



26th March 2021

ST/SH

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A

Leader's Office
Castle House
Barracks Road
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1BL

Dear Prime Minister

Regulation and Enforcement of Walleys Quarry Landfill Site, Newcastle-under-Lyme Staffordshire by the Environment Agency – Request for formal independent review

It is rare to be able to write to the Prime Minister about a local problem with the confidence that he is already well aware of the issue.

At your recent visit to Stoke on Trent the local media raised with you the problems of odours from the Walleys Quarry landfill site in Silverdale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, and indeed Mr Aaron Bell our local MP has, I know, also spoken with you about this and made it the subject of a 10 minute rule bill.

This landfill site has been causing significant local concern for a considerable time, with foul odour concerns being reported over a 10-year period but that has become significantly worse since 2019. This culminated over the weekend of 26th to 28th February 2021 with the Council receiving over 2000 complaints from local residents and business of the odour affecting them in their home, gardens and throughout the community. Despite the level of complaints, the Environment Agency also received they deployed no resource to investigate and later confirmed that the air monitoring equipment that they had recently installed was not connected to a power supply.

To give you a sense of the scale of the problem, over the weekend on 26th to 28th February, the local hospital was unable to open windows in some wards, compromising the ventilation so critical to combatting the spread of COVID. Our Fire & Rescue Service found themselves charging breathing apparatus with foul smelling air. The local branch of Cadent, who are required to respond to each and every report of a gas leak, were stretched to breaking point in responding to reports of gas, which were actually odours from the landfill site.

Until very recently, the Environment Agency has stuck to the line that the landfill is operating in full compliance with the permit - despite hundreds of complaints and concerns, over several years. We are at a loss to explain why this stance has been taken, when the EA is actually charged with requiring the operator to ensure that there is 'no significant' pollution, where "pollution" means any emission as a result of human activity, which may:

- Be harmful to human health or the quality of the environment.
- Cause offence to a human sense.
- Result in damage to material property.
- Impair or interfere with amenities or other legitimate uses of the environment.

At a recent extraordinary Borough Council meeting called to discuss the odour problems, a unanimous decision was taken to request an independent investigation into the regulatory performance of the Environment Agency in their handling of the permit for Walleys Quarry Landfill site. My Chief Executive has written separately to George Eustice MP to request this, and I would urge you to lend your support to this effort.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Tagg', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Simon Tagg
Leader, Newcastle Borough Council

CC: Aaron Bell MP
Martin Hamilton, Chief Executive, Newcastle Borough Council

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