

Briefing Note of:	Head of Environmental Health
Contact Officer:	Mike Walker
Telephone No:	01543-464480

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
22ND JANUARY 2014
THE FUTURE OF THE POPLARS LANDFILL SITE

1 Purpose of Briefing note

- 1.1 To provide an update on the future of the Poplars Landfill Site and background information on the Poplars Landfill Liaison Group

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the information provided by Biffa Waste Services Ltd and that in relation to the Poplars Landfill Liaison Group is noted

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Biffa Waste Services Ltd has provided a written response in relation to the future of Poplars Landfill Site
- 3.2 An explanation of the history of the Poplars Landfill Liaison Group and its purpose has been provided.

4 Detail

- 4.1 The future of the Poplars landfill Site forms part of the agreed Environment Policy Development work programme for the Municipal Year 2013-14.
- 4.2 Members requested that representatives of Biffa Waste Services Ltd, which operates the site, were invited to the appropriate Committee meeting to discuss issues in relation to the site.
- 4.3 Biffa has declined this invitation and has instead submitted a letter that summarises the principal issues and the Company's position. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 1.

Poplars landfill Liaison Group

- 4.4 The letter makes reference to the Poplars Landfill Liaison Meetings and this briefing note has been prepared to introduce to provide members with an understanding of the work of the Liaison Group.

History

- 4.5 The Liaison Group was established prior to the acquisition of the site by Biffa and is understood to have been in existence during the period when the site was regulated as part of the Local Authority Waste Disposal Company Regime.
- 4.6 Meetings were convened to consider "Progress and Purpose" issues in relation to operations at the site and initially the Group was made up of members and officers of Cannock Chase DC and Staffordshire, the site operator and the regulator.
- 4.7 Subsequently to address increasing concerns from local community, representatives of the following two residents/community groups were invited to the meetings – Rumer Hill Residents and Mill Green Residents

Current Situation

- 4.8 The current membership of the groups is drawn from officers of
Staffordshire County Council
- Waste Management
 - Planning Departments
- The Environment Agency (Regulator for the site)
Cannock Chase District Council Environmental Health
Biffa Waste Services Ltd
- Landfill Operations
 - Anaerobic Digester Plant Operations
 - Planning
- Residents Groups
- Rumer Hill
 - Mill Green
- Selected Councillors from Staffordshire CC, Cannock Chase DC and Norton Canes Parish Council.
- 4.9 Generally two meetings are held each year and the last one was in October 2013 and the next is due in March 2014. Additional meetings may be convened to consider emerging issues.
- 4.10 The topics considered continue to include:-
- A review of the response to previously raised issues
- Progress reports from the Landfill Site Manager and the AD Plant Manager
- Reports from
The Environment Agency, including a review of any complaints received

Environmental Health, again including records of complaints
SCC Planning and Waste Management Departments

An opportunity is also provided for members, officers and the residents representatives to raise any issues of concern. Efforts are made to provide a response either at the meeting or subsequently.

4.11 Recent issues have included:-

Mud and other deposits escaping from vehicles onto the surrounding highways
Odours from the AD Plant
Odours from the spreading of digestate from the AD Plant on local agricultural land.

4.12 A copy of the minutes for the October meeting is included at Appendix 2 of this Briefing Note for information.

5 Appendices

Appendix 1	Copy of the letter from Biffa Waste Services Ltd, dated 22 nd November 2013
Appendix 2	
	Copy of Minutes of Poplars Liaison Meeting, dated 24 th October 2013

Background Papers

None

ITEM NO. 8.4

APPENDIX 1



Biffa Waste Services Ltd
Poplars Landfill Site
Lichfield Road
Cannock
Staffordshire
WS11 8NQ

Jeff.Rhodes@biffa.co.uk
Tel: 0121 6616732
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Web www.biffa.co.uk

Stephen Schofield
Waste & Engineering Services
Cannock Chase Council
Beecroft Road
Cannock
Staffordshire WS11 1BG

Date: 22nd November 2013

Dear Stephen,

POPLARS LANDFILL SITE ENQUIRY

Chris Blakeman has forwarded me your email of 15th November.

As you will be aware, there is a long established Liaison Group for the site, which includes Councillors and officers from Cannock Chase Council. We think it best and fairest if discussions regarding the site continue to be channelled through that forum, so that all interested parties are informed, as well as Cannock Chase Council. The questions you pose have also already been discussed, quite often, during the Liaison Group meetings.

Poplars landfill operation is in no different a situation to most other landfill sites around the country in that the more waste is diverted from landfill, the less waste is getting landfilled. The site is a commercial operation and, like any other commercial operation, has to respond to the market. At Poplars we have a defined set of fill and restoration contours we have to achieve under our planning consent. Therefore it is that restoration profile which will determine when the site is complete, not a calendar date. There is still a considerable void left to fill before we achieve those levels – approximately 5.7M cubic metres. We will continue filling the site but how quickly we are able to fill it depends on future input rates, which depends on market conditions. At one time, at its busiest, the site was taking around 500,000 tonnes/year. In more recent times with increased landfill diversion this has dropped to around 350,000 tonnes/year. This may fall further as more general waste is diverted from landfill.

Historically the site has always served a strategic role and it still does - taking industrial and commercial waste from businesses in the West Midlands and also municipal waste. Haulage costs tend to shape this natural commercial catchment area. Some municipal waste is still likely to come to the site, possibly also including waste from the new Four Ashes EfW facility during down times, but the vast majority of future inputs are likely to be the industrial and commercial waste stream. Typically and generally there is around twice as much industrial and commercial waste arising as there is municipal waste. However, as noted earlier, actual inputs and traffic will be market driven and are therefore difficult to predict. For that reason, it would probably unhelpful and misleading to speculate on likely completion dates with so much void still remaining, although the above numbers give an idea of different scenarios, if a crude 1:1 conversion is used (1 tonne: 1 cubic metre). Clearly it is a long way off.

This will no doubt be a regular discussion point at the Liaison Group going forward. I assume the CCC representatives on that group will feed back to your Council as a whole, or perhaps pass on copies of the minutes they get. I'm sorry it's not possible to be any more specific at this point in time but from the above explanation I hope you can understand why.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Rhodes', written in a cursive style.

Jeff Rhodes
BSc (Hons) BTP MRTPI
Company Planning & Permitting Manager, Biffa Group

APPENDIX 2

Minutes of Poplars Liaison Meeting Poplars Landfill Site Thursday 4th October 2013

Present:

Mrs Debbie Holihead	Staffordshire County Council
Ms Catherine Woolridge	Staffordshire County Council
Mrs Diane Todd	Staffordshire County Council
Mr Carl Bennett	Cannock Chase District Council
Mr Mike Walker	Cannock Chase District Council
Cllr Mike Sutherland	Cannock Chase District Council
Cllr Maureen Freeman	Cannock Chase District Council
Cllr Chris Jones	Staffordshire County Council
Mrs Liz Jenkins	Environment Agency
Mr Sid Dukes	Mill Green Action Group
Mr Harry Wilkes	Mill Green Action Group
Mr Chris Blakeman	Biffa Waste Services Ltd
Mr Jeff Rhodes	Biffa Waste Services Ltd
Mr Daniel Sage	Biffa Waste Services Ltd

Introduction:

Mr Sid Dukes announced at the commencement of the meeting that he is sadly leaving the liaison group and this meeting will be his last. Mr Dukes introduced Mr Harry Wilkes, who will represent the Mill Green Action Group hence forth.

Apologies received:

Cllr Mark Winnington	Staffordshire County Council
Mr Mark Smith	Environment Agency
Cllr John Kraujalis	Cannock Chase District Council
Mr Mark Loran	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr George Adamson	Cannock Chase District Council

Review Minutes of Last Meeting

Minutes agreed.

Matters Arising

Mr Wilkes raised the issue and complaints raised re mud staining on the Lichfield Rd, calling the road the "red road" and enquired re the presence of a road-sweeper. Mrs Holihead stated that a planning officer came to site after an enquiry from Staffs Highways and noted that there was mud evident in the office car park and that the highway itself was clear of mud/staining. Mr Blakeman confirmed that there was mud in

the car park from 4x4s that use the car park but these would not contribute to mud on the highway. It was also confirmed that a sweeper was on hire six days per week.

Mr Dukes thought that the mud on Lichfield Rd was being caused by tractors running from the AD Plant with numbers running 3-4, sometimes 6-7 per day. Mr Dukes also enquired why tractors were being used rather than local hauliers and queried the legality of using red diesel on the highway. Mr Sage clarified the reason why tractors are used, they run direct from site to go to direct deployment on farmers fields, an operation which regular tipper vehicles are unable to do. The haulier uses the main A5 when leaving the site but if there are problems on this highway then the A34 will have to be used as a necessity. The haulier is assisting as much as possible and their operation is legitimate.

Cllr Sutherland thought that all vehicles using the site, landfill and AD vehicles should use the wheel-wash before leaving the site. DS confirmed that vehicles using the AD plant do not need to go over the wheel-wash as they are only driving over hard surfaced yard areas and are not going onto the landfill.

Cllr Freeman requested that the cleaning of vehicles and usage of the wheel-wash was looked at to see if it could be improved.

Mr Wilkes was also concerned regarding the speed of tractors and asked whether the tanker unit registrations have to match the tractors, Ms Woolridge indicated that they did not have to.

Mr Wilkes then raised the issue of pieces of foam on the highway which he believed were dangerous and could cause drivers to swerve as they look like rocks. Mr Blakeman reiterated that a mobile sweeper was on hire 6 days per week and that a small mobile sweeper was also used by the AD plant. The road sweeper operator's main areas of operation are internal roads and the A460 to the next roundabout. Other peripheral areas outside the site are done but this does depend on the density of traffic in the area, particularly Lichfield Rd at present because of long-standing bridge repair works in Hednesford. Mr Blakeman also commented regarding the "red-road" issue and that staining may have been caused by the huge area of site (120,000m²) that had been permanently capped part using site red clay as the bedding layer and protection material on the cap media used. This capping work is an essential part of the environmental control of the site, which benefits residents in the long term. Mr Rhodes noted that this red clay is a feature of Staffordshire geology and people may be familiar with similar conditions associated with brick clay quarrying activities in the Staffordshire coalfield areas over many years. However, unlike a quarry, any such impact associated with the landfill is short term and intermittent from when a lot of earthworks are going on during landfilling engineering phases. Also the red colouration of the clay can sometimes result in localised discolouration of the road surface but this is not the same thing as lumps or large volumes of thick mud on the road.

Cllr Freeman enquired whether A460 drains were ever checked to ensure blockages did not occur. Ms Woolridge stated that she would speak to the Highways department for clarity/confirmation.

Cllr Sutherland enquired whether there would be any traffic reduction using the site with the opening of the new 4 Ashes EFW (Energy from Waste) incinerator. Mr Blakeman

confirmed that the site currently takes c.1000 tonnes per week of domestic waste from Staffs CC and Walsall MBC. This volume will drop to c.400 tonnes of waste for the initial weeks of operation and then reduce further to c.200 tonnes of waste per week.

Mr Dukes lastly asked whether Mr Sage could give them some comfort that on Sundays the tractor traffic will keep to the A460. Mr Sage responded that he would speak to the haulier again to reiterate the concerns raised.

Report Updates

Presented by Mr Mike Walker – report attached

Mike presented his reported, noting that complaints had been received regarding slurry spreading on local farmers fields. Mike also commented that when land spreading in agriculture the slurry must be ploughed in within 24hrs but there can be an odour present when the slurry is sitting waiting to be ploughed in.

Mr Dukes and Wilkes stated that they did not believe that the odour was from farmers fields. Liz Jenkins stated that on 27th September a number of complaints came through and that following investigation by the Environment Agency on the day it was confirmed that no odours were leaving the site. Liz Jenkins also noted that she witnessed a tanker going into a farmers field off Lichfield rd. Liz spoke to the farmer and it was confirmed that the slurry was ploughed in by 4pm of the same day.

Liz noted that the EA complaint telephone line was available 24/7.

Report received.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Presented by Liz Jenkins – report attached

Liz continued the summation of the above incident and stated that liquor spreading by a third party was under taken under a separate permit. The spreading was carried out by using a spray bar and going forwards any further spreading will have to be via injection. Mr Sage confirmed that this will be the case.

As per the report, the Environment Agency had continued to work with Biffa regarding concerns from residents relating to odours from the site. Complaint numbers have been high and the EA have been out constantly monitoring and investigating complaints. Liz noted that the general impression is that the situation has improved and that odours area at a much lower level with some residents agreeing. The EA were satisfied that the further additional improvements to the plant have made a big difference.

As per the report the total number of complaints for the period received were as follows:

February	42	June	76
March	33	July	129
April	87	August	202
May	56	September	39

It is unclear why the number of complaints received in August were so high. Cllr Sutherland requested a breakdown of complaints to see if there were any particular days which created a high number to match against operations on the days noted.

Mr Sage noted that there were no complaints from Rumer Hill now, Liz agreed but the area was still part of the EA check around the site.

Mr Blakeman noted that the site leachate plant for a few days in July caused an odour problem and that additional controls were now in place, Liz agreed that she had seen the works carried out and the control measures were much improved. Liz also noted that she had seen the works on the carbon filter fitted to the AD gas bag.

Mr Dukes wondered whether there was leachate leaking on the A460. Mr Blakeman confirmed that any water noted would be surface water. Cllr Sutherland commented that the works previously carried out on the drainage on the highway had much improved this area better.

Mr Dukes also commented that site visits/tours of the site previously carried out were very useful. Cllr Sutherland also said that it would be informative.

Report received

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Verbal report presented by Chris Jones

Chris stated that the HWRC (Household Waste Recycling Centre) contract was now with FCC. It has been noted that there has been a slight increase in waste being accepted at the Poplars HWRC with 8916 tonnes being received in 2012/13 and 3751 tonnes received in the first quarter of 2013/14. It is believed that this trend has been seen across Staffordshire and was not unique and is potentially an indicator of the improving economic climate.

Chris also noted that the new EFW was likely to be fully operational by December 2013 and that inputs to landfill will decrease as inputs to the EFW will in turn increase.

Mr Dukes asked whether the ash produced from the incinerator would come to Poplars, Chris responded, indicated that the ash will be taken out of the county for recycling purposes.

Mr Wilkes enquired regarding blue bin recycling and where does the waste go to, Chris answered that the material goes to the Biffa MRF at Aldridge for recycling. Mr Wilkes asked re plastics received at the HWRC, Chris again indicated that this material also gets recycled.

Report received

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY PLANNING AUTHORITY
Verbal report presented by Debbie Holihead

Debbie explained along with Jeff Rhodes that there are currently several planning applications in place which include an additional gas engine at the AD plant, a power cable from the AD plant to feed power to Sainsburys and a separate application to update site drawings to include the recent additional odour control equipment.

Report received

BIFFA WASTE SERVICES LTD

Landfill **Presented by Mr Chris Blakeman – report attached**
AD Plant **Presented by Mr Dan Sage – verbal report**

Chris Blakeman presented his report.

In 2013 the site has undertaken major capping works with c.120,000 m² of land permanently capped. The air shafts from the redundant Cannock colliery have been reduced and capped and new tipping cell, phase I1 has been constructed. Tipping in 2013 has continued in phase 9C2.

Mr Dukes enquired whether clay extraction would take place. Mr Rhodes answered by explaining that Biffa had been previously approached by brick making companies regarding the Etruria Marl on site but this was not a proposition that was being looked at.

Cllr Bennett enquired how gas leaks are checked. Chris answered that the gas system is checked and monitored by the third party company Infinis and also by site staff.

Mr Wilkes enquired regarding the site's end date. Chris answered that there is no end date to the site and that the site currently has 6 million m³ of available void. Inputs are currently 300,000 tonnes per annum but the sites "life-span" will depend on future inputs.

Dan Sage presented his verbal report.

Dan indicated that the AD plant takes as per the previous year c.1800-1900 tonnes of food waste per week. Electricity generation from the generated gas is currently at 5.5 MWh with an additional engine to be fitted to send power to Sainsburys.

Dan explained that the majority of vehicle movements to the AD plant were in the morning and with steady inputs until 17.00hrs, The AD plant continues to take a small volume of waste until its permitted time at 21.00hrs. Materials leaving the site consist of 5-10% of inputs as digestate (solids) and that 200-250m³ leave as a liquid effluent. The effluent initially went to Minworth and the site LTP for disposal but now leave during the spreading season for fertiliser.

Dan also noted that the AD management team have spent more than double the £800k stated to improve the AD plant and that he was happy with the improvements made.

Report received

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 7th March 2014 – 10.00am

A site tour will be provided after the next liaison group meeting