

From Linda Whitebread on behalf of the South Cambridgeshire Green Party to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

"I was surprised to see that the Council and other public bodies are sharing a website with the contractors carrying out the remediation work, rather than taking a more detached and regulatory stance. It also appears that the contractors are doing their own monitoring. Are these normal practices, and if so, how do the public bodies confirm that the measurements made by the contractor are done correctly?"

The website you refer to is hosted and controlled by this Council as a means of providing information about the Bayer site to local residents. Whilst the developer and contractor share information, such as site photographs etc, they have their own web pages in relation to the site through their respective company's websites.

It is normal practice for contractors to monitor their own work and this is a requirement of their Environmental Permit, which is regulated by the Environment Agency. The monitoring is verified by Atkins as an independent consultant and all of the analysis is carried out at an independent and accredited laboratory. All of the results are provided to this Council, the Environment Agency and the HPA for review, in addition they are all published on the dedicated website. SCDC and the Environment Agency also carry out random visits to monitor and validate procedures as well as any complaints.

Supplementary question, asked at the Council meeting:

"All agree that the land needs to be cleaned up and it is a legitimate of the Council to require the developer to make sure the work is done before permission is granted to build houses. However, we are not happy with the shared website. It creates a conflict of interests. It is unfortunate to say that Council officers are working closely with contractors and are happy with the spot checks. The perception is that the Council is hand-in-glove with the developers. Will the Council consider detaching itself from the developers, using a separate website with a link to the contractor?"

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder noted Ms Whitebread's concerns and said that the Council was willing to consider these suggestions and would see if it were practical for all concerned to implement.