

Health report published on Saxon Pit industrial site

A report considering if there are any health concerns in relation to operations on a Whittlesey industrial site has returned its recommendations.

The Cambridgeshire County Council Public Health report into current operations at Saxon Pit makes several reassurances and suggests further evidence would be useful to fully assess other aspects.

The County Council's Public Health service instigated the risk assessment in response to public concerns about the site, off Peterborough Road.

Three businesses operate on or near the site: Johnsons Aggregate Recycling, dealing with the treatment of incinerator bottom ash; Forterra, manufacturing house bricks; and East Midlands Waste Management, importing waste to stabilise the pit face and with permission to recycle metal, the report says.

All emissions from the businesses are regulated through Environment Agency permits, and the report states that the site as a whole is operating at an expected level of permit compliance.

The risk assessment looked at potential risks to human health from emissions to air, land and water from current operations at Saxon Pit. The resulting report was drawn up with input from UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Environmental Health at Fenland District Council and the Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA), and with advice from the Environment Agency and Waste Planning Authority at Cambridgeshire County Council.

The report finds there are no identified risks to public health from:

- water from King's Dyke being used for livestock
- emissions from land (gas) from the site
- air quality in the location of Hallcroft Road (where monitoring data indicates air quality is good)

Further evidence would be beneficial to assess:

- air quality at the Saxon Pit boundary
- if there are ongoing noise or odour issues
- any cumulative health impacts, including on mental health.

Sally Cartwright, Director of Public Health at Cambridgeshire County Council, said:

"We are pleased to have carried out this work with our partners, which brings together all the available relevant data on the potential health impacts of these operations in the community.

"The assessment shows that the regulatory arrangements for the site with multiple activities is complex, and that understanding the combined effects on health can be challenging.

“The cumulative impacts on health and wellbeing need to be better understood and assessed, and we’re proposing further work to address that.

“We’re also keen to gather further evidence and data and a plan is in place to do that. We recognise that recommending further analysis, particularly around air quality, may cause concern. Our intention is the opposite. We want to strengthen the evidence base to provide further reassurance. Positively, the most verified data we have on air quality in Whittlesey from Hallcroft Road shows it to be in compliance with national air quality objectives. It’s important to note that overall air quality is not just impacted by industrial activity, it is also affected by other local sources including transport and domestic open fires and solid fuel stoves.

“We’d like to involve the community as we move forward, with plans to hold quarterly regulator meetings with residents and to establish a new larger group, including community representatives, to oversee the delivery and implementation of the recommendations arising from this assessment.”

The report makes the following recommendations from the Director of Public Health:

1. Regulators hold quarterly meetings with residents to provide updates and increase trust and collaboration between the community, operators, and regulators.
2. Public Health at Cambridgeshire County Council to work with residents on a cumulative community health impact assessment.
3. The Environment Agency (with support from Fenland District Council) to increase monitoring to ensure risks to human health from emissions to water remain low.
4. Multi-agency partners to work together to develop an air quality monitoring strategy to understand air pollution risk and the Environment Agency to ensure regular review of dust emission management plans.
5. Public Health at Cambridgeshire County Council to explore opportunities to strengthen policies and practices around waste and human health.

Public briefing sessions about the report are being held today (Tuesday 13 January) at 11am and 6pm via Microsoft Teams, with people who had previously raised issues and questions about activities at Saxon Pit having already been invited. To request the joining link please email PublicHealth.AdminTeam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

A future information event will be held for the wider community with details to be confirmed soon. Regular meetings will also be offered on an ongoing basis in line with the recommendations in the report.

Anyone with questions can visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/saxon-pit to see a list of answers to questions already raised. Further questions can be emailed to: health.protection@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Read the full report at: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/saxon-pit