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AB Produce under fire from Measham villagers over foul stench

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By David Owen



In the spotlight: Andrew Bridgen, founder of AB Produce, outside the Measham factory

Comments (1)

Villagers plagued by a foul smell emanating from an MP's potato factory have questioned the firm's commitment to tackling the problem.

People living in Measham say the stench emitted by AB Produce, which processes British farm potatoes and vegetables, is making their lives a misery.

It was founded by North West Leicestershire MP Andrew Bridgen and his brother, Paul, and moved to the village's Westminster Industrial Estate in 2003.

Resident Adrian Leigh, of Wordsworth Way, said: "It's a thick, heavy smell of rotting vegetables.

"It gets right to the back of your throat and makes you gag.

"Although we live on the other side of the village, it can get really bad.

"A few summers back, it pretty much ruined my daughter's birthday party it was that terrible.

"It's been going on since the plant moved to Measham – and it's not just the odd day.

"Depending where the wind's blowing, even drivers on the nearby M42 have complained about it.

"It's not on."

The problem is believed to be caused by stagnant water and rotting organic matter collecting in lagoons and irrigation systems on the site.

AB Produce, in Repton Road, intended to offer long-suffering residents hope by revealing it will be investing £2.2million in new equipment to treat the water.

Speaking to the BBC last week, Andrew Bridgen MP said: "The company has got plans in to sort the whole issue out.

"This is a plan the company has been working on for more than a year."

Measham parish councillor Michael Williams set up the Campaign Against the Smell (Cats) in 2010, which has a website where villagers can report smelly incidents.

"The stench could be described as a muck-spreading smell, but it isn't," he said. "It's not just a smell, but a taste, which makes it so revolting."

Mr Williams doubts the firm's commitment to tackling the problem once and for all.

"Back in 2007, AB Produce said it was spending £400,000 on upgrading its lagoons and irrigation systems – it said it would fix the problem but it didn't.

"Now it says it is investing this money in new equipment, but that's only part of the answer.

"That rotting vegetation has been lying there for years, with bacteria and other microbes feeding on it, creating noxious smells and toxins.

"They need to completely dig out the lagoons and then spread what's left over the land.

"It will smell for a further year afterwards, but at least that would be it."

Mr Williams has also accused North West Leicestershire District Council's environmental health department of failing to take action.

"They refuse to admit this is a statutory nuisance, despite the fact this has been ongoing for years," he said.

"People have given up and stopped complaining.

"They simply don't believe anything will be done about it."

Councillor Alison Smith, the council's deputy leader, said the council was working with the firm, Environment Agency and parish council to find a [solution](#) .

"In the past two years, we've carried out two month-long investigations, but did not find that the odour was a statutory nuisance," she said.

To report an incident to the council, call 01530 454545 or visit the Cats site at:

www.cats.cherryorange.co.uk

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