



# Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

**Robbie Moore MP**  
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
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Cllr Simon Tagg  
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Dear Cllr Tagg,

Thank you for your letter of 21 December to the Prime Minister about Walleys Quarry landfill site. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I am very much aware of the recent history of Walleys Quarry and the problems experienced by the local community. I know that the community will be concerned by the hydrogen sulphide (H<sub>2</sub>S) emission levels over recent weeks and the difficult conditions they have experienced. I am in regular contact with Philip Duffy, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency (EA), to ensure all measures within their power are being exhausted to secure a positive outcome.

The error with the H<sub>2</sub>S monitoring data collected by the Mobile Monitoring Facilities is regrettable and is something for which the EA has publicly apologised. On discovery of this issue the EA acted swiftly, openly and transparently and continues to do so.

It remains the case that it is only the H<sub>2</sub>S data which is affected. The issue, and its effect on the H<sub>2</sub>S data, was not evident during a previous external audit or periodic calibration. I am satisfied that the EA has completed its investigation into the H<sub>2</sub>S analyser calibration issue in accordance with international standards and that it has determined the root cause and identified corrective actions. Given the way other studies, which are generally carried out over a much shorter period, have used H<sub>2</sub>S monitoring data from the same analysers, there are no similar concerns in respect of other sites.

The EA has kept local authority partners and the local community informed through the Strategic Coordinating Group and the EA's Engagement Head Quarters website respectively.

The expert technical assistance for the EA previously referred to has taken the form an independent peer review group, chaired by Defra's Chief Scientific Adviser. This group was established to provide a fully independent view of the EA's proposals to adjust the historic H<sub>2</sub>S data.

Since October 2023 the group has been assessing the method that the EA has developed, which could allow for the adjustment of historic H<sub>2</sub>S data around Walleys Quarry. The group's findings are expected to be finalised imminently. The EA will need time to consider its findings carefully, but I expect it to tell you and the public more as soon as it can.

The EA has continued to robustly regulate Walleys Quarry, performing frequent unannounced and announced inspections. Where it has identified permit non-compliances the EA has required action at pace from Walleys Quarry Ltd (WQL). Where WQL has not completed actions in a timely manner, the EA has escalated its enforcement response, including serving a fourth Enforcement Notice in October 2023. WQL complied with that Notice, which was therefore withdrawn in January 2024. The EA has visually confirmed that WQL has installed all the necessary temporary capping works indicated in the notice.

The EA is also working to secure improvements in operating techniques documents, including the Odour Management Plan, and Landfill Gas Management Plan. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council accepted that these plans represented the best practicable means of WQL addressing odour nuisance in October 2022.

The recent conditions for the community are unacceptable and all efforts are focussed on ensuring this is addressed. However, it is also recognised that the EA's regulatory strategy has resulted in notable improvements since February 2021, corroborated through regulatory, partner and community feedback, monitoring evidence and engineering improvements on site. The current situation is not representative of the EA's effort or success. Prior to December 2023, when the temporary increase in levels of H<sub>2</sub>S outside the site began, there had been a significant period of sustained improvement.

In addition to requiring WQL to act in relation to emissions from the internal flanks, the EA has required the company to do more to manage the uncapped operational area of the landfill, which is also understood to be a source of fugitive emissions of landfill gas. Recent very wet weather has slowed progress with some of this remedial action.

The EA has informed WQL that it expects to see a reverse of the recent trends and has assured me that it continues, and will continue to, consider all appropriate regulatory action and powers to resolve the situation.

Both I and the EA remain committed to resolving the issues impacting the community of Newcastle-under-Lyme and all options are being considered.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



**ROBBIE MOORE MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs