

## Transcript of Facebook Q & A event 26 October 2022

PRES: Presenter

MJ: Mike Jenkins

PRES: Hello there and thank you for joining us for the October edition of the Q & A here on Facebook. A warm welcome if you are new to the group. During this particular video we will be answering as many questions as we can submitted by you the members during the weeklong questions thread. It's important to note there are some we can't answer for legal reasons, some which fall outside our remit as the Environment Agency and indeed some we may group together if they are on a theme. Joining me today is Mike Jenkins, Mike is a Project Executive at the Environment Agency and Mike has responsibility for the EA's regulations of Walleys Quarry Landfill site. Without further ado first up this month and we go to a question from Clare and Clare writes to say and she did send in a picture as well; what is the blue canisters that the Quarry hastily buried? Mike over to you.

MJ: Thank you Neil and Clare thank you very much for the question. Thank you particularly for sending through the photograph and the other information you did which we have shared with our Regulatory Team. It is worth saying Walleys Quarry Limited is permitted to accept empty drums and other containers at the site for disposal.

PRES: Ok, thank you Mike. Nick is next and Nick says, why if there is a criminal investigation are lorries still allowed to tip waste unchecked? Mike.

MJ: Thank you. So Walleys Quarry Limited revised its waste acceptance procedures at the end of June 2022, which includes checks on waste before it is accepted at the site and also before it is tipped. Our officers continue to carry out site inspections to assess Walleys Quarry Limited compliance with their permit.

PRES: Ok, let's move on then two questions now both on the theme of compliance and Michael and Matthew would both like to know why the Environment Agency has described Walleys Quarry Limited as, and I quote 'working towards compliance?' Mike.

MJ: Thank you for the questions, so our overall assessment of Walleys Quarry Limited is working towards compliance, reflects the fact serious permit breaches reported in January and early April 2022 have not reoccurred. Walleys Quarry Limited have taken remedial action in response to those breaches by addressing the waste acceptance process as well as improving the gas infrastructure. This contributed to the reduction in Hydrogen Sulphide emissions recorded by our Mobile Monitoring Facilities or MMF'S and reported in our regular updates and in the monthly UKHSA. So, UK Health Security Agency Health Risk assessments.

PRES: Thanks Mike. Three questions now then from Maureen, from Helen and from Jonathan, I'll read them all out in full and then get a response for you. Maureen first then, what is the point of you going to do the site checks? You must tell Red, hence not many trucks turn up. Surely this tells you they are hiding something I would smell a rat. Onto Helen, Helen says why do the EA just do random checks on the site? The trucks just avoid you. Surely, a permanent presence on site daily, for a few weeks would give you all the evidence you need. Or are you afraid of what evidence you may find and then action would have to be taken? Easy to just drag everything out with enquiries and potential court cases, by which time the landfill will be capped and landscaped we've all had enough. And final question on the theme from Jonathan and Jonathan says is it not about time there was a permanent EA presence at the site? They have given you enough reasons if it was traffic offences,

they would have been locked up years ago. A lot in there, Mike Jenkins has been looking at the subject of visits and EA presence at the site.

MJ: Thanks Neil and thank you to the three of you for your questions. So, we as the Environment Agency is not funded to provide a permanent presence on the site. We continue to make both announced and unannounced site inspections and we only inform Walleys Quarry Limited of a site inspection in advance when we need to speak to a specific member of the company staff at the site. No forewarning is given of unannounced inspections. We will continue with this combination of both types of inspection, which represent the most effective way of assessing permit compliance. We've carried out significantly more regulatory activity with regard to Walleys Quarry than any other permitted sites. A landfill site normally being subject to 1 audit, 4 site inspections or monitoring reviews and 1 engineering inspection per year. So far in 2022, we've carried out 58 inspections to the site.

PRES: Thanks Mike. Dave is next and Dave has written to ask us; what are the latest emission readings as it stunk to high heaven in Newcastle this week? Now Dave posted that on the 3 October 2022, just to put that into context. Mike.

MJ: Thanks Dave for the question. So, first of all I would like to highlight that we published the percentage of time the monitoring facilities MMF's record Hydrogen Sulphide above the World Health Organisation annoyance guidelines levels in our update each week, so they are always available on our Citizen Space page. For the week that you're referring to, so around 3 October, we had less than 100 reports from members of the public into the week prior to that question being submitted. I've had a look back at some of the monitoring results from that time. So, for the week commencing 3 October when your question was actually asked, we saw that MMF9, so Galingale View was above the annoyance level 3.7% of the week. MMF2, so, Silverdale Pumping Station was above 4.4% of the week. While MMF1, the Cemetery and MMF6, the Fire Station were not above the annoyance guideline level for that week at all. Looking to the previous week, so that week commencing 26 September, we saw that MMF9, Galingale View was above the annoyance guideline level of 4.2% of the week. MMF1, MMF2 and MMF6 were not above the annoyance guideline threshold that week at all. Furthermore, we also publish our monthly Air Quality Report. So, you can have a look at all of the data that's contained within that. And the latest report for September is available on our Citizens space page. Thank you.

PRES: Thanks Mike. Just to note as well, I will put links to these reports, anything Mike refers to which you might want to read for yourself. I will put it in the post directly underneath the video, so you'll be able to check that for yourself.

Ok, onto Claire and Claire says we need like for like figures. In the last video it was comparing data from March 2021 to data from August. Everyone knows that the colder weather brings more problems. Also, if the readings were 27.1 in March, what about before this period when no monitoring was being done? The levels would have been very high. We've already been exposed to higher levels, so what will be done about that? Mike back to you.

MJ: I thank you Claire for the question and it's quite a bit in there so bear with me. So, our report of comparisons of Ambient Air Quality Data, MMF9, dated 1 June 2022 and available on the Citizen Space webpage again we will get the link up in the chat for you confirms that consideration of HS2 concentrations over the two monitoring periods show a lower mean average concentration from March to April 2022. So, the figures that were within that are the for March to April 2021 it was 27.2 micrograms per cubic metre and from March to April 2022 it was a 12.4 micrograms per cubic metre. Since receiving your question, we've also published the September 2022 data. This indicates that

MMF9, in September 2022, the average H2S or Hydrogen Sulphide concentration during the month was at 1.1 micrograms per cubic metre whereas in September 2021, it was a 3.1 micrograms per metre cubed. Similarly, in September the 2021 emissions of Hydrogen Sulphide recorded at MMF9 were above the annoyance threshold for 10% of the month, compared to 2.6% of the month in September 2022. Regarding your question about when no monitoring was being taken, previous Air Quality Studies were carried out in 2017 and 2019. In its Health Risk Assessment about Air Quality Monitoring results from March 2021 to August 2022, so the latest report that UK Health Security Agency have published, they note that UKHSA has been provided previous monitoring data from 6 July 2017 to 14 February 2018 and 15 January 2019 to 25 June 2019. For the 2017 to 2018 monitoring period the average concentration was 0.85 micrograms per metre cubed and for the 2019 monitoring period the average concentration was 0.95 micrograms per metre cubed. These previous concentrations are below the US Environmental Protection Act level therefore, they would not be expected to contribute to any significant effects on health, so that's the quote that comes from their report. Now, the reports detailing the monitoring data from that we recorded since March 2021 to now and the earlier 2017 and 2019 studies are all available on our Citizen Space web page. Thanks Neil.

PRES: Thank you. Claire again. Second question and she refer to a video which she posted. She says this happens daily, the noise is all day on and off. And when I say on and off, I mean literally a few minutes to stop then a few minutes to start. If you had windows open in the summer, it was awful. I teach online to students in China and it sometimes we would be very loud if it's not the vile stench or gases, it's the dust or emissions and noise. So, I'd like to know what's going to be done, Mike.

MJ: Thank you. So, with any working landfill offsite noise due to plants and machinery operating can be expected on occasions. Under the permit Walleys Quarry Limited is required to prevent or where that's not possible to minimise offsite noise. We haven't been able to substantiate a permit breach in respect of noise but will continue to the assess compliance.

PRES: And a third question from Claire. What's been done about dust emissions?

MJ: Thank you. So, we did discuss dust emissions in our August session the Facebook Q&A from August last month. Our Monitoring Facilities, the MMF's are monitoring different sizes of dust and the data is shared with UK Health Security Agency. In its last Health Risk Assessment, the UKHSA confirms that, results are all below the relevant annual Air Quality objectives. If you do experience dust pollution, then it should be reported in the same way as odour.

PRES: Thanks Mike and thank you Claire. Next up then to Phil and Phil writes in respect to the bond which is in place to protect the public purse should the site close? On previous Q&A videos, the EA have stated that they are unable to confirm or other if the bond is sufficient to meet the costs of making and maintaining the site safely. He says my question is, who was responsible for calculating the monetary value of the bond and who is responsible for approving the bond? Actual names and designations of the officers are required. This is an extremely pertinent question given the circumstances and the community need assurance that the regulatory authorities are performing their duties appropriately. Mike, one that has been asked before indeed, by Phil.

MJ: Thank you and Phil thank you for the question. So, the decision on the amount of financial provision that's required is made at the appropriate management level. The Environment Agency is not able to disclose the names of its staff as this is personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018 and to disclose it will breach first Data Protection Principle of the Data Protection Act of 2018. Whilst the Environment Agency would normally disclose names of its staff, we have determined that it would be unfair to disclose the information, identify staff connected to regulation to Walleys Quarry

site at this time. Due to the negative impact that such disclosure would have on the health, safety, and wellbeing. What I really want to do is to reassure Phil and the community that the financial provision we have required from Walleys Quarry Limited is in accordance with the guidance which is available on the gov.uk web pages.

PRES: Thank you. Second question from Phil now. Why can't we have the questions asked by a member of our community?

MJ: So, there's a lot of effort that goes into producing the monthly Q&A sessions across multiple teams and areas of expertise. The questions that you ask require us to seek individual specialists to give you the best possible answer, this takes time across such a large organisation such as the Environment Agency. We also need to record the sessions in advance to allow subtitles to be provided so the recording is available to as many people as possible.

PRES: Thank you, Mike. Richard then. And Richard says, now that you claim that the situation has improved vastly, are you prepared to park a manual mobile drop-in centre in Newcastle under Lyme town centre or adjacent to the Quarry entrance in the layby for a week like you do on your other projects? Mike.

MJ: Thank you. So, at the moment we are engaged in using Facebook as the community asked us to do this during our door-to-door visits. There's also the Citizen Space web page which is regularly updated to keep the community informed. We remain open to alternative ways of engaging with the community and we continue to discuss this with our partners.

PRES: Thank you. Onto Steven and Michael two questions again on a theme. Stephen writes when will the EA make all data and reports about the site public and easily accessible as they are issued, rather than waiting for FOI, Freedom of Information requests? And then Michael says in a previous video it was stated it was not necessary to submit a Freedom of Information request for Compliance Assessment Reports. If this is the case, how do we request them, and will this be quicker than the FOI route? Mike Jenkins.

MJ: Thank you both for the questions. So, the monitoring data from our MMF's is published on the Citizen Space Web page on a monthly basis alongside the UK Health Security Agency Health Risk Assessments. We also provide the weekly update with which contains information about emissions of Hydrogen Sulphide outside the site boundary. Compliance Assessment Reports or CARs are treated as public register documents once the challenge period is expired or the process is concluded when they can be inspected by any member of the public. CAR forms are shared with the operator within 14 days of the inspection. An operator is able to challenge the CAR, the Compliance Assessment Record within 28 days of its receipt. The Environment Agency is required to publish annual reports and monitoring information that it receives from the operator on the public register. The Environment Agency is working on making it easier to inspect CAR forms and other information using the digital public register. In the meantime, if you would like to see a copy of a CAR form, you can click on the request additional documents link which automatically generates an e-mail for this purpose. We commit to respond to these emails as quickly as we possibly can.

PRES: Thank you Mike. Carl is up next, and Carl writes okay, here I go. Why is there no drone on your footage like before or after on Walleys Quarry? You don't need permission under a 49-kilogramme drone? Over to you Mike.

MJ: So, in accordance with our guidance, we speak to Walleys Quarry Limited as the landowner before undertaking drone flights over the site. We'd also need permission from the landowner before we could release any drone footage.

PRES: Okay up next is Mark and Mark writes to say, a question for Mike on Sulphate reducing bacteria. There required the following to produce H<sub>2</sub>S, a Sulphate source (the base of this site is rich following Lafarge plasterboard manufacturing disposal confirmed by the Environment Agency). anaerobic conditions, moisture, (something I previously discussed to reduce this long term because of the considerable H<sub>2</sub>S problem). Never seen before on such a scale in this so-called G7 country. Also, a carbon source, which leads me onto my question. Why are we continuing to deposit municipal waste that adds greatly to the ongoing problem rich with carbon? Also, a general question, why are we allowing municipal waste so close to where people live as there is no possible way, you can stop the odours from this is affecting residents, as proven in summer. A lot there, Mike over to you.

MJ: Thank you for the question. So, you can see in the latest version of our plan to reduce Hydrogen Sulphide emissions, that the Hydrogen Sulphide concentrations in the bulk gas line fallen significantly since 30 June 2021. In our weekly update, on 22 September 2022, we told you that the figure had been 6500 parts per million and was then 1400 parts per million. Since then, it's continued to reduce. As we said in response to an earlier question, Walleys Quarry Limited is being required to improve its waste procedures with a view to minimise the risk of accepting gypsum bearing wastes that can lead to the creation of Hydrogen Sulphide in landfill gas. Planning permission is a matter for the local planning authority. The Environment Agency is a statutory consultee only in respect of specific types of proposed development.

PRES: Thanks Mike. Richard next and Richard says should you consider closing this group? Does anything positive come from it? Does it just frustrate members? Does it just add to people's anxieties, and does it not just add to people's low self-esteem and other mental health problems? Mike.

MJ: Thank you. So, we set the group up as a direct response to what we were hearing from people in Silverdale and surrounding areas following our doorstep visits. The Facebook group is the channel for the Environment Agency to talk to the community about our regulation of Walleys Quarry Limited and it allows us to provide video statements and links to other relevant information. Becoming a member of the Facebook group is entirely optional and anyone can leave the group if and when they choose to. Our data shows that video views have more than doubled since we started the group in April.

PRES: Thank you. Louise is next then and Louise writes, are you going to stop them using the perfume sprays as well? They are toxic for me and do nothing to cover up the problem of them poisoning us with toxic gases and dust, they're not getting better and never will until it is shut, and you lot know it. So, stop with the delaying tactics, which benefits Red Industry and allows them to continue making millions out of slowly killing us. Mike, over to you.

MJ: Thank you. So, as we explained in response to an earlier question, levels of Hydrogen Sulphide reported outside the site boundary at MMF9 in September 2022, were almost a third of those twelve months earlier. The UKHSA has not indicated it is concerned by dust emissions. Officers have advised Walleys Quarry Limited to consider whether it is using appropriate dilution factor for the deodoriser when they're detected the fragrance during off site odour assessment. Information about the products on the manufacturer's website indicates it is not toxic to humans.

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

PRES: Thanks Mike. A lot in there. Now the next designated questions thread will open here on Facebook on Monday, 7 November at 9:00am. It will remain open for five days until Friday, 11

November at 5:00pm. If you are new to the group, this is where you can pose any questions to us, the Environment Agency concerning our relation of Walleys Quarry Limited. Thank you to Mike Jenkins and thank you to you for watching.