

News Release

18 December 2020

Environment Agency concludes investigation at Rotherham landfill site

- Landfill site investigated after allegations of falsifying groundwater sampling data
- Environment Agency investigation concludes that there is no evidence of falsification of groundwater sampling data

The Environment Agency has concluded its investigation into allegations that groundwater sampling data was falsely submitted from a non-functioning borehole at Grange Landfill site in Droppingwell, Rotherham.

Site operator, Grange Landfill Ltd, is currently undertaking works to install a surface water management system and an impermeable clay barrier that protects groundwater at the landfill site. This is a condition of the site's permitting and no waste disposal activities are to commence until the Environment Agency is fully satisfied that the landfill infrastructure has been engineered to the relevant standards.

The permit conditions also require the site operator to undertake testing of groundwater to assess water quality. This will help to establish a benchmark by which the Environment Agency can monitor the potential impact of site operations on groundwater once landfilling operations begin.

However, in January 2020 it was alleged that between 2017-19, Grange Landfill may have submitted bogus ground water readings to the Environment Agency from a borehole that was capped off in 2017.

Area Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, Jacqui Tootill, said: "This was a serious allegation. Environmental permits are in place to protect people and the environment and we take potential breaches extremely seriously. We therefore launched an immediate investigation.

"This included a thorough audit of the site's monitoring regime and an examination of the boreholes on site as well as interviews with key witnesses.

"We concluded that whilst the borehole in question was damaged and repaired on several occasions between April 2017 and October 2019, it was still serviceable up until the point that the last water sample was taken and submitted in October 2019. It finally fell into disrepair, allegedly due to vandalism, in November 2019.

"We found no evidence of falsification of groundwater sampling data."

The Environment Agency has now informed the operator that it would like the borehole to be reinstated. This will allow it to be used, once the site is operational, to provide reassurance that the landfill is performing as designed and not having a detrimental impact on groundwater.

The operator must now make a formal request to the Council to access its land and undertake the work necessary to reinstate the borehole.

The Environment Agency will continue to regulate the operator of Grange Landfill to ensure that it continues to meet the conditions of its environmental permit.

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