this question, but we can then respond to Michael's further questions and points that have been made along with those questions that have been raised by other members of the community. We're hoping to get that recorded and done ready for next week. We also post that on to the Facebook Group and what we will do at the same time, Michael in respect to that further post that you put on Facebook as we will publish that as well. So, people can see what you have asked along with what other questions we have had from other members of the community, and we're tied up all together in a separate explainer video.

PRES: Ok, Phil's up next then and Phil has written to say a question was asked on the last video regarding the viability of the bond that Walley's have in place should they become insolvent and although, the technicalities were explained I don't think a simple yes sufficient or no it isn't sufficient answer was given. Please can this be clarified on the next call says Phil.

Ok, Mike what have you got.

MJ: Thank you and thank you Phil for the question. SO, on the last occasion we did explain how the financial provision is calculated and we shared some links to find out public facing guidance. We also explained that we're not able to comment on specific financial provision arrangements. So, we I'm afraid we cannot give a simple yes, or no, answer to the question.

PRES: And another one from Phil and he writes to say, I understand that it's difficulty for people to ask their own question on the video call but rather than an EA Officer thinks he means me asking on the community's behalf please can you arrange for a member of the community local elected representative or other person of note to ask the questions. This would then allow the questioner the opportunity to ask supplementary question to the pre-prepared EA answers in order to gain full clarity? Marc Liddarth

ML: Thanks Neil, and thanks Phil for that question as well so obviously we always look for suggestions on how we can improve these types of engagement and communication pieces with the community and just to kind of cover off that on a practical level our communication or our comms team they manage all the Facebook Q&A sessions. No disrespect to Neil who is doing this, Neil is a comms speciality he isn't a specialist in regulations and therefore, he isn't able to directly answer your questions themselves. What Neil and the team do is that when we get these questions posted to us in advance they go out and they take the time to seek the appropriate inputs and responses back from our colleagues who would know those answers. Now what we do, do and we have done already and will continue to do is do these explainer videos and what Mike has obviously mentioned previously about giving a follow up answer to supplementary question because of the previous answer about financial provision felt wasn't deemed answered correctly that is an appropriate way to answer any or propose any supplementary question to us through the next video. We also then look at subject matters that do come our way and those subject matters particularly around for example the CCS scores and the breaches we will do separate explainer videos and we've answered or will answer those questions separately. So, where we are maybe not answering, or you feel that we are not answering the questions in full or believe there are follow up please so then just post

them onto the Facebook Page. We will then look at those we will then deem whether we will answer them on the next session or we will then do a separate explainer video if we feel it's appropriate to do so. So, hopefully that gives you the assurance that if the question is not fully answered to your satisfaction we will then follow in those ways and means.

PRES: Ok, Rose is next then and Rose writes absolutely disgusting how many more breaches have there got to be before you revoke the permit, I think this will go on until 2026 and you do not intend to do anything about it. What confidence should we have in the EA other companies have been closed for less. She goes on to say you have no interest at all in what we are all going through. What does it tell you when lorries go into hiding when the EA are at the landfill? Are you going to do anything at all as this is now taking far too long. Everyone is now losing faith in the EA. There's a lot in there.

Let's go to Mike please for a reply.

MJ: Thank you and thank you for the question. So, as I explained earlier, we cannot comment on matters which may be part of legal proceedings, so I do need to say that up front. We've also spoken about the current level of permit compliance. Our public facing plan to reduce emissions of Hydrogen Sulphide is on the Citizen Space webpage and includes the work that we've Walley's Quarry Limited to undertake. We expect to update this plan in September to keep you fully informed of the progress made since it was last published which was back in February of 2022. The EA has required Walleys Quarry Limited to continue to implement measures identified quickly as possible and all of these are fitting around our plan is which to contain, capture and destroy emissions. So that is included to contain emissions almost half of the service of the area of the site has been capped with materials to reduce dispersion into the atmosphere. Walleys Quarry Limited has also revised capping and phasing plans resulting in smaller tipping areas in future with a more frequent capping ones tipping areas have been filled at a faster rate. To capture emissions, new gas extraction infrastructure has been installed including extraction wells and gas transfer equipment as we've spoken about quite a bit recently. Since the beginning of May 2022, approximately 3,000 cubic meter per hour of landfill gas is now being collected and treated which previously could have escaped into the atmosphere. To destroy the emissions improvements have been made to the gas flare capacity and infrastructure on the gas engines to prevent release to the atmosphere. In July 2022, the cumulative average concentrations for the monitoring units were below the long-term lifetime health-based guidance value for exposure to Hydrogen Sulphide. In addition, odour complaints have been much lower than they were earlier on in the year.

PRES: Ok, thank you and next up welcome to new member Claire. Claire first of all writes to say: Can we have Mobile Monitoring Systems in place that we decide where we want them. So, they want to be able as a community to decide where they go there must be a way to monitor the spread of the gas?

Let's go to Marc please.

ML: Thanks Neil and welcome Claire and thank you for your question. So, in terms of the location of the 4 Mobile Monitoring Facility Units, or what we use the acronym of MMF's and sometimes you may hear us call them also the Air Quality Monitoring Units. They, the position of those locations were selected by our specialist National Odour and Air Quality Team. The choice of location represents a balancing exercise between both kind of technical and practical factors. So, in respect of these MMF's and where they have been located around Walleys Quarry Landfill, it's been chosen on a number of different factors. One of them being where within residential areas we receive complaints from and also a really key factor for these things to run is a need for a decent power

supply. So that obviously first of all limits where they can actually be deployed, they were also the most suitable locations because we have to take in factors such as the prevailing wind direction and also things like the local topography and we need a decent surface and security places for where the MMF's can actually be sited around the site itself. So, the bottom line is Claire, unfortunately we can't just place these MMF units anywhere within the local community and we have to take in all those factors into account. Now, if anyone is not familiar as to where they are we have 4 Air Quality Monitoring Units or MMF's around the landfill site, they appear or there's a diagram within our monthly Air Quality Monitoring Report figure 1 which is published on our Citizen Space, and you can see the actual locations of where each of these Air Quality Monitoring Units are located.

PRES: Ok, thank you Marc, will stay with you and as a follow-up question from Claire also can CCTV be installed outside the site to monitor the actual lorries arriving? CCTV seems to be okay to install everywhere else that isn't life threatening so it's the second one from Claire and we will stay with you Marc.

ML: Yeah, thanks again Neil and thank you Claire for that question. So, in terms of environmental regulation there is like limited use of CCTV when it does come to us doing regulations. So, in terms of lorries and going in and out of the site, the environmental permit does not restrict the operating hours or numbers of vehicles that can enter the site that is all controlled by the planning permissions which is set by the planning authority, Staffordshire County Council. What we also deem is that footage if we did capture it wouldn't tell us what the lorries are actually carrying. So that would be very limited use for us having CCTV outside of the perimeter of that site. Now, we also what we have to consider is the installation of CCTV in public places does involve data protection considerations and there are also legal restriction on the use of covert recording devices as well.

PRES: Ok thank you. Next up is Abby it's quite a long question so bear with me. I'll split up at the bottom of the Galingale Estate we are now frequently experiencing the smell of rotting food and rancid bins. It's like a full bin lorry is parked outside the house all day and sometimes overnight. Despite Walleys Quarry Limited now concentrating their filling slightly away from the Galingale odour can you please explain why the frequency and the intensity of this odour has increased and is the worst it's been. There are weeks were this is daily, has the makeup of the waste on site changed and are different procedures in place? In replying Abby says, please don't tell me to report it I do already. I do not report it every time as in there are some days were, frankly, I don't have the mental energy strength and resilience to find the gizmo to report something I know full well the EA will dismiss when one of tis team venture off site for five minutes and decides my reporting is inaccurate. There are plenty of houses for rent on this estate rent one for a few months and try living a working from home here for a while. And she finishes up by saying residents have really hit the environmental health inequalities jackpot round here. Hydrogen Sulphide levels above World Health Organisation long-term acceptable levels the unpleasant stench of fresh waste, gulls' noise and dust and she finishes off asking what waste can they accept?

There's a lot there let's go to Mike.

MJ: Thanks Neil, and again Abby thank you very much for the question. So, before I offer a response to the main part of your question, I would like to first just to address your comments on the value of reporting odours to us. The reports of odour that we receive from the public gives us that real-time information on issues that are occurring at the site, and they really do help us. They aren't dismissed they generally tally with the data from the Monitoring Facilities around the site. So, I know it is difficult, but I would really encourage people to carry on reporting issues of odour and so on to us. Going back to your question Walley's Quarry Limited is permitted to accept inert waste and non-

hazardous landfill sorry non- hazardous waste. Fresh commercial and industrial waste particularly in hot weather may be more odorous and therefore, I've asked the team to investigate your specific concern. We're not aware of any changes to the composition of the waste on site. There's been no variation to the permit to allow Walleys Quarry Limited to bring in different materials. We have previously highlighted the recent changes to the waste acceptance procedure, but these would not have an adverse impact on odour emissions.

PRES: Ok thank you Mike. Becky is up next then and Becky actually responded to our weekly update, yes this was in response to the 2nd of August update on lifetime exposure data and what she's done here is posted this within the questions thread just to clarify my notes. So, Becky says can you please explain why this is presented as average values rather than cumulative values. I am not exposed on average but rather at presumably unsafe levels almost everyday for more than two years. Also, what is the impact of high exposure over a shorter period say 2 years when calculated in terms of lifetime exposure the UK life expectancy she says is roughly 8 years? How is this knowledge not the public health risk assessment but this knowledge of environment human relationship of environment impact on human health factored into the EA regulation at the site and then she says (if at all as you always seem to do the Not us Gov routine when questions like this arise) and she says thank you.

Marc you've looked at this one for us.

ML: Yeah, thanks for reading that Neil and thank you Becky for those questions. I'll try and break those down because there were some there was a number in there Neil. So, the first bit just obviously well, we have said before the Environment Agency take all the specialist advice around health risk from UKHSA and that obviously then informs us of our regulatory approach, and we've been doing that from the outset of this situation. Now, just wanted to obviously come to the point that Becky raised where said that also what is the impact of high exposure over a shorter period. Now I'm obviously taking that as the impact to obviously the health part of this and the situation is that I cannot answer you know what that would be from a health risk perspective because the Environment Agency we are not the health experts or people that can offer the health in advice and answer to that question. And as I have previously answered in a question earlier in this video you know the specialist partners that do support this incident around health would be the right people to talk too. So, I would recommend if you have those concerns about what impact of high exposure over a shorter period is, is to contact those partners in this case that would be UKHSA. You know the objectives that we have set out in our plan that Mike spoken about previously in an answer, the contain, capture, and destroy to reduce those Hydrogen Sulphide emissions helps us to deliver the health-based recommendations that are made by UKHSA. All the data that we collate from those Mobile Monitoring Facilities, those MMF's we share regularly with UKHSA and that assistance in the production of their monthly health risk assessment of Air Quality in the area and the latest report from UKHSA, which will be the July 2022 report will be published I believe today on the Citizen Space page. Now within that report where Becky's asked the question about presenting average values rather than cumulative values, both average values and cumulative values are published within that report. So, if you look in those reports Becky and anyone else that wants to have a look you will find a table, table 7 that does include the cumulative average concentrations and then there is table 8 that then publishes those monthly averages as well. In the last point, that Becky raised in the questions about the environmental impact on human health factors into EA regulation just to make the point that permit that is provided by the Environment Agency and environmental permit to any operator is there to not only consider the protection to the environment but is there also to consider and look at the protection to human health as well.

PRES: Ok thank you. Final question then Mark writes to say, it's now been two months since Professor Trevor McMillan of Keele University wrote an open letter to James Bevan, Sir James Bevan to say and we're quoting here from the letter from Professor McMillan; the odour causes considerable risk to the future sustainability of our university. Given that the odour may be experienced on our open days when thousands of students make a decision about where to study and because the issue is now well known not only locally but also nationally receiving regular mainstream news coverage. Without a remedy there could be serious long term health ramifications sorry long-term ramifications on our future success and financial substantiality. Moreover, as an organisation which also underpins considerable physical and cultural regeneration in our local area this could have a serious and lasting impact on our local economy and society. Has James Bevan responded to this is the question and could you share the response please as well as other communications from Keele University?

Mike.

MJ: Thank you Neil and Mark thank you for the question. So yes, a response to the letter from Professor McMillan was sent by Clare Dinnis on the 7th of July 2022 on behalf James Bevan who also received a copy. We responded directly to Professor McMillan and we would not use social media to publish our letter if you wish to make a request for information that we hold you should send an email to enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk. Thank you.

** END OF Q&A, Presenter wraps up asking for feedback and advises Questions Thread to open below.

PRES: Ok thank you very much indeed busy one this month thanks of course to Mike, to Mike Jenkins and to Marc Lidderdth as well.

The next questions thread will open on Monday the 5th of September, and it will close after 5 days as always at 5pm on the Friday which is the 9th of September. We'll look forward to your questions and we'll see you again next month.