

# Environment Agency Briefing - Saxon Pit, Whittlesey

28 April 2021

## Community Briefing

We are providing this briefing to share an update on the current situation at Saxon Pit, Whittlesey and to inform you of changes to permit applications we have received for the site.

### Background

In order to fulfil the required stabilisation project to backfill the excavation void of the former brickworks with inert waste and soils, an environmental permit for Deposit for Recovery operations was issued by the Environment Agency on 30 January 2012. Over time this permit has transferred to different operators, but since the 26 October 2017 it has been with the current permit holder and operator East Midlands Waste Management Ltd.

Following the identification of significant visual contamination across the surface of the excavation void in February 2018, further investigations have revealed the illegal acceptance and disposal of 122,858 tonnes of Automotive Shredder Residue (ASR)\* by the current operator buried within the void between October 2017 and February 2018. This excludes wastes which may have been accepted and buried prior to October 2017.

\* ASR is a waste by-product of the metal recycling and end-of-life vehicle sector following shredding, shearing or fragmentising and is mostly comprised of mixed plastics, foam, rubber and glass.

Since allowing all unpermitted waste to remain buried within the eastern buttress subject to strict conditions, further investigatory work has taken place to obtain sufficient representative information to demonstrate that subject to the completion of the required works, there will be no adverse environmental risk.

### What we are doing

All further investigatory works have now been completed and a final monitoring report identifying gas levels and water ingress entering the pit was produced in March 2021. Following our interpretation of the report and technical discussions with consultants acting on behalf of the operator, the findings of the report have now been initially approved. We are now in the process of agreeing the necessary remediation works and how they will be implemented. Works are now scheduled to start from April 2021 subject to conditions. The works will include:

a). the installation of a French drain at the crest of the pit and an impermeable below ground clay plug along the eastern and south eastern boundaries positioned between the watercourse and the pit to a depth of approximately five metres penetrating down into the Oxford Clay to prevent or minimise ingress;

- b). the deposit of suitable soils onto the eastern buttress to include an engineered 'functioning layer';
- c). to extend the existing monitoring boreholes within the waste mass above the levels of the restoration layer; and
- d). to monitor gas levels throughout the duration of the works.

Although high concentrations of methane and carbon dioxide were recorded at the monitoring boreholes within the waste mass, the low ground gas flow rates indicate that ground gas produced by degradation activity is low. No significant concentrations of methane or carbon dioxide were recorded at the monitoring boreholes located to the east and south of the buttress on the perimeter of the site. The monitoring data in the boreholes external to the site shows that there is no migration of the gas from the waste off site towards the residential properties to the east.

Based on all the information available it is considered that no active ground gas control measures are necessary within the buttress. It is now considered that a very low permeability capping layer has the potential to increase the pressure of the ground gas contained in the site which could increase the potential for migration away from the site. It is recommended that the final capping and cover layer placed over the buttress material should no longer include an engineered low permeability cap. The capping layer should be a 'functional layer' to encourage surface water runoff, to separate the restored ground surface from the underlying waste and to support the growing media necessary to achieve the approved restoration habitats.

Once complete, it is anticipated that all permanently required monitoring infrastructure and containment measures will be engineered and incorporated into the final restoration scheme. This infrastructure will ensure the long term monitoring of gas and leachate will take place. Once fully landscaped, the restoration scheme should provide ecological benefit including for example standing water environments, reed beds, grassland and scrub habitat. The site may be partially open for public access.

In addition to the above site-specific activity, Sir James Bevan our CEO met with Stephen Barclay MP on the 16 April 2021 and provided assurances that the Saxon Pit site was being treated as a priority. He also assured him there would be as much transparency as possible with the local community about action to manage the environmental and health risks at the site.

On the 19 April 2021 we met with Environmental Health at Fenland District Council. Officers from Fenland District Council were reassured with the level of commitment, priority and ongoing technical scrutiny being given to this matter by the Environment Agency.

## New applications

Our last community briefing informed you that our National Permitting Service (NPS) had received three further permit applications in relation to Saxon Pit.

The first is a bespoke application to operate an installation to accept and process 500,000 tonnes of non-hazardous Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA) and inert waste by Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd. This application is still currently being determined by NPS.

We had also received two permit applications from Materials Movement Ltd acting on behalf of East Midlands Waste Management Ltd.

The first was for a mobile plant deployment to bring soils and contaminated material, substances or products to site for treatment namely soils contaminated with asbestos, heavy metals and hydrocarbons. The applicant also proposed to encapsulate ASR and heavy metal contaminated soils in cement or lime to produce an inert Hydraulically Bound Material (HBM). The applicant has withdrawn this application and has submitted a new bespoke installation application to accept and treat contaminated waste soils instead. This application will be advertised on our website listed by postcode at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/environmental-permitting-waste-installations-and-radioactive-substances-activity-notices-of-applications-made>.

The second application is to discharge effluent from the onsite storage lagoon to the Kings Dyke watercourse. This discharge permit application will also be advertised on our website listed by postcode at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/environmental-permitting-waste-installations-and-radioactive-substances-activity-notices-of-applications-made>.

We will update you further when both consultation periods commence.

## How you can get in touch

We will keep you advised on matters relating to this site through further briefings, but in the meantime if you have any queries or would like further information please contact us at: [Enquiries\\_EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Enquiries_EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Iceni House, Cobham Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9JD or Brampton Office, Bromholme Lane, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 4NE