

Environment Agency Briefing - Saxon Pit, Whittlesey

July 2022

Community Briefing

We are providing this briefing to update you on the current situation at Saxon Pit, Whittlesey and to keep you informed of any changes.

Background

This is a shortened description, please see previous versions for the full description. The most recent version was published in January 2022.

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

Investigations revealed the acceptance and disposal of a substantial amount of non-permitted waste. Since allowing all non-permitted waste to remain buried within the eastern buttress, subject to strict conditions, we've undertaken further investigatory work to obtain sufficient information to demonstrate that, subject to the completion of the required works, there will be no adverse environmental risk.

What has been happening?

Since our last community briefing in January 2022, the operator is continuing to accept waste on site comprised mostly of 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.

Work has now commenced in phase two of five along the eastern boundary. Phase one along the southern boundary is approximately 95% complete with an approximate one metre of suitable final restoration cover required as a growth medium. Phase two is the closest phase to residential receptors along Priors Road. We continue to receive reports of noise and dust. Several reports of noise are indicative of noise generated by a bulldozer used to spread and level material once deposited. We would like to assure you we are doing everything we can to try to minimise noise from the ongoing remediation and restoration works.

The overall required remediation and restoration works involve:

a) depositing of material onto the eastern buttress to increase contour levels prior to the placement of a restoration layer to provide a growth medium to support the proposed habitats at the restored site;

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- b) extending the existing monitoring boreholes within the waste mass above the levels of the restoration layer and depositing soils immediately around each borehole to protect them from damage;
- c) installing 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 of surface and groundwater; and
- d) monitoring of gas levels, surface water, groundwater and the onsite lagoon throughout the duration of the works to different required frequencies.

The final restoration layer within phase one is likely to be completed prior to the installation of the below ground impermeable clay plug to prevent or minimise water ingress entering pit. This will involve the engineering of an estimated 1600 cubic metres of suitable compacted clay within an excavated trench to a depth of approximately five metres. This will unfortunately involve vegetation clearance around the site perimeter which will be minimised as much as possible.

The deposited material is engineered as a 'functional layer' to encourage surface water runoff and to separate the restored ground surface from the underlying waste.

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 that the long-term monitoring of gas and leachate will take place. Once fully landscaped, the restoration scheme should provide ecological benefit, including standing water environments, reed beds, grassland, and scrub habitat. We are informed by the operator that their intention is to allow public access for walking and recreation on part of the site.

Since remediation and restoration work started in June 2021, gas levels continue to be monitored monthly. In summary, elevated gas levels continue to remain high within the buried waste of the buttress and very low outside the site at the perimeter. Should gas levels at the perimeter rise to levels that cause concern, the current infilling works will cease whilst further investigations are undertaken to try to identify the cause and source.

The current planning permission expires in November 2022. The operator is expected to apply to Cambridgeshire County Council to formerly request an extension to the current permission for a period of at least two years to complete the required works.

Our officers continue to carry out regular unannounced site inspections as well offsite monitoring.

We are continuing to liaise with all relevant stakeholders including Environmental Health at Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council Planning Department. This includes providing all monitoring reports to Environmental Health at Fenland District Council and liaising with officers as necessary to ensure all complaints received are investigated by the relevant regulatory authority.

Other operations

Although not formally commissioned, operations at Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd are increasing. Environment Agency officers continue to conduct regular inspections of activities on site. We continue to receive reports of dust and noise from this operation. We are working closely with the operator to try to address these issues.

East Midlands Waste Management Ltd also carry out the screening of scrap metal under a T9 exemption from requiring a permit. This activity is separate from the ongoing remediation and restoration scheme. We continue to receive reports of noise and dust which may be directly associated with this activity. We are also working closely with the operator to try to minimise the impact of this activity.

AW Jenkinson (Forestry Products) Ltd process non-waste forestry and timber materials. We have received reports of odour and noise from this activity. As the operator does not currently accept waste, the Environment Agency has no regulatory control over this operation. Any reports associated with this activity should be directed to Environmental Health at Fenland District Council.

Permitting

Our National Permitting Service (NPS) have received an enhanced pre-application request on behalf of East Midlands Waste Management Ltd for permitting advice for a proposed discharge application. This proposal is to discharge treated effluent from the onsite storage lagoon to the Kings Dyke watercourse. This is not a formal permit application, it is only to obtain permitting advice should the operator decide to submit a formal application for our determination. Should we receive a formal application, we will notify you of how you can comment on the application as part of the consultation process.

How you can get in touch

We will keep you updated 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 \[EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk\]\(mailto:Enquiries_EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk\)](mailto:Enquiries_EastAnglia@environment-agency.gov.uk) or write to us at:

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