

Walley's Quarry Liaison Committee

Background

The Liaison Committee (LC) was formed in 2007 following the start of landfill operations at Walley's Quarry.

One of the local County Councillors historically chairs the LC.

Its remit is set down in a legal condition of the planning application for the site, which requires the operator (currently RED industries) to:

- Arrange and service meetings, providing a venue and assuring the minutes are published.
- To hold meetings of the LC quarterly (but no less than twice a year) and;
- That meetings are not open to the public (though members of the public have been allowed to attend in the past by agreement of the operator).

The purpose of the LC, as again set out in the legal planning condition, is to provide a forum for an exchange of information and a method of communication with the local community via the local representatives.

The LC can make recommendations to the operator or the EA (and has done so in the past) but has no executive power to act or to request records or information that the operator deems commercially confidential.

Who attends?

Again, attendance is stipulated in the planning condition and includes:

- Representatives from the operator.
- The two local County Councillors and the four local Newcastle Borough Councillors.

- Local Parish Council's, Resident Groups and up to three local residents appointed at the discretion of the operator.
- Any relevant officers from both Staffordshire County Council and Newcastle Borough Council - for example in Planning and Environmental Health (EHOs).
- Representatives of the Environment Agency (EA).

The Agenda and Minutes for each LC meeting are published on the operator's website (<https://www.redindustries.co.uk/walleys-landfill-community>) and involve a detailed site update from the operator, updates from EA, the Borough Council's Environmental Health and Staffordshire County Council's Planning.

There is also a forum for attendees on behalf of the community to ask questions of the operator and EA.

Recent history and recommendations from LC

Following major issues of odour in the area, particularly in 2013, 2015, resulted in action being taken by the previous operator of the site (Lafarge Aggregates Limited) including site layout changes, odour masking measures and latterly a large cash investment in leachate treatment plant onside - as opposed to it being stored and then transported off site.

Following the recent upsurge in odours since 2018, LC members pressed for air quality sensors to be installed and challenge the EA over their siting to have the best effect of picking up any odours.

The LC has encouraged the operator to engage with residents in the area, which led to Newsletters being published and delivered to households with details on how to complain about odours in the local area.

Since lockdown

The April meeting was cancelled at the start of lockdown.

Requests have been submitted on 2 occasion since for a virtual meeting but no response has yet been received from the operator.

The next meeting of the LC is due in September.

Public perception of the LC

Because of the clear constraints of the planning condition, the LC is often seen as a 'talking shop' and because it is not a public meeting it is sometimes claimed that 'things are being kept secret' when they are not.

I and other members of the LC can report that there is often heated debates and always robust challenges, particularly of the EA who ultimately have the powers to investigate and take action.

Highway issues associated to with Walleys Quarry

Many highway issues particularly around the entrance to the landfill in Cemetery Road are being looked into by Staffordshire County Council, and Cllr Jones and myself as the local County Councillors for the area, have asked highway offices to work on a solution to address the road safety issues caused by lorry movements and 'parking up'.

Cllr Simon Tagg

County Councillor for Westlands & Thistleberry

12th August 2020