

Update following fire at Hafod Landfill

Following the fire at Hafod Landfill last month we wanted to be able to provide you with an update to explain the current situation and further work ahead.

Our role

The landfill site has an environmental permit which is regulated by Natural Resources Wales. This permit contains a number of conditions detailing how the site should be operated by Enovert. Some of these conditions include waste acceptance, landfill gas management and the types of waste that can be deposited. Hazardous waste is not tipped at Hafod. The permit does not govern the proximity of the site to houses as this is a Planning issue.

The permit specifies the types of waste that can be accepted but

we have no power to stipulate where the waste comes from.

The fire

Fires at landfill sites are relatively rare, but when they do occur the impacts on the environment and local communities can be significant. NRW responded to the fire at Hafod Landfill as part of a multi-agency approach along with North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health Wales, Wrexham County Borough Council and North Wales Police. The alarm was raised on Wednesday evening (27th May) and the fire was fully extinguished by Saturday 30th May. It appears

that the fire was contained to the surface of the site rather than being a deep-seated fire.

Health advice was issued and regularly updated during the fire with local people asked to stay indoors and keep their doors and windows closed. People concerned about their health were advised to contact their GP or NHS Direct.

North Wales Fire Service are investigating the cause.



(Photo provided by North Wales Police)

Air quality Monitoring During the Incident

A specialist group of experts (chaired by NRW and including Public Health Wales, the Local Authority and the Met Office) reviewed meteorological data and information being relayed back from the site to assess whether there might be any health implications from the smoke. They decided that dedicated equipment should be deployed to monitor air quality in the community.

Air monitoring data from this equipment and that collected from an existing air monitoring station in Wrexham was used to inform the management of risks from this incident. Generally, air pollution concentrations were below health based air quality standards, but there were periods where particulate matter concentrations were elevated due to the smoke (including the evening of Thursday 28th May).

During this period, people who were exposed to the smoke, either by being outdoors, or having doors or windows open may have experienced irritation of the eyes, nose and throat. However, this period of elevated air pollution was very short lived (approx. 1 ½ hours), and concentrations soon dropped to below the air quality standard. Any symptoms would be expected to have disappeared quickly and should not lead to long term health problems.

As the fire reduced in scale, air quality improved and by the afternoon of the 29th May, air quality in the Johnstown area was generally good and of no cause for public health concern.

Health advice in place during the incident was withdrawn on the 30th May when the fire was declared out.

Following the fire, we required Enovert to provide an action plan detailing additional monitoring requirements, replacement of fire damaged infrastructure and extra measures to ensure that fire

risk was minimised. Once the fire service and NRW had reviewed this plan and were satisfied that these measures were in place and were being implemented, limited tipping was allowed to commence in an area not affected by the fire.

The following week, the site started receiving its regular waste streams for disposal. The waste continues to be tipped in an area not affected by the fire.

Next Steps

As well as ensuring that the continuing operations at the site are in accordance with the environmental permit, NRW has launched an investigation into whether any conditions contained within the permit were breached prior to the fire starting. There are many lines of enquiry that we are following. We will be able to provide an update once

the investigation has been completed. A number of site inspections have been carried out since the fire and NRW are in regular contact with Enovert who are providing updates in line with the agreed Action Plan.

Communications

We have written to those people who contacted us during the fire and our Communications Team will be using the media and social media to provide an update.

We have also provided information to Cllr David Bithell, Ken Skates MS, Llyr Gruffydd MS, Simon Baynes MP and to our Minister, Lesley Griffiths via Welsh Government.

We also sit on the Hafod Liaison Group and will be able to feedback updates to local members through that group.



Contacts

To report an environmental incident, please phone our incident line 03000 653000. This number is staffed 24 hours per day.

Choose option 1 for Welsh and 2 for English

For health related concerns then please contact your GP or NHS Direct.