

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services)

9 November 2010

FORMER BAYER CROPSCIENCE SITE, HAUXTON

Purpose and Recommendation

1. To update the portfolio holder following complaints received relating to site remediation activities at the former agrochemical works in Hauxton. This is an item for information only – the Portfolio Holder is asked to note the content of the report and the level of resources the council and public agencies are continuing to allocate to this issue.

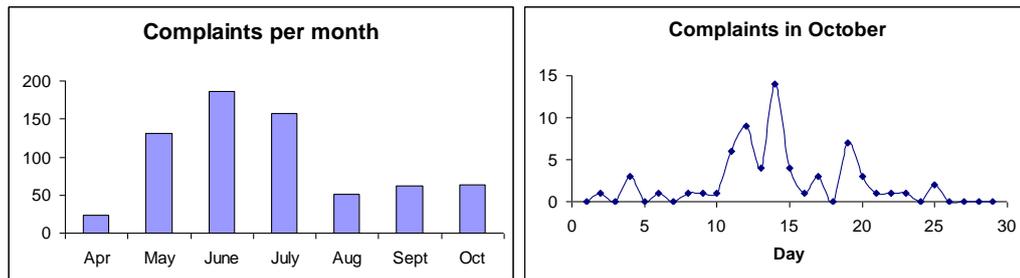
Background

2. The Former Bayer CropScience site is located along the A10 on the outskirts of Hauxton. Since the 1940s the site was used for the production of agrochemicals including pesticides and herbicides, which over time have contaminated the soil and ground water. Due to the risk posed to the groundwater and nearby watercourses, the site was determined as Contaminated Land in 2003 by SCDC under Part IIa of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and designated a Special Site for regulation by the Environment Agency. The site must now be remediated and cannot be left in its current form as it poses a potential threat to the Riddy Brook and River Cam.
3. Remediation of the site started in March 2010 and is expected to take approximately 80 weeks. These works are due for completion in September 2011. The process is regulated by a number of conditions imposed by the planning consent and also by an Environmental Permit which is controlled by the Environment Agency.
4. The remediation process requires the soil to be excavated. There are odours associated with the contaminants in the soil. As these contaminated soils are dug they can release odours that had previously been trapped underground. The first complaints were received by the council/ on April 8th 2010.

Considerations / Implications

5. Whilst the local authority retain the duty to investigate allegations of statutory nuisance including odour nuisance, owing to the process being regulated by an environmental permit the primary control is by enforcement of the conditions attached to the permit and therefore the Environment Agency is the responsible body. A procedure to direct complaints to the EA hotline was set up so that a central record could be compiled. Since the October Portfolio holder update there have been 64 reports of odour in the surrounding area with 22 of these reports mentioning health effects.
6. Although the number of complaints appears to have risen slightly for October, a closer look shows that the majority were received between the 11th and 15th. This coincided with the site moving very odorous material onto the forced ventilation beds and prevailing winds towards Harston. The spike of calls on the 19th were investigated

by the Environment Agency and assessed to be caused by the odour suppressant system (which was subsequently adjusted).



7. NHS Cambridgeshire, the commissioning body of the local National Health Service, are continuing to monitor the number of patients who have been seen by the Harston and Shelford GP surgeries. No new patients have contacted their GPs with complaints believed to be related to the remediation works.
8. Results of monitoring data for volatile organic compounds are forwarded to the Health Protection Agency as they become available for assistance in interpretation of results and advice relating to exposure and potential health effects. From assessing the available monitoring data, the HPA's following advice has not altered: "It is unlikely that emissions from the site are going to cause any short term health effects due to the direct effect of the chemicals themselves (such as runny nose, sore throat, breathing difficulties etc) or indeed any longer term health effects".
9. Following HauxAir's request to use a different type of air monitoring tube, trials were undertaken during September for both the 28-day passive long-term sampling and for 14 days of 24-hour active short-term sampling. The laboratory analysis of these tubes has shown that they both gave similar results and therefore the advice of the HPA remains unchanged.
10. The six-month investigation by EHOs into the complaints of odour has concluded that this does not constitute a statutory nuisance. In the course of this investigation, over 60 visits were made to the area at various times throughout the day and night, seven days a week. 48 residents who complained to the Council were asked to complete odour diaries and 8 residents returned them. All residents who complained to the Council have been sent a letter advising them of the findings. Officers will continue to oversee works at the site and it remains the council's intention to ensure that measures are put in place to reduce odours as far as practicable on site. Unless there is a substantial alteration in circumstances with remediation works on site, and resultant increases in intensity and frequency of odour occurrences, this investigation is now concluded.
11. Two pro-active press releases have been issued since the last portfolio holder meeting. The first gave results of the additional monitoring undertaken following concerns raised by HauxAir and the second the culmination of the investigation into statutory nuisance. These resulted in two radio interviews involving Graham Ford of HauxAir and Kevin Rutterford of the EA. The news story was also covered by Cambridge News and BBC Online.
12. Cambridge News also ran an article about the Consultative Committee entitled "Villagers barred from Clean Up Meeting". Harrow Estates supplied a comment to the paper.

13. The Consultative Committee took place on 20th October and the elected representatives will release notes of this in due course. These will include an update on works completed so far, now 30 weeks into the 80-week project, the outcome of monitoring with the alternative tubes and a brief update about future plans.
14. Concerns were raised (through a media query) about foam found on the River Cam, downstream of the site on Thursday 28th October. The Environment Agency investigated this and found that the foam was observed downstream and upstream of the site – suggesting that pollution from the site is unlikely to be the cause. The foam has been attributed to a natural occurrence (decomposing algae/diatoms can produce a soap-like compound). The paper has so far not published this story.
15. Following questions raised at the previous portfolio holder meeting regarding pipe work to the treatment works the current arrangements have been clarified. Pipes taking water from the east side of the A10 to the wastewater treatment plant on the west side of the A10 are encased in a covered concrete box. The concrete box is backfilled with granular activated carbon which would absorb any contamination should any leakages occur. The pipework falls toward a sump that is checked periodically as any leakages would cause water to collect in the sump and therefore indicate a break in the pipe.
16. For the next few weeks, work on site will continue with excavating across the first half of the site and the treatment of soils already excavated. Apart from a few hotspots of contamination, the most highly impacted areas have now been excavated. Once soils reach agreed targets they will be reinstated or if the targets cannot be achieved they will be removed from site to a suitably licensed landfill site.
17. Planning conditions require a report to be submitted detailing a proposed method statement for dealing with the bentonite wall following initial investigation. This is anticipated in the next few months and is a significant stage since the bentonite wall can only be safely investigated once the contaminated soils have been cleared behind it.
18. The next consultative committee is due to be held on 16th December 2010

Conclusions / Summary

19. The site will be closely monitored for the duration of the works and the multi agency group will continue to support the council to address the health concerns expressed by the local community.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

www.scambs.gov.uk/bayersite

Media Monitoring Report compiled by Emma Lowther, Communications Manager.
Response to HauxAir 25/10/10.

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