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Asiantaeth yr
Amgylchedd Cymru
Environment
Agency Wales

Petitions Committee
Welsh Assembly Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Ein cyf/Our ref: 11 04 21 CCP

Eich cyf/Your ref: P-03-302

Dyddiad/Date: 21st April 2011

Dear Ms Stocks,

RE: P-03-302 Compost Processing Plant

Thank you for your letter dated 5 April 2011 allowing us to comment on the recent petition that calls for suspension of operations at Bryn Compost, Gelligaer.

As mentioned in our previous letter, we continue to work with the community and site operator to reduce the odour annoyance on the amenity of communities surrounding the site.

We have worked closely with Aneurin Bevan Health Board and Public Health Wales (PHW) to address public concerns about health issues at this site. PHW has assessed the bio-aerosol risk from the composting activity at this site as low. The operator continues to conduct bio-aerosol monitoring around the site to assess risk to human health. We recognise that residents remain concerned that the odours they are experiencing may affect their wellbeing and we are liaising with PHW who are exploring further the possible connections between odours and wellbeing.

Bryn Compost's Odour Management Plan (OMP), now a requirement of the operator's permit following a permit variation, is being implemented. The OMP requires higher standards of technical management to effectively manage potential odour releases and reduce odour generation at the site. Provided it is operated and managed correctly, it should reduce odour annoyance significantly within the communities currently affected. The operator has already made some structural changes at the site to improve aeration of the waste and to the air filtering system. Further improvements are timetabled. However, we will regulate operations on site to ensure compliance with the OMP is achieved and any necessary improvements implemented in full.

In the event that the operator fails to comply with the OMP, it risks enforcement action against it that could result in permit suspension or revocation. The operator will be aware of these risks and of our expectations that it will operate in compliance with its permit. We are prepared to use our powers and to take enforcement action should it become necessary, but we have to do so within the legal framework we, as the regulator, have been given to work within. This means that any enforcement action we take would be evidence-led. Our ability to suspend operations on site, and to sustain that through any appeal, is dependent upon us being satisfied and able to show that there is a risk of serious pollution as a result of operations on site.

Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd Cymru
Tŷ Cambria, 29 Heol Casnewydd, Caerdydd, CF24 0TP
Llinell gwasanaethau cwsmeriaid: 08708 506 506
Epost: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
www.asiantaeth-amgylchedd.cymru.gov.uk

Environment Agency Wales
Cambria House, 29 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0TP
Customer services line: 08708 506 506
Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
www.environment-agency.wales.gov.uk

We know that harm to human health would be a factor to indicate serious pollution, but the site is well below limits sets for bio aerosols. National colleagues are reviewing our technical guidance to clarify what constitutes serious pollution with regard to odours. The review will take into account the impacts an odour has on the receptors, the sensitivity of those receptors and wider impacts on public amenities, events and businesses.

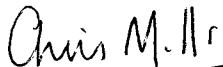
Again I assure you that we continue to apply considerable resources (both locally and nationally) to ensure the operators of such facilities reduce the frequency of odour events to a level which does not cause complaints.

We meet every three months with the Bryn Compost Liaison Group to provide updates for this group, and we produce quarterly newsletters for wider dissemination in all three communities affected by odours.

We also intend to hold a second local 'drop-in' session for local residents, to update them on the outcomes from the Mobile Monitoring Facility and odour diary data, once it has all been compiled. We will copy to Councillors and the relevant Assembly Members any and all correspondence to local residents regarding the site. We will start this process after the Assembly election, on 6 May and will also provide Councillors with a summary of our correspondence to residents from the pre-election period. In addition we have developed a web page that will contain monitoring results, updates and information. The web page will go live on 6 May 2011.

I trust this information is of assistance and reassures you that we are fully committed to seeking solutions to the odour issues at Bryn Compost. However, please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further details.

Yours sincerely,



CHRIS MILLS
DIRECTOR WALES

Llinell uniongyrchol/Direct dial: 029 2046 6031

Ffacs uniongyrchol/Direct fax: 029 2046 6411

E-bost uniongyrchol/Direct e-mail: chris.mills@environment-agency.wales.gov.uk