

EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Report to: The Cabinet
20 July 2010

Wards:

South West Holderness

Yorkshire Water Hull Waste Water Treatment Works at Saltend

Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services

A. Executive Summary

This report relates to the long standing case of odour problems arising from Yorkshire Water's waste water treatment works at Saltend.

Given the level of local concern and in response to the functions of the Council's Environmental Control Team and interventions of Yorkshire Water, the level of complaints from residents about the site has dropped significantly over the last 12 months. The improvement has been helped by Yorkshire Water completing their "Medium Term Odour Mitigation" works as recommended by their agents (Ove Arup & Partners) in June 2009, which was followed by the Environmental Control Team carrying out their dedicated odour monitoring assessment.

An inspection of the premises and review of the works proposed by Yorkshire Water provide a clear recommendation as to how to ensure continued improvement on the site.

The Council has made representations to the Water services Regulation Authority (OFWAT) to ensure that Yorkshire Water's investment programme includes further improvements to odour control (as recommended by their consultant) at the waste water treatment works at Saltend. Confirmation has now been received that Yorkshire Water have secured approval from OFWAT to fund and carry out the "Long Term Odour Mitigation" works recommended by Arup. They have placed a high priority on these works and intend to have them carried out in this financial year (2010-2011).

The Council's Environmental Control case officer continues to conduct regular visits to the site to review what complaints may have been received by the council and Yorkshire Water, and to monitor their progress and developments to improve odour control on the site. Assessment of odours by way of routine officer visits near to the works has continued, in response to any public concerns. As a result of actions taken the number of complaints have reduced significantly (see attached Table 1).

Officers of East Riding of Yorkshire Council continue to work closely with Yorkshire Water to achieve further improvements of the management of odours from the works.

B. Corporate Priorities 2008-2011

Valuing our Environment

C. Portfolio

Cultural Services, Housing and Public Protection

D. Recommendations and Reason for Recommendations

That The Cabinet agrees the findings of this report and that the following specific actions be undertaken.

- (a) Write formally to Yorkshire Water, in line with section 2.3 to ensure that commitments, in the form of an improvement schedule, to complete the Long Term Odour Mitigation Works from the Arup Report) within 2010-2011 are implemented.
- (b) Continue to work with Yorkshire Water to monitor their progress with improvements to the odour control processes on the site.
- (c) Continue to monitor levels of complaints of odour arising from the site and, if necessary review the decision on not pursuing a statutory nuisance at this stage.

1. Background

1.1 The site under investigation was required as a result of the European Waste Water Directive and was granted planning approval on 21st October 1997. It became fully operational in 2002. The Hull Waste Water Treatment Works (Hull WwTW) is designed to offer biological treatment of sewage from Hull and the surrounding areas including Hedon and Preston. The total drainage area is approximately 48 square miles with a total sewer length of 1107 miles.

1.2 The Local Authority has a wide range of statutory duties. With regard to odours from the Hull WwTW the Local Authority has a duty to investigate complaints of statutory nuisances in its area. This was not always the case but within the last three to four years, has changed primarily as a result of a successful challenge in the courts by London Borough of Hounslow's statutory nuisance action against Thames Water over the Mogden Sewage Treatment Works.

1.3 The smell produced by Hull WwTW has affected the local environment in the Hedon and Preston areas. The complaints have been investigated since the first complaint in 2001 and it is important to acknowledge in this report that there have, since 2003, been a number of significant incidents resulting in a greater degree of odours being released and in turn complaints. The major incidents which increased odour from the site have included:

- April/May 2004 – illegal discharge of Soya Oil to the works;
- Summer 2005 – illegal discharge of industrial solvents to the works;
- Summer 2006 – failure of air blowers to biological treatment on site (leading to septicity);
- failures in the sludge drier plant in October 2009 (leading to a burning smell leaving the site); and
- at times failure of different elements of the existing odour control unit at the works.

1.4 Further to local concerns and pressures from the Council, Yorkshire Water has carried out various improvements, some specifically designed to minimise odour from the site. The carrying out of such work would in itself be likely to have increased the potential for odour

releases due to necessary shut downs of plant and equipment. Examples are the installation of carbon filters in 2006 and wet chemical scrubber in 2008. Additional improvement works have since been identified and carried out on this equipment. These works together with improved site management has reduced the number of complaints significantly over recent months as demonstrated in the attached table.

1.5 Taking account of the factors mentioned above it was felt that a more detailed and concentrated approach in the assessment of odours from this site was needed. The five main aims of the Environmental Control study were:

- to ascertain patterns of odour dispersion from the site;
- to react to complaints more effectively;
- to gauge the impact of the most recent improvement works to the odour control system at the works;
- to gather evidence for the purpose of establishing whether or not a statutory odour nuisance exists from the operations at the works; and
- to advise Yorkshire Water on possible emission sources on the site and identify the need to carry out further improvements.

1.6 Yorkshire Water has employed Ove Arup & Partners to carry out a detailed odour assessment of the site and produce a series of recommendations. This led to the "Medium Term Odour Mitigation" works being carried out in summer 2008 and completed in early summer 2009, such as extensions to covers to provide better collection of odorous gasses. Yorkshire Water have now confirmed the approval of funding for the further required improvements to the plant (the "Long Term Odour Mitigation" works contained in the Arup Report). This has been made available under the AMP 5 funding arrangements. Yorkshire Water have confirmed that the work is their top priority project and is scheduled to be completed within 12 months.

1.7 The Council's Environmental Control case officer continues to conduct regular visits to the site to review what complaints may have been received by the Council and Yorkshire Water, and to monitor their progress and developments to improve odour control on the site. Assessment of odours by way of routine officer visits near to the works has continued at a level commensurate with the level of complaints, in response to continuing public concerns as part of the normal officer case load. The conclusion of this ongoing assessment of this stage is that there are limited grounds for what can be considered a statutory nuisance.

1.8 Out of hours and weekend visits were undertaken and a contact number provided to take out of hour calls during the monitoring exercise. The case officer has also provided their mobile telephone number to complainants.

2. Findings of the Council's Environmental Control Study

2.1 The key findings were:

- That numbers of complaints have increased at times of known problems at the site (illegal discharges to the works or breakdowns of plant and equipment) and at times of increased publicity about making a complaint.
- That there is no evidence that significant odours from Hull WwTW are reaching Hedon or Preston to the point that a statutory odour nuisance is being or likely to be caused to residents of Hedon or Preston.

- That all the incidents of odour detected at the higher end of the intensity scale have been detected at or very near to the boundary of the site. On occasions this has been classified as offensive, however the incidents were short lived.
- That no officer during any odour assessment concluded that a statutory odour nuisance existed at the time of the assessment. It is the Environmental Health Officer in Environmental Control acting on behalf of the council who takes a view upon whether or not a statutory nuisance exists and instigates the necessary abatement action.
- Overall it has been concluded that the Council has not the grounds to evidence a statutory odour nuisance.

2.2 A review has concluded that there is no evidence that a statutory nuisance is affecting residents living at a distance from the site (mainly in Preston and Hedon areas).

2.3 Although numbers of complaints are currently low, there is more concern of a nuisance in closer proximity to the site. It is recommended that the Council write a warning to Yorkshire Water formally notifying Yorkshire Water of the findings of the report and of the Council's reserved position with regard to the potential for the service of an abatement notice. It is suggested that this warning be used to negotiate an odour improvement schedule which because funding has been confirmed, should be within the company's capacity to deliver.

2.4 Specific issues with regard to the construction and management of the plant were raised. These include such things as dispersion modelling of odours and improving the extraction systems servicing the sludge thickening building.

2.5 The production of an odour improvement schedule with appropriate timescales by Yorkshire Water is seen as the best way of ensuring that the required improvements take place.

3. Conclusion

3.1 That officers from the Environmental Control Team will:

- (a) Write formally to Yorkshire Water, in line with section 2.3 to ensure that commitments, in the form of an improvement schedule, to complete the Long Term Odour Mitigation Works from the Arup Report) within 2010-2011 as proposed by YWS are obtained.
- (b) Continue to work with Yorkshire Water to monitor their progress with improvements to the odour control processes on the site.
- (c) Continue to monitor levels of complaints of odour arising from the site and, if necessary review the decision on not pursuing a statutory nuisance at this stage.

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Background Papers
None

Table 1

Month	Complaints received affecting residences	Complaints received from people whilst driving past
May 09	15	
June 09	13	24
July 09	28	3
August 09	12	
September 09	15	2
October 09	11	2
November 09	7	
December 09	5	
January 10	2	
February 10	2	
March 10	3	
April 10		1
Number of complainants between April 2005 – May 2010 = 354		