

Meeting notes for Thursday 28th August 2014

The meeting on Thursday night (28th) at 7pm went well we had:

NWLDC John Richardson & Clare Proudfoot,

EA David Hudson & Joe Adams,

AB Produce Paul Bridgen, Neil Sharratt and Peter Ellis

CATS Michael Williams

“An absolutely Brilliant meeting” with a crowd of over 150 people, residents from Measham and the surrounding villages.

We started the meeting in Robin's Nest and to our surprise we filled up 20 minutes before the start of the meeting and so had to hold the meeting outdoors and people just kept coming from all sides. We are only guessing at 150 people as we know some people arrived and left after a few minutes understandably as they found us holding the meeting outside of Robin's Nest with limited seating. From that point a bit of real local democracy in action as anyone who wanted to be there could be. Lots of questions from lots of people and whilst a couple of people did not get their questions across most did.

The problem was that the responses were somewhat low volume or rather mumbled. I think everyone agreed that they could hear me but had some difficulty hearing some of others who then made no real attempt to speak up.

We took them everyone through a potted history lesson of AB from their days at Woolstitch Farm through the protests in Netherseal and to their subsequent move to Measham in 2003. We also outlined where complaints in our village had started in 2006 and as such have been in continuing for at least 8 years.

The Environmental Health people did not get an easy ride and probably came off worse of all. Their collective dithering and lack of teeth came up time and again. People really got fed up and an argument which was starting to become personal had to be stopped.

The only agency that came out on top was the EA as they promised to monitor the situation and enforce permits. However things got a little sticky when they said that they had not enforced to date, however David Hudson EA handled this well and promised to involve residents at each step. Some of the next steps by AB produce will be subject to their approval and monitoring. But before this the EA promised to consult with the residents.

AB Produce's Neill Sharratt spoke as well as Paul and Peter. They did not have much of a final plan and had to admit that they were going to have to try ideas and see which ones worked. ABP started to blame Mick from CATS for not passing on information something that was ignored as playing politics. They did however offer to work more closely with residents and would welcome communication with groups such as Tenants and Residents Association (TARA), CATS and the Parish Council. They also agreed to meet with one resident and her husband to consider solutions which are on the open market.

ABP has to complete a lagoon management plan something which the EA stated they had failed to complete satisfactorily on a number of occasions to date and are still in breach. AB have been given a further deadline to comply. The current works to dig out two lagoons may not provide a complete fix although it is expected to produce a significant reduction in odours. We may not be able to measure this until next summer as we always see a reduction due to winter weather. Paul Bridgen was asked if the works they are undertaking are guaranteed to fix the problem and he had to agree that he did not know and when asked further said that this may not be a complete fix.

Currently AB Produce's plan is ongoing, thus far they have emptied two of their lagoons of liquid slurry and carted that off to land that they own/ rent for spreading. Some of this we believe has turned up as far afield as Elford in Staffordshire to the utter dismay of their local residents.

Second part is to dig out the solids and contain these using a straw bunt and then top this off with sheeting and soil to allow it to dry without any further odour being emitted. The second lagoon is being dug out and should be complete within the week. Once dry the material can be spread and used to fertilise land in preparation for planting.

They may need to empty the lagoons of liquid again as they will naturally fill. This will again be spread. The remaining 6 lagoons that contain mainly soluble starch may be de-watered to remove some of this or could be left as is which will produce odours problems; how much we will have to wait and see.

The next part of the plan is to top of the lagoons with a suitable covering one method already looked at by ABP is to lay out a carpet of ceramic/clay balls several centimetres deep on the top of the lagoon so as to stop wind bourn odours being spread. Paul said that he had looked at this at another location but was not sure that this would stop the odour. Thus other solutions are being sort.

ABP also wants to develop their plans for an Anaerobic Digester (AD) plant, something which we have some concerns although the EA stated that these can be okay if properly installed and managed. This will need to be the case as Natural England will need to be satisfied as the plant will be next to the SSSI River Mease. We are still not convinced and need to see the plans and ensure that any development fulfils on its obligations to remove any odour. It was stated by ABP that the AD plant would be a closed loop system and as such would only be used to process waste from their plant and not from anywhere else. We are concerned that in several years' time this will change and we will have increased tractor movements to and from the AD plant carrying other's waste and then the waste from the AD plant.

The only time that we will know if these plans are successful is next year or subsequent years if we get warm summers. By then it may be too late although the EA has promised to persevere with the case.

The Question and Answer session was a little lively at times and of course due to people's anger and anguish got started rather earlier than planned. The questions on the whole were very good and in particular took the Env. Health and AB Produce to task. There were some who felt that the environment was confrontational and that unnecessary questions were being asked but we feel that some people said that because they were AB Produce supporters.

It was felt by most that the Environmental Health Officers failed to cover themselves in any glory, quite the reverse occurred. They were still maintaining their mantra that for this to be a statutory nuisance an officers with a suitable appendage (detector 1A aka A Nose) is the only suitable where of measuring and therefore determining a nuisance has occurred. This pantomime received the loudest cheers and general uproar. They failed to acknowledge that in fact anyone can start proceedings through the courts using local nuisance legislation and where their home-insurance will probably foot the bill if you have legal aid as part of the insurance policy. One of our colleagues found this on Wrexham Councils website something. So why the secrecy, why the delay in using their statutory powers?

Another problem which seems to affect those living really close to AB is that of flies and in particular something that has been described as potato flies. This also requires further investigation.

One question that some felt was not also answered was that of health issues associated with the problem. Whilst most accepted that there could be problems for some one person thought this was not the case at all. Dr Philip Monk (HPA) in 2012 identified that the lagoons could be responsible for a biological and/ or Chemical hazard. The first being within a few hundred metres of the lagoons and the latter being beyond that. He felt most residents fitted within the later. We have a catalogue of cases where people have reported health problems where previously they had none. One lady reported that her two children had suddenly started getting hay fever type symptoms after moving to this village from another rural setting. The HPA have said in the past that it would take significant research over a long period of time to prove a causal link but never the less there could be real problems for people suffering from Asthma, COPD and other respiratory problems.

CATS have invited TARA to a meeting to select people to attend meetings with AB Produce. Neill was also asked if small groups could visit AB's site and be taken on a tour, the first of these visits is being arranged by Parish Councillor Duncan Rogers and Neill Sharratt.

Another public meeting is being planned for approximately six weeks time subject to getting a venue large enough such as the Leisure Centre with a set of mics an amp and speakers as well as some more seating.

[Attached a photo of the event we me talking and also the text of my speech.]