

Environment Agency Briefing - Saxon Pit, Whittlesey

February 2024

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 at Saxon Pit. This enables 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, and 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 March 2023, the operator has continued to accept waste on site comprising of appropriate soils and stones to be deposited and incorporated into the final remediation and restoration on the eastern buttress.

There are five phases to the restoration of the eastern buttress with the operator now working predominantly in phase 4. Phases 1, 2, and 3 are close to being completed with only the final levels needing to be profiled and then for a topsoil or peat enriched soil to provide a vegetative layer to be seeded with grasses and plant cover.

The operator is currently on course to complete the required restoration and stabilisation of the eastern buttress in line with the planning permission which is due to expire in November 2025.

The monitoring results for gas, groundwater and surface waters remain consistent and stable.

In October 2023, the operator installed a significant section of the impermeable clay plug around the south-eastern end of Saxon Pit.

What does the remediation and restoration work involve?

The overall remediation and restoration work involves the following key aspects:

- 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.

What is happening next and when?

The next key stage of the required mitigation measures is about to take place at the end of February and through March 2024. This involves extending the impermeable clay plug by about 50 metres and then installing the French drain.

As part of these works a very small number of small deciduous trees and shrubs will need to be removed along the route of where the French drain is to be installed. These small trees and shrubs will be cleared before the start of the nesting bird season and before they come into leaf.

The work to install the French drain will involve using a medium-sized tracked excavator with a 600mm wide bucket to dig a trench that will be lined with a geotextile impermeable membrane, a perforated land-drain and backfilled with gravel.

Residents on Priors Road may hear the sound of the excavator as it works on the crest of the eastern side of Saxon Pit. The operator will adhere to its operating hours as controlled by its planning permission by ensuring the works take place during the daytime only. It is anticipated that it will take no more than four weeks to extend the impermeable clay plug and install the French drain. The works are linear in nature with the excavator working along from the south-eastern corner of Saxon Pit moving towards the north-eastern corner.

The final restoration layer and cultivation of phase one is likely to be completed following the installation of the French drain. After that, the operator will look to complete the final restoration layer and cultivation of phase 2. Once Phase 1 and 2 are finished and cultivated, no further heavy plant and machinery will operate over these areas.

Relevant planning permission has been granted for a new HGV trailer storage area within Saxon Pit and the operator intends to remove and re-use the raised hardcore area that is encroaching on the permitted area as part of that development. This work is likely to start in or around May 2024.

Our officers continue to carry out regular unannounced site inspections as well as conducting offsite amenity monitoring. We will continue to review monitoring data to ensure the results remain stable.

Permitting

Our National Permitting Service (NPS) has now started the first part of its review of an application to discharge trade effluent and surface water 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

We will keep you updated on matters relating to this site through further briefings which we plan to post via a new Citizens Space page online. 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:

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