

Environment Agency Briefing - Saxon Pit, Whittlesey

21 June 2021

Community Briefing

We are providing this briefing to share an update on the current situation at Saxon Pit, Whittlesey and to keep you informed 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

Following our last community briefing in April 2021, the final remediation and restoration proposals have been formerly approved. Works are now scheduled to commence from 21 June 2021 subject to conditions. The works will include:

- a). to extend the existing monitoring boreholes within the waste mass above the levels of the restoration layer and to deposit soils immediately around each borehole to protect them from damage;
- b). the deposit of material onto the eastern buttress to form a capping layer followed by a restoration layer placed above the capping layer needed to provide a growth medium to support the proposed habitats at the restored site;

- c). 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; and
- d). to monitor gas levels, surface water, groundwater and the onsite lagoon throughout the duration of the works to different required frequencies.

The capping layer will be engineered as a 'functional layer' to encourage surface water runoff and to separate the restored ground surface from the underlying waste.

Once complete, all permanently required monitoring infrastructure and containment measures will be engineered and incorporated into the final restoration scheme. This infrastructure will ensure long term monitoring can 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.

The operator is continuing to accept waste on site mostly soils to be temporarily stored pending their use and incorporation into the final remediation and restoration on the eastern buttress. These soils are derived from green field sites where there is no suspicion of contamination or from clean, uncontaminated sources of construction and demolition waste.

We are continuing to liaise with all relevant stakeholders including Environmental Health at Fenland District Council.

New applications

Our National Permitting Service (NPS) are continuing their technical assessment of the submitted application by Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd to accept and process 500,000 tonnes of non-hazardous Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA) and inert waste.

Our technical assessment of two additional permit applications received from Materials Movement Ltd to accept and treat contaminated waste soils and to discharge effluent from the onsite lagoon to a watercourse is yet to commence. Both applications will be advertised on our website and we will update you when the 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

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