

St John Fisher Catholic College:

Dear Mr Bell

I am writing on behalf of the St John Fisher Catholic College community regarding the odour from Walley's Quarry run by Red Industries in Newcastle under Lyme.

Concern has been raised by parents and children regarding the smell with some children unable to eat lunch due to feeling nauseous. Coupled with the need for ventilation at present in our school due to the current pandemic, I ask you to take into consideration the concerns raised by members of the school community.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Garrett Murray
Head of School

Thanks

Garrett

[cid:image001.jpg@01D715AC.DD2D2300]"The LORD is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation." Psalm 118:14

Mr G Murray - Head of School
St John Fisher Catholic College, Ashfields New Road, Newcastle under Lyme. Staffordshire. ST5 2SJ
www.saintjohnfishercc.co.uk | 01782 307551

Friarswood Academy:

Dear Mr Bell,

I am emailing to you today regarding the awful smell that is reportedly coming from Whalley's Landfill site. Many parents are commenting on this situation along with staff and children therefore I feel it is only right that I share their concerns as well as my own.

Everyday we have to open windows in school due to the Covid situation but the smell is so terrible that children and staff are complaining constantly. When the children are outside playing, some children struggle with the smell. Our early years children are outside a lot of the time, which causes even more concern. This obvious issue with the air quality is a real concern. At a time when we are being asked to educate children outside as much as possible and let them have fresh air, along with the staff going outside for fresh air, this simply just isn't happening because of these issues.

On a personal note, I live near to this site and it isn't just the awful stench that is a problem, it's the amount of debris that litters the roads, grass verges and the cemetery. I'm always horrified at the state of this area especially when loved ones visit the cemetery. How can people mourn their loved ones whilst litter is being blown around them and the stench is so overpowering at times.

Thank you in anticipation of you reading and acknowledging this concern.

Kind regards

Mrs Lindsey Wilmer

Headteacher

Merryfields School:

Good Afternoon Mr Bell

I hope both you and your family are well during these strange and difficult times.

I am writing to discuss briefly a concern we have within school and were hoping you would be able to raise it with the appropriate people.

As you know, Merryfields School have remained open to pupils since last March and continue to offer placements to a very high number of our pupils on a daily basis. As is the case with other schools, we will be welcoming all pupils back to school on Monday 8th March, which we are thrilled about and awaiting with great anticipation.

Our concern arises, as there is a certain 'stench' for want of a better word, which is currently spreading around not only our school, but also Wolstantan. We have been informed that this is coming from a nearby tip, or refuge site and whilst we understand that this is not something that would generally be an issue, the severity of the smell is having a very negative impact on our learners within school.

The smell is not constant and seems to be heightened during certain days and times of the day.

Due to Covid-19, we are required to have our windows open for ventilation, as part of our control measures. However, when we do open windows, the resultant smell enters the building is very difficult to get rid of. Our more cognitively able pupils are being understandably distracted by this whilst in the classroom. However, what is equally concerning for ourselves, is the impact this smell is having on our more sensory learners and those with behavioural needs.

As you are aware a high number of pupils in Merryfields have sensory processing disorder. The impact of this smell on their ability to concentrate is very damaging and the distracting nature is often too much for pupils to deal with. We are therefore seeing an increase in negative behaviours in pupils, as they struggle to deal with such an overwhelming scent.

Finally, our pupils require a very high level of access to focused outdoor provision. Our staff are not overly happy about leaving the classroom to stand outdoors in such a stench as well as exposing the learners to it on a regular basis.

I am aware that you are extremely busy, and please be assured my intention is not to add to your workload. However, I have concerns that if this smell does not clear soon, we will experience significant issues with our pupils, especially as we are due to welcome all of our pupils back to school this Monday.

I hope you can find the time to respond as I would be interested to know if we are the only school raising this issue and whether something was currently being actioned to investigate this smell.

Thank you very much for your time.
Neil Brannigan

Coppice Academy:

The Coppice academy is a special school located on Abbots Way. We are very lucky to have lots of outside spaces within and around our school grounds. These outside spaces are essential to the delivery of our vocational curriculum that allow students to receive education in an holistic environment. When we returned to school after the Christmas holiday the rancid smell from the landfill site at Walley's Quarry seemed to have increased so much so students are asking to stay indoors and keep windows shut as the smell is making them feel quite ill. Unfortunately due to Covid and the need for additional ventilation throughout the school we have an big issue that is difficult to balance. My fears going forward into spring/summer is that if the smell will increase and will worsen as temperatures rise. The result to us as a school will mean that will not be able to use our open spaces hence failing to teach our children vital life and employability skills which will hinder future pathways.

Diane Ahearn
Principal

Langdale Primary:

Thank you for your email. As a resident of the local area, I have also submitted a complaint this weekend as the smell was unbearable. I worked from home on the Wednesday and felt nauseous and had a very bad headache.

My school, Langdale Primary School, is roughly 1.8 miles from the Quarry site and generally, we do not suffer with the smell unless the air is very cool in the morning or at extreme temperatures in the summer. However, this last week has seen a marked difference as we noted the smell in and around the school from Wednesday through to this last weekend.

Some evidence I can use to support the weekend and 3 days prior is that the smell was in my school, we called out a plumber as we often get drains blocked, who said that they were all clear and it may be due to the landfill site. I had 2 members of staff be violently sick for no apparent reason, but both had reported the smell, a very strong headache and then violent sickness.

3 members of staff are currently off with migraine symptoms and this is becoming more prevalent with staff over the last 6 months - coincidentally, these staff live within the surrounding area.

I have done a brief survey with the children we have in school today - our normal numbers would be 422, but we only have 139 in due to COVID. Out of the 139, I asked the older children for more accuracy - 84 in total.

Of the 84 asked, 65 agreed that at some point they had smelt the landfill whilst at home and school. Of the 84 asked, 52 agreed that they were put off from playing by the smell, mainly at home, but 12 reported not wanting to play outside last Thursday due to the smell.

I could do a more comprehensive research for you when all schools return. I have huge concerns for the children on their return as we are expected to keep all windows open in school to allow for air circulation and unfortunately, last week, we were forced to close the windows due to the children complaining about the smell.

From: MURPHY, Ella A <ellaa.murphy@parliament.uk>
Sent: 16 March 2021 13:09
To: BURRELL, Taylor <taylor.burrell@parliament.uk>
Subject: RE: Evidence to NBC

This has now been edited on the case. Can you double check what attachments are going with it, send them over to me, and then I will send.

From: BURRELL, Taylor <taylor.burrell@parliament.uk>
Sent: 15 March 2021 20:50
To: MURPHY, Ella A <ellaa.murphy@parliament.uk>
Subject: RE: Evidence to NBC

I am writing to provide a submission of how the odours from Walley's Quarry landfill is impacting my constituents as well as my role as an MP.

As you all know, the stink has been very bad since Christmas but in the last month it has become intolerable and this has been noticed by those all around Newcastle-under-Lyme as well as further afield. Many businesses, organisations, schools and residents have been in contact with me about it.

I have received correspondence from the Business Improvement District (BID). They have informed me that many businesses are finding the constant presence of the odour to be having serious detrimental effects on their businesses both in the town centre and outside the ring road. Some of the issues being highlighted relate to premises ventilation, staff welfare and wellbeing as well as serious complaints and concerns from customers. An example of how great an impact the odour is having can be summarised by one business, who wrote to me saying "we have over £40,000 worth of stock... somehow the smell is now within (the store) and will no doubt settle on to the clothing range which then in essence makes our stock unsellable and worthless."

I share many businesses' concerns that as they come out of lockdown and start to reopen, it will be very difficult to encourage people back to the town centre because of the smell.

On 8th March I visited St Giles' & St George's Academy and spoke to some of the children who had written to me about the impact the smell has on their ability to focus during lessons. The Headteacher, Mrs Pointon, told me about the numerous occasions she has arrived at school to overwhelming odour in the building. I have had similar reports from St Wulstans, St Lukes, Silverdale, Knutton St Mary's, St John Fisher Secondary, Merryfields, Friarswood as well as other pre-schools and nurseries in the area too. I will append their letters into my correspondence.

It is comfortably the biggest issue that I receive correspondence about in my mailbox. Since my election in 2019 I have had over 700 recorded emails about the odour. Around 1 in every 5 constituents contact me about the odour. Many of these people have suggested that the odour is causing them and their family health issues. As I am not a doctor, I have advised them to contact their GP with these concerns. On 12th March I visited Silverdale and Rycroft GP and spoke with Dr Scott. We discussed the impact that the foul odours in the air are having, both on the community but also the strain it is putting on the surgery.

Dr Scott described the health impact that they are seeing, with local patients presenting with asthma exacerbations, severe hay-fever type symptoms, nausea, depression and insomnia. I understand that local GPs will be submitting their own evidence of the impact on their services.

Since Christmas it is the most written about topic by a significant proportion, such is the strength of feeling and number of incidents. Currently this has meant that I have around 500 unresolved cases on the topic. Over the past month, when the smell has got particularly worse, 54% of all constituents who contacted me, did so about the topic. I have had 10 times the average amount of social media engagements with the public on Walley's, with an increase to 34,464 people interacting with my page about the issue.

This is adversely affecting constituent's lives in many ways such as cutting their asking price on houses, not moving into more easily accessible living, doing day-to-day activities as well as impacting their mental health. I have reproduced a few examples of what has been said to me to show the seriousness of the odour of their lives:

"It's affecting my health, I have MS and it's triggering migraines. My 13 year old son who has asthma can't stop coughing and has vomited."

"My twin 1 year old grandchildren stayed and they have been coughing all night, we are all shattered and it is sending us crazy. I would like to escape my own home and area."

"the smell from the landfill is bad this morning at half 3...Not happy at all. something needs doing and fast."

"I deserve fresh air!!!! My son deserve fresh air! Not worth living! We cant sleep!!! We cant breathe!!! I feel sick all the time!!!!"

"On Friday we buried my mum at Silverdale cemetery and I've visited every day since. Today I've had to wear a mask as the smell is so strong and enough to make you sick! Its heart-breaking that we can't spend as much time as we want with our loved ones at the cemetery due to the horrendous smell."

"When we hopefully emerge in to a world with less COVID restrictions, I would anticipate that this will become a significant issue in attracting businesses and investment into the town. Who on earth would want to bring their business here suffer the stench out of choice?"

My team of staff is small and dealing with issues related to the smell takes up the majority of their time. In addition to responding to constituents, my staff and I have been in meetings with and visited several organisations, participated in interviews, gave press releases, written speeches, drafted Bills and generated social media posts all on the one topic of odour emanating from the landfill. This detracts from other issues which an MP may be able to provide help with. In recent weeks I have also had to hire more staff to help with the workload.

The smell emanating from Walley's Quarry Landfill is my top local concern. I will continue to push for action on it. I hope this submission helps provide a clear picture of the impact the odour is having on everyone's lives.

From: MURPHY, Ella A <ellaa.murphy@parliament.uk>

Sent: 15 March 2021 18:46

To: BURRELL, Taylor <taylor.burrell@parliament.uk>

Subject: RE: Evidence to NBC

Aaron will need to look at this again, but can you add to the point about the health issues the conversation AB had on Friday and Dr Scott's list of common symptoms that present themselves.

Instead of the highlighted 2 weeks, I would say month.

Also can you add the testimony from that Baby shop who were worried about their merch being unsellable to the BID paragraph.

The highlighted bit further down I think can be sharpened too.

From: BURRELL, Taylor <taylor.burrell@parliament.uk>
Sent: 15 March 2021 16:48
To: MURPHY, Ella A <ellaa.murphy@parliament.uk>
Subject: Evidence to NBC

Updated letter to Council:

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As you all know, the stink has been very bad in the past few months but in **the last two weeks** it has become intolerable and this has been noticed by those all around Newcastle-under-Lyme as well as further afield. Many businesses, organisations, schools and residents have been in contact with me about it.

I have received correspondence from the Business Improvement District (BID). They have informed me that many businesses are finding the constant presence of the odour to be having serious detrimental effects on their businesses both in the town centre and outside the ring road. Some of the issues being highlighted relate to premises ventilation, staff welfare and wellbeing as well as serious complaints and concerns from customers.

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Emails and letters from schools:

Dear Mr Bell

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Yours sincerely,

Mr Garrett Murray
Head of School

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Mr G Murray - Head of School
St John Fisher Catholic College, Ashfields New Road, Newcastle under Lyme. Staffordshire. ST5 2SJ
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On a personal note, I live near to this site and it isn't just the awful stench that is a problem, it's the amount of debris that litters the roads, grass verges and the cemetery. I'm always horrified at the state of this area especially when loved ones visit the cemetery. How can people mourn their loved ones whilst litter is being blown around them and the stench is so overpowering at times.

Thank you in anticipation of you reading and acknowledging this concern.

Kind regards

Mrs Lindsey Wilmer

Headteacher (Friarswood)

Good Afternoon Mr Bell

I hope both you and your family are well during these strange and difficult times.

I am writing to discuss briefly a concern we have within school and were hoping you would be able to raise it with the appropriate people.

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Thank you very much for your time.
Neil Brannigan (Merryfields)

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Diane Ahearn
Principal

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