

Report to Overview and Scrutiny – Six Monthly review December 2008

Purpose of report.....	1
Background	1
Progress on the Project	2
Open Day	2
Liaison with residents & groups in the area	2
Odour Monitoring	3
Complaints.....	3
Monitoring	4
Odour Management Plan.....	4
Environment Agency	4
Conclusion.....	5
Recommendation	5
Appendix – Recommendations Overview and Scrutiny 11 November 2008.....	6

Purpose of report

This report is to update the Committee with information concerning the Billing Waste Water Treatment Plant. The recommendations made the committee to Cabinet in November 2008 are reproduced in the Appendix and cross-referenced in the text.

Background

Since the last report to the Committee planning consent has been granted for the construction of an addition to the sludge treatment process. The new plant is referred to as a Monsal plant and this provides enhanced sludge treatment so as to provide a more useful sludge cake that can be used directly on land. Currently the cake has to be stored for several months on site before it can be sent for spreading on agricultural land. The cake produced by the new process is expected to be much less odorous than the current product.

The inclusion of the new works requires modifications to the existing process that are expected to reduce the odour emission from the process as a whole by approximately 30%.

Construction of the new plant has been underway for several months and should be finished by September or October 2009.

We are currently working with Anglian Water to finalise the noise and odour control schemes required by the planning consent.

A visit was made to a similar Monsal Plant at Kings Lyn recently to try to progress work on compliance with the noise control condition and this is currently in hand. AW has advised us that their more detailed proposals for the Odour Control Scheme will be provided by the end of March.

Progress on the Project

The construction works appears to be well advanced. The ancillary work to provide increased sludge thickening capacity, replacement of primary de-sludging pumps, installation of iron salt dosing plant, closure of the primary settlement chambers and covering the import sludge holding tank should be completed and begin commissioning in May - June 2009 (Recommendation 7 and 8 below).

In addition to the above the rising main from Earls Barton, that operates intermittently, has been provided with an extension so that it discharges below the surface at the inlet works. This was done to try to reduce intermittent incidents of strong odour reportedly affecting the inlet area. Further complaints concerning this have not been received.

Open Day

The Works have not had an open day and there are no plans for one in the immediate future (Recommendation 8 below).

There is a considerable amount of construction work across the whole site and AW felt that an open day would expose people to potential risk. It is always difficult to control large numbers of people and the risk would be magnified because of the construction work.

Liaison with residents & groups in the area

Anglian Water held an open meeting at Ecton Village Hall on 5th February 2008.

Mr Hilsdon (Plant Manager) attended a meeting of Cogenhoe & Whiston council on 14th April 2008 to discuss the new sludge treatment centre

Anglian water has produced and distributed locally two newsletters about what is happening at Gt. Billing STW (they have also been e-mailed to Ecton and Cogenhoe & Whiston councils), a third newsletter will be produced soon. Copies of the newsletters are attached.

Mr Hilsdon, the Works manager has provided the following information regarding numbers of complaints made direct to Anglian Water.

In the Calendar year of 2008, we received 37 odour complaints. Most of these were directly from customers to our Call Centre but some were passed to me by yourself [Northampton Borough Council] as a result of you receiving them from members of the public.

Action taken with every complaint received is

- 1. Check site records book & site odour spray log book for any potential cause of odour. Ensure that repairs for odour control plant breakdowns are given a high priority*
- 2. Check for any work on site (e.g. movement of sludge cake etc) that may cause odour*
- 3. Contact customer by telephone & discuss their complaint, ask if further feedback is required*
- 4. Send written response if requested*

Odour Monitoring

Regular checks are carried out (6 days per week) by Anglian Water on the odour control equipment on site and log sheets are completed detailing any issues found or any changes made. Any necessary actions or repairs are carried out as detailed in the Odour Management Plan. We would ask to see these logs when we visit.

Anglian Water personnel from Peterborough using odour-measuring equipment carry out odour surveys across the whole site. It is understood that these surveys have been carried out on four occasions this year (Recommendation 8 below).

As well as these surveys, the local team carry portable gas monitors that can be used for odour monitoring if necessary. Although the portable detectors do not measure very low concentrations of gas AW consider that they are a very good indicator if odour levels are liable to rise to detectable levels.

Complaints

Since the petitions received around the last O&S meeting there have been a total of 27 complaints.

3 were the return of diary sheets

People returning diary sheets were contacted and have been requested to continue logging incidents.

3 were from outside the Borough (Ecton 2, Cogenhoe 1)

Complaints from outside the Borough were passed on the relevant Local Authority. No observations have been carried out at locations outside the borough. Monitoring at these locations is the responsibility of the Local Authority for that area.

By month, there were:

June – 5

July – 15 (6 concerning an incident around 1 – 3 July; 7 concerning an incident around the 24, 25 July)

August – 1

September – 2 (1 Diary Sheet)

October – 1 (diary sheet)

Monitoring

In 2008 a total of 80 off-site observations have been carried out around the works, mainly pro-actively when weather conditions were considered suitable or in response to a complaint (Recommendation 3 below).

During the observations any smell was rated on a scale of 1-4 each for intensity, hedonic tone (or offensiveness) and persistence. So each observation could score up to a maximum of 12. Analysis of the observations gave the following result.

Max	Ave	STD	Count
10	2.2	2.7	80

It can be seen that the scores were generally in the lower quartile. The 10 score was noted in September at Billing Garden Village and is thought to be due to the movement of sludge cake from the bays, which was observed during an extensive site visit the day before (Recommendation 10 below). The Plant manager was advised of the situation and asked to investigate. No complaints were received from the occupants of the Village concerning the incident.

On one occasion a score of 6 had been noted around one complainant's house. When approached concerning the incident it was stated that the odour had been observed but it was not considered worth noting on the diary sheet.

It was noted that odour was more detectable as temperatures rose. The incident that provoked several complaints in early July was due to maintenance on the Primary Sludge Tanks (PSTs).

Other incidents after that were due to the movement of sludge cake. This should be affected for the better when the new Enhanced Sludge Treatment Plant (Monsal Plant) comes on line in September 2009.

Other incidents were attributed to the sludge buffer tank, which has now been covered and is to be provided with odour abatement.

At other times, particularly in the warmest weather it was difficult to pin the smell down to one particular source.

Generally, the smell from the works was found to variable and at times elusive. It was not found to be an all-pervasive presence at any one location.

Odour Management Plan

A revised odour management Plan has been produced that is substantially traceable to the Code of Practice and this will be monitored. The latest version is attached.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has recently issued a Waste Management Licence (WML) for the processing of imported sludge on the site. The process boundary takes in just about everything of any odour producing significance, except the Primary Settlement Tanks. The Licence is required due to the proposed quantities of imported sludge.

When the Monsal plant comes on line this will be included in the licence/permit and its Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant will be subject to an Environmental Permit (EP) in its own right.

Premises subject to Waste Management Licences or Environmental Permits are immune from Statutory Nuisance Action and, therefore, the EA are responsible for controlling noise and smell on these sites. A meeting has been held recently with the Environment Agency regarding liaison over the site.

Since part of the site falls outside the Process Boundary (the Primary Settlement Tanks) we still have a responsibility to investigate complaints. Environment Agency will be notified of all complaints we receive and vice versa.

Odour and noise on Licensed or Permitted Sites are controlled by means of process guidance notes and conditions and don't involve the need to demonstrate nuisance. The conditions generally require that odour and noise do not give rise to "reasonable cause for annoyance", which is a higher standard than nuisance that requires the situation to be more than merely annoying.

We are liaising with Anglian Water over the Planning Conditions and will continue to monitor the odour proactively within the Borough and collate the data.

Conclusion

The observations indicate that the works to be carried out in association with the construction of the Monsal Plant should help control the sources of odour on site. However, the effect will not be fully felt until the plant is completed and running normally, which will be September 2009 at the earliest, which means the effects won't be fully appreciated until summer 2010.

The observations indicate that the smell is not bad enough to be a nuisance and warrant the service of a Notice at the moment but the situation will be kept under review.

The recent involvement of the Environment Agency in licensing the site means that only odour emissions from the Primary Settlement Tanks can be subject to Statutory Nuisance Action, odour from other parts of the site should be controlled by the Environment Agency.

We will be liaising with the Environment Agency over odour and noise issues.

Recommendation

The situation is kept under review by the Environmental Health Department and action taken as need arises.

Appendix – Recommendations Overview and Scrutiny 11 November 2008

This Working Party recommends that;

1. It has seen sufficient evidence to acknowledge that the work of Northampton Borough Council's Environmental Health Officers has been robust and professional. To ensure continued improvements to the service, the Environmental Health Department carries out periodic reviews to ensure that their working practices continue to be in line with national standards and Government guidance;
2. The Working Party considers that currently there is insufficient evidence to serve an Abatement Notice;
3. Notwithstanding the above statement, given the factors affecting the possibility of any potential future nuisance due to the nature of the activity and the many causative factors, it is recommended that a robust proactive continuous monitoring regime is put in place by the Council's Environmental Health Department;
4. The evidence collected by this working party is forwarded onto West Northamptonshire Development Corporation for their information in the consideration of any planning applications submitted by Anglian Water;
5. The evidence presented in this report be noted, and
6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Two recommends to Cabinet the findings and recommendations of this report for adoption.
7. That Officers be instructed to monitor the iron salts releasing programme
8. That Officers be instructed to contact Anglian Water requesting details when the iron salts releasing programme was installed, the dates that the consultants will be visiting the site and details of the open day.
9. That a copy of the report be forwarded to all neighbouring Local Authorities.
10. This Working Party notes that: In addition to point (3) Anglian Water is and will continue to take appropriate action to manage the odour, working closely with the Council's Environmental Health Officers;
11. The Council's Environmental Health Officers are contacting each petitioner within the Northampton Borough Boundary, and forward the rest of the petition to Wellingborough Borough Council for action according to their processes.

NB - Recommendations 4, 9 and 11 have been carried out.