

CATS Meeting



5th October 2012, 5.30 pm

Measham Parish Boardroom, The Cemetery, Bosworth Road, Measham.

Campaign Against The Smell (CATS)
Michael Williams
Adrian Leigh

North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC)
John Richardson Head of Community Service
Clare Proudfoot Street Action Team
Minna Haines Environmental Health Officer



Health Protection Agency (HPA)
Dr Philip Monk



Also present, Measham Residents and local District Councillors (Sean Sheahan and Thomas Neilson).

Introductions

Michael Williams (MW) and John Richardson (JR) opened the meeting and then JR introduced the team from NWLDC and Dr Monk from the HPA. JR confirmed that this was a follow up meeting to our earlier meeting of 30th August.

Agreed actions from previous meeting:

1. NWLDC to meet with AB Produce and visit location in order to assess nature of pollutants.
2. Reporting mechanism to be advertised to local residents using Website, Facebook, Twitter and posters in business locations and library.
3. Month long monitoring of Air Quality within Measham to assess severity and frequency of air nuisance incidents.
4. Report back in approximately one month on progress thus far (this meeting 5th October)

All at the meeting agreed that these previous actions have been undertaken.

HPA Review

JR then introduced Dr Monk so that he could give an appraisal of the Measham Odour.

Dr Monk (HPA) gave an assessment of the pollutant and its likely effects on the health of the people in Measham and the surrounding areas. Dr Monk outlined from 3 candidates:

- Dust/ Particulate
- Biological Hazard
- Chemical Hazard

that the odour problem in Measham is most likely to be the result of a Chemical Hazard. This did not dismiss a Biological Hazard entirely, it was just that the position of the lagoons at AB Produce are outside the range a bio hazard is likely to persist.

Anyone within a 250 metres radius of the lagoons could in fact be subject to a bio-hazard; this would include visitors to the site and of course any employees working there. It was thought that all residents are in excess of this range and as a result any bugs associated with a bio-hazard would drop out of the air within the stated radius.

Dr Monk also stated that outside a range of 250m it is very difficult to identify where the bugs came from as any measurement at this point would include bugs from other sources or noise as he put it.

The Chemical Hazard is more of a problem as it is caused by a break down of starch by bacteria which generates a gas. This gas is likely to be released from the lagoons when the gasses rise to the top, this may be the result of heating during the day or other heating/cooling actions in the evening. This would in part explain the high number of odour reports in the early hours of the morning and again in the afternoon.

Chemical hazards have been known to affect people in different ways and can cause:

- fatigue or tiredness
- nausea
- sore eyes
- sore throat
- breathing problems

Chemical hazards can be particularly problematic for high risk individuals and includes the older generation and people already suffering with lung diseases, COPD etc. The HPA once again re-iterated their earlier advice that people who believe they have a health issue related to the odour need to raise this with their local GP. The GPs have been informed by the HPA and should be monitoring any incidents and passing this on to the HPA.

At this time the HPA stated that local GPs have not reported anything out of the ordinary although we guess that is mainly due to fact that many people would not wish to bother their local GP. That said only reports to the GP are being monitored by the HPA.

Although the problem may have been in the village for the past 9 years or more this may be too short to find any causal link between a hazard such as the Odour from AB Produce and any health issues in the local population.

Question were also raised concerning flies and although Dr Monk agreed that they are nasty things and can carry disease as we are not dealing with a disease then the flies could not be a carrier. No one was sure why we may have had a sudden increase in the number of flies and Dr Monk did not feel that there was anything worth pursuing with this matter.

The Chemical Hazard is highly directional as it will be carried on any wind. This was confirmed by Clare Proudfoot (CP) by the monitoring that NWLDC had performed. This is also backed by CATS stats which show that post codes affected match the wind direction that day.

As already stated the heating effects of the day are likely to contribute to the intensity of the chemical hazard. This is perhaps why in winter months that the problem is considerably less apparent only to return during warmer months.

A question concerning the make up of the chemical in the pools was made in that are they added to the cleaning process by AB Produce. CP and Dr Monk agreed that this was not the case and that the process was a natural break down of the starch materials in the vegetables. However the level of concentration in the lagoons is above normal levels and can in its current state cause problems.

A further question asked if a chemical could be added to the lagoons to neutralise the problem, the answer to this was that currently this is not practical or necessarily possible.

Dr Monk was asked to clarify the situation and he agreed in summing up that we are most likely to be experiencing a Chemical Hazard and that through prolonged or intense exposure this could be a health hazard particularly to vulnerable groups.

Report from Minna Haines and Clare Proudfoot

Minna Haines (MH) the environmental officer for NWLDC reported back on the months monitoring which was conducted by 4 environmental health officers in up to 12 locations in the area using a scale of 1-5 (5 is the worst). Officers reported that they have been monitoring at all times of the day, some evenings and weekends.

In the last month they had recorded 35 complaints from 20 different people. They said that the problem was very sporadic and agreed that it moved with the wind and very often changed in intensity. The highest recorded reading by their officers was a 4.

MH and her team did not feel that the problem matched their conditions for a statutory nuisance. They were also unwilling to provide information to detail what level and frequency would in fact constitute a nuisance.

(Editorial: the report matched people's expectation of the council as expressed in the meeting that followed this presentation. So although the council have not discovered something they consider a statutory nuisance the residents present were not happy with this finding. This can be explained partly because of the weather and of course the current season).

Report from John Richardson

JR reported information received from AB Produce following meeting.

JR stated that following our last meeting Minna Haines and Clare Proudfoot visited AB Produce (ABP). ABP identified the source of the problem has being the lagoons. They currently have 8 lagoons of which 4 are being used to store water from their cleaning process. These 4 lagoons are filled with water that has been treated by newly installed machinery. This machinery reduces the solids content to around 0.01% which can be considered to be almost clean water.

The other 4 lagoons have more solid waste and were used in the early days of the operation. Two of these lagoons are full of slurry which has high solids content whilst a further 2 have what was called partial solids.

These solids have broken down and been causing the odour problem. ABP have licenses in place with the Environmental Agency to deal with two of these directly and would like to extend this to the other 2 lagoons.

ABP will dig out the lagoons following the recent harvest activities and spread this across the land and then plough this in.

The dig out should commence once the weather permits and the target soil saturation levels fall to an acceptable level in compliance with EA requirements. This activity should commence in the next 3 weeks and take around 7 to 10 days to complete again weather permitting.

Future practise of removing solids from the water before it is stored in the lagoons and removing peelings for animal feed and then taking these solids off site will reduce the problem in future.

JR also stated that ABP have asked a small number of locals together with the council officials to visit the site post the dig out and to meet with them to discuss the matter in full.

CATS have also agreed to meet with the council officers again 3 months after the dig to report on progress.

CATS Members Only Meeting

Thanks to Adrian for his web site as this has allowed us to capture our own statistics proving that the smell is more persistent than we first thought and that it was very much dependent upon the wind direction. It has also logged over 100 reports in the period of September from some 18 households.

The comments on Twitter have been a little low however we have had some great feedback on Facebook and it has been mainly consistent with our own view although some people have persisted in thinking that we are campaigning against cat smell, or dog excrement of course our campaign is the seriously ghastly and persistent smell coming from AB Produce.

CATS members agreed to follow up all the points raised in the meeting and to accept the request for a meeting with AB Produce following the dig operations.

CATS members also agreed that it would be necessary to continue monitoring now and for the foreseeable future in order to make sure that the problem has in deed been rectified and that the corrective actions planned do in fact achieve their intended goal of removing the odour problem from the village.

CATS also agreed that it is desirable that more people attend the next meeting.

Posters were distributed to those attending and a leaflet drop was agreed in time for the next meeting, all attending agreed to help with distribution of the leaflets.

CATS would also like to thank the District Councillors for their support as well as the recent announcement by the Parish Council to back our campaign. We would also like to thank members of the press including the Ashby/ Coalville and Swadlincote Times, Burton Mail and Leicester Mercury as well as Measham's own Measham Messenger for their articles.

Next meeting To Be Advised.