

Environment Agency Briefing - Saxon Pit, Whittlesey

March 2023

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.

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 July 2022, the operator is continuing to accept waste on site comprised mostly of soils to be deposited and incorporated into the final remediation and restoration on the eastern buttress. This material is derived from green field sites where there is no suspicion of contamination or from clean, uncontaminated sources of construction and demolition waste.

Phase two of five along the eastern boundary is now approximately 50% complete. Ongoing work also includes part of phase three. Phase two is the closest phase to residential receptors along Priors Road. We would like to assure you we are doing everything we can to try to minimise noise and dust from the ongoing remediation and restoration works. 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.

The overall required remediation and restoration works involve:

- a) depositing 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;
- b) extending the existing monitoring boreholes within the waste mass above the levels of the restoration layer;

- c) installing a French drain at the crest of the pit along the eastern boundary to intercept surface water from the adjacent residential area and an impermeable below ground clay plug along the south and south-eastern boundaries. This will be 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 deposited material is being engineered as a 'functional layer' to encourage surface water runoff and to separate the restored ground surface from the underlying waste.

The final restoration layer and cultivation of phase one is likely to be completed following 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.

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, gas levels continue to be elevated 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. One of the monitoring boreholes within the waste mass is currently blocked. Should the operator be unable to clear this blockage, a new borehole will be drilled within close proximity to the existing borehole.

A raised hardcore area used for the storage of HGV trailers and containers encroaches the permitted area. This area has now been cleared pending its removal from within the permitted area by 31 March 2023. This area will then be subject to the same level of remediation and restoration as the remaining eastern buttress.

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

Cambridgeshire County Council have formerly approved an extension to the current planning permission for a further two years and two months to complete the required works.

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.

Johnsons Aggregates & Recycling Ltd

We continue to receive complaints associated with activities taking place at Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd. Following two sets of independent noise monitoring, the results have highlighted the following key areas that require further noise mitigation:

- a) although decibel levels have been reduced, the trommel positioned at the front of building one requires further acoustic screening. It is the operator's intention to install an acoustic enclosure around the trommel subject to planning approval. Once granted, installation will begin;
- b) the dust extraction systems, in particular unit three is a significant contributing factor to overall noise generation. New ductwork and/or any other mitigation measures for the three extraction units are to be installed and are currently with a noise consultant pending approval. This will include the emission point for extraction unit three and its location in the building; and
- c) noise associated with maintenance activities such as high-pressure washing will not be carried out during the evenings.

Once the above mitigation measures have been implemented, the noise monitoring survey will be repeated. Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd continues to be committed in delivering the required work, as quickly and efficiently as reasonably practicable.

Other operations

AW Jenkinson (Forestry Products) Ltd process non-waste forestry and timber materials. We continue to receive 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) has received an application to discharge trade effluent from the onsite storage lagoon to the Kings Dyke watercourse. As part of our technical assessment and determination, this application will be advertised on our website for public consultation. We will notify you when this application is to be available for comment on our website.

How you can get in touch

From 10 March 2023, our principal regulatory officer for the site will be changing. 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: wasteregulationely@environment-agency.gov.uk or write to us at:

Waste Team, Ely office, Prickwillow Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4TX.