

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date: 25 March 2021



Dr Nic Coetzee
Consultant in Communicable Disease Control
Public Health England – West Midlands
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By e-mail only: nic.coetzee@phe.gov.uk

Dear Nic

Health concerns regarding odour from Walleys Quarry landfill site, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire

As you are aware, this landfill site has been causing significant local concern for a considerable time, with substantial odour complaints being reported over many years. This culminated over the weekend of 26th to 28th February 2021 with the Council receiving over 2000 complaints from local residents and business from the odour affecting them in their home, gardens and throughout the community.

This Council takes the residents' concerns very seriously and had been undertaking a scrutiny review of the impact of the landfill on the local community, which reported PHE advice that a well regulated landfill site will not cause adverse health impacts. The findings of this scrutiny review, along with the level of public concern, led to an extraordinary Council meeting being held on 18th March 2020. At this meeting, there was a common theme amongst all members that they felt let down by the lack of proactive and positive action taken by the Environment Agency in response to their regulatory role with the landfill site and the recurring theme that the emissions from the landfill site are causing regular and persistent health effects. Those reporting effects have referred to experiencing headaches, nausea, vomiting, sore eyes and throat, and the exacerbation of pre-existing health conditions such as asthma and COPD. It has been reported that the effects are also having an impact on mental health, this has been exacerbated by the reporting of the persistent odour inside homes at a time during the pandemic when the Government advice is that homes should have windows open and be well ventilated.

On 17th March 2021 the Environment Agency identified two breaches of the permit, one significant, and confirmed that the odour was emanating from the site.

Such is the level of elected members' concerns that a unanimous decision was taken to request that PHE review the previously issued health advice and request PHE alongside the CCG implement **“regular health screening for residents who are concerned of potential health impacts as a consequence of the regular presence of ‘foul odours’”**.

Although the operators of the landfill, Red Industries, have temporarily ceased the importation of waste into the facility from 13th March 2021, this is a voluntary arrangement. Council also resolved to request that the Environment Agency use its powers to deliver an 'immediate suspension of the licence for waste operations at Walleys Quarry, including the import of waste material at the site, until the cause of the 'foul odours' has been identified and resolved' and that the Secretary of State undertake a formal independent review into the Environment Agency's regulation of Walleys Quarry Landfill site.

Cont'd

Contacting the Council: Telephone 01782 717717

E-mail customerservices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk · www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk

In conclusion, could you please advise regarding what arrangements PHE can put in place to deliver the regular health screening requested by Full Council?

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Hamilton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Martin Hamilton
Chief Executive

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