

Keeping you informed

Odour issues from Acumen Waste Services Ltd

July 2023

Our aim is to protect and improve the environment so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of a clean, safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

We issue environmental permits that set standards for those operating waste facilities. Sites with environmental permits must adhere to conditions set out in these permits in order to minimise their impact on the environment and the local community.

Latest Information

Since May 2023 we have received an increase in reports of odour around the Escrick area. We have now confirmed that the odour is coming from Acumen Waste Services Ltd, The Old Brick and Tile Works, Riccall Road, Escrick. This site holds an Environmental Permit to carry out its activities, issued by the Environment Agency.

Our response

We take pollution from odours at permitted waste sites seriously and recognise this can be distressing for affected communities.

Our officers have been pro-actively attending the area to conduct odour monitoring and site inspections, including monitoring during the evening and early hours of the day.

During the monitoring officers have determined moderate to strong odour at off-site locations and confirmed that the activities of Acumen Waste Services Ltd are the source of the odour. We have specifically linked the odour emissions to storage of a large quantity of biodegradable waste and recorded relevant permit breaches.

What are we doing about it?

We required the operator to put an action plan in place to resolve this problem. . The company has provided a plan to remove the waste and after careful considerations we have accepted it. Waste removal started on 17 July 2023. The company has committed to removing the material as soon as possible but due to the quantity involved it could take up to 4 months to complete the task. This timeframe has been estimated based on an average removal rate of 500 tonnes per

day, Monday to Friday. As of 26 July 2023, the company was ahead of this schedule.

An increased number of vehicles will be accessing the site while the odorous waste is being removed. Acumen have informed us that they are aware of the recent problems with traffic management on the business park and in response they have employed a traffic marshal to improve management of queuing vehicles.

Please be aware that traffic management on public / private highways/roads is not within the Environment Agency's remit and we have no enforcement powers that we can use in relation to this issue.

The plan that is being implemented will address the odour issue, however, odour emissions are likely to continue during the process of removing the waste. Acumen has deployed numerous odour suppression / masking units in an attempt to reduce the impact during the removal process. These units spray a scented mist into the air and can act to reduce / mask emissions of odour. The fragrance currently in use is 'cotton fresh' and is similar to laundry detergent. You may notice this smell during the waste removal period. You may also see the misting units in operation.

The Environment Agency has deployed an air quality monitoring unit on the business park. It is continually monitoring methane and hydrogen sulphide concentrations in the air as surrogates (indicators) for odour. We are doing this as we believe it will help us understand and demonstrate the level of odour impact during the removal of the waste.

We are aware that there is some concern regarding potential health impacts associated with the odour emissions and we recognise the impact that odour can have, even when a substance that contributes to the smell is not harmful to human health at the concentrations that are likely to be present. If people have health concerns, they should contact their local GP.

What happens next?

We will continue to assess Acumen's delivery of its compliance plan to ensure that the odorous material is removed as quickly as possible and in an appropriate manner. We have increased the frequency of site inspections and we will continue to carry out off-site odour assessments to assess and record the level of impact that is occurring. In order to assist with our community engagement and keep you informed we intend to set up a Citizen Space page. This is essentially a website that will be available for members

of the public to view. We will publish relevant information, such as our compliance assessment reports and the Newsletters to this page.

We will send around a link to the distribution list once the page is online.

How can you help?

Please keep reporting any incidences of odours to us. The reports we receive to our incident hotline are important in helping us assess the problem. Our staff will log the specific details of pollution that you are experiencing.

If you are able to report incidences of odours immediately, this will help us respond. As these odours appear to be intermittent, assessment can be difficult if reports are received many hours after detection. Whilst we recognise that it may be inconvenient to report it as soon as you smell it, we are better able to respond when reports are made as soon as you notice them. Descriptions of the odour, what it smells like to you, can also be extremely helpful in identifying the origin.

Please ring our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60. It is operational 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

Although we are unable to attend in response to every call and cannot resolve this nuisance immediately, reported incidents are one way in which we assess how a site is performing and whether improvements are working.

We are unable to provide feedback to calls on our incident hotline and will send out a further briefing note when there is an update to works on site.

Who are we speaking to?

We are keeping the local MP and ward councillors informed about the current situation by providing this briefing note.

We have sent this briefing note to anyone who has reported incidents regarding this site; If you know anyone who would be interested in this briefing, please do pass it on.

If you wish to receive future newsletter on this matter, please provide your email address by emailing yorkshirewaste@environment-agency.gov.uk and quote Escrick Newsletter in the subject.