

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

J L THOMAS LIAISON GROUP

Wednesday 29 October 2008

Present:-

Councillor John Winterbottom (Chair)
Councillor Marcel Choules
Councillor Vanessa Newcombe

Mr T Green, JL Thomas
Mr B Ratcliffe, JL Thomas
Liz Taberer, JL Thomas
Mr J Henthorne, Residents Representative
Alex Bulleid, Environmental Health Technician
John Leech, Principal Environmental Health Officer (JL)
Sarah Prior, Assistant Member Services Officer

18

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from John Staddon, Residents Representative.

19

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2008

The notes of the meeting held on 12 March 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

20

PROCESS UPDATE

Mr Green from J L Thomas updated the group on progress made since the last meeting. Over the last two months, at a cost of about £1million, they have had a new drier installed and when fully commissioned it will provide a greater rate of throughput. A new concentrated odour scrubbing tower has also been installed to the press and drier vapour extraction system. Additionally, upgrading of the control room has been completed and there is now a purpose-built IT system in place to view and control the various plant operations.

Mr Ratcliffe explained that the Company acknowledges the high number of complaints received over the summer and it will make every attempt to identify and implement further improvement works as soon as possible. He explained that there has been a significant improvement to the plant operation processes over the last 6-8 weeks.

The question was raised as to whether there have been improvements to increase throughput which in turn had led to an increase in the volume of material processed? It was explained that the volume of throughput had, to date, remained similar. Improvements that have been made are expected to improve plant reliability and reduce the number of processing hours by means of increased throughput, once the new drier is fully proved.

The question was raised as to whether it is expected that there will be a change in throughput in the future, for example, due to any possible future changes in agriculture etc? It was explained that the Company did not anticipate any reduction in the volume of raw materials processed at the factory.

21

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING

An additional schedule was distributed to the group (attached) and John Leech explained that a further two complaints had been made since the schedule was produced two days ago. Since the last meeting in March there has been a total of 175 complaints. A table of process problems on specific days was also provided.

John Leech explained that Exeter City Council are concerned about the number of complaints received, which has increased considerably since the last meeting, particularly complaints received when there has been no obvious process problem.

Jeff Henthorne raised the question on behalf of John Staddon, Residents Representative, as to whether a letter could be sent to all complainants letting them know what the problem is. John Leech explained that the complainants were all contacted individually to give them feedback. It was agreed that a standard letter is not likely to have any great benefit. However, it does remain a problem convincing the public that every effort is being made to improve the situation. It was queried as to whether the Liaison group notes were available for the public to view. It was agreed that they should be published on the Internet.

Jeff Henthorne expressed concerns over the way in which some of the odour complaints were judged, with 'odour not judged to be offensive' in the case comments notes. There is concern that the public will feel it is pointless to complain. He explained that he felt there had been significant improvements to odour control made over the past few years, however this year has been much worse. It was queried as to why this was?

It was explained that there has been a fairly consistent west / south westerly wind direction over the summer and these consistent wind directions were reflected in the increase in the numbers of complaints from the area to the west of the river. It was mentioned that the majority of complaints, during this period, are usually from residents in the St Leonard's and Rivermead Road areas.

John Leech explained that there has been some media interest in the issue of odour from the factory. Articles were published on 23 June and 4 August in the Express and Echo, and there had been articles in the St Leonard's newsletter. A telephone contact for the Council was given in the latter publication. It is likely that this has had a significant impact on the number of complaints made. Alex Bullied explained that one or two of the complainants had even mentioned that on seeing the articles they were prompted to 'join the campaign'.

The procedure of lorries waiting on the yard at the factory prior to unloading inside the factory was discussed. It was explained that staggered arrival times are arranged where possible to avoid any queuing on the yard. However, when logistical problems do arise, a loaded vehicle may have to wait on the yard for a short period of time. It is normal policy for incoming lorries to be sprayed with scent before entering the City boundary to minimise any odour from the vehicle.

It was explained that on receiving complaints JL Thomas staff will visit the areas and they make daily tours of the boundary and a log is kept, as is required by the Local Authority. JL Thomas acknowledges that the number of complaints is a

serious problem. In a meeting with Council Officers and Cllr Winterbottom, on 29 October, it was agreed that a working party would be set up to look at the incidents over the summer period and identify possible improvements to the process. By 2009 the effects of operational improvements made this year should be more apparent.

The issue of the effects of the wind direction was discussed. It was thought that the last summer has seen a prevailing west / south westerly wind direction. It was suggested that it would be useful to carry out an analysis of the last five years wind direction.

The question was raised as to whether it is possible to ascertain how many complaints have been made as a direct result of the media coverage? Alex Bullied explained that the increase in complaints is difficult to quantify, however, subjectively it would appear that there had been an increase due to the publicity.

Mr Henthorne raised a concern about an incident when there was a very loud 'drilling' type noise coming from the plant in the early hours of one particular morning. It was explained that this may have occurred following installation of the new drier, the likely cause being a steam safety valve blowing off under pressure during commissioning trials. The problem had since been rectified.

22

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The question was raised as to what progress had been made in negotiations with Cyclerval with regard the possible supply of steam to the factory from the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) incinerator. It was explained that J L Thomas had not had any further contact from Cyclerval for the last six months. J L Thomas had previously expressed an interest in the supply of steam to the factory from the EfW incinerator, but before this could be possible various technical issues would need to be resolved.

23

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was arranged to be held on Wednesday 22 April 2009 at 5.30pm in Bad Homburg, Civic Centre.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.10 pm)

Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

Minute Item 21

Process Problem	34
No Process Problem	90
No Process Problem/had been process problem	21
General complaint	4
Not Processing	20
Vehicle complaint	4
Noise	1
Query if from factory	1
Total	175

Date	Number	Comment
15/5	3	No Process problems
17/6	5	Process problem during part of the day but not in the latter part of the day
18/6	2	Process problem
25/6	2	Process problem
26/6	6	No process problems
10/7	4	No process problems
25/7	5	No process problems
29/7	3	No process problems
31/7	9	Process problem
1/8	7	No process problems – old material
4/8	2	No process problems
5/8	5	No process problems
6/8	2	No process problems
9/8	4	No process problems
10/8	4	No process problems – 2 complaints when not processing
18/8	3	Not processing
19/8	3	Moving lorries on yard, 1 no process problems
20/8	5	No process problems
21/8	4	Process problem
23/8	2	No process problems
1/9	9	Not processing
2/9	2	No process problems
9/9	2	No process problems
11/9	4	No process problems
25/9	2	Process problem
26/9	2	No process problems
2/10	2	Process problems
9/10	3	No process problems
10/10	12	Process problem day before lorries on yard
14/10	3	Process problem
18/10	3	No process problems
22/10	2	No process problems
23/10	2	No process problems

This page is intentionally left blank

JL Thomas & Co. Ltd, Canal Banks, Exeter

Complaints since the last meeting

Complaint Date	Odour Date	Address	Details
WK/200810002 22/09/2008	22/09/2008	Marsh Green Road	Factory complaint - weather warm and sunny Complaint made about smell Saturday afternoon, all day Sunday and this morning. AB investigated - was yard/process type odour on some parts of Marsh Green Road. It was locally fairly strong but generally quite weak. Works to replace dryer are ongoing at factory, so side door (Canal side) open periodically to allow access. Also quantity of old equipment on rear yard and being washed down in external vehicle wash bay. This most likely to be cause of problem, particularly on Sunday when old dryer was being cleaned. JLT tower running and smelt good. Odour not judged to be offensive, although the situation is not desirable. It is however a one-off event. Agreed with NP that would wash down indoors where possible, although access to raw material room still required occasionally for lorries. About 5 hours worth of equipment still to be cleaned.
WK/200810047 23/09/2008	23/09/2008	Marsh Green Road	Factory complaint - weather sunny but with cold wind Complaint that smell bad again this morning. AB investigated - was weak and occasional raw material/yard smell on Marsh Green Road. Works to replace drier are ongoing and last large item of equipment being washed outside on vehicle wash bay (not possible to wash down inside factory due to size). Time of complaint coincides with three lorries of raw material leaving however, which may be cause of problem. Most material has been sent to other plants directly from source however smaller loads have had to come in to JLT to be loaded onto larger lorries before being taken elsewhere. Odour not judged to be offensive due to occasional and slight nature. Factory is taking steps to minimise odour releases during ongoing engineering works.
WK/200810124 24/09/2008	24/09/2008	Marsh Green Road	Factory complaint - weather overcast Complainant reported that staff on his site are being sick as a result of the odour. Rang JLT - are in process of testing new drier and not yet running or processing. JLT tower in operation and smelling good. Rear yard clear and clean. TG made assessment along Marsh Green Road and could not detect any odour from factory at that time. Three fallen stock deliveries were queuing to get into factory at approximately time of complaint, which could have caused a 'farmyard' type smell.
WK/200810235 25/09/2008	25/09/2008	Trusham Road	Factory Complaint - weather overcast and warm Complaint regarding odour and smoke coming from the site. AB investigated - was occasional slight odour on Marsh Green Road/Trusham Road. Not offensive. Dryer started however not running up to correct temperature. MBM therefore being returned to raw material room to be re-processed. This will have caused localised and very brief releases of 'mealy' odour. Also one final piece of screw conveyor being washed in yard. Towers all running since about 1130 am. All on set points although SF at low end of free chlorine range. This will be increased to upper end of range. Because of prolonged shutdown, tallow temperature low and this may explain any smoke emissions during the morning. Checks by the factory did not indicate long periods of dark smoke however.

JL Thomas & Co. Ltd, Canal Banks, Exeter

Complaints since the last meeting

Complaint Date	Odour Date	Address	Details
engineer available to investigate should the smoke emissions occur again.			
WK/200810750			
06/10/2008	06/10/2008	Feltrim Avenue	Factory complaint - weather overcast and cool
Case Comments	<p>Complaint regarding smell from factory. AB investigated - was occasional and slight, but noticeable, process-type odour. Factory not running, only JLT tower operating. The new press scrubber has been delivered to site and has been taken into the building today. This has meant that the large access door to the main dryer room has been open for some time today. This may have contributed to the complaint. TG also reported that a lorry had been loading tallow shortly before the complaint, which may also have contributed. The press scrubber is now in the building and the access door is being re-sheeted. TG cannot foresee that this problem is likely to occur again. Not considered to be offensive due to strenght of odour and very infrequent type of odour.</p>		
WK/200810769			
06/10/2008	06/10/2008	Barnardo Road	Factory complaint - weather overcast and cool
Case Comments	<p>Complainant noticed smell while walking along Barnardo Road and Topsham Road. Smell has now gone. AB investigated earlier complaint at 1400 - was occasional and slight, but noticeable, process-type odour. Factory not running, only JLT tower operating. The new press scrubber has been delivered to site and has been taken into the building today. This has meant that the large access door to the main dryer room has been open for some time today. This may have contributed to the complaint although door is now re-sheeted. TG cannot foresee that this problem is likely to occur again. Not considered to be offensive due to strenght of odour and very infrequent type of odour.</p>		
WK/200810822			
07/10/2008	07/10/2008	St Leonards Avenue	Factory complaint - weather overcast and cool
Case Comments	no reported problems at the factory, the towers are running on set points		
Phone call received	Call describing the odour as not as strong as normal but still revolting.		
EPSU Officer Visit	RS walked the area, occasional strong clean tower smell but due to the gusty nature of the wind today the odour was very transient. Not offensive due to nature and frequency of odour.		
Phone call made	Call to the factory - no problems that they are aware of but will investigate and get back to us.		
WK/200810964			
09/10/2008	09/10/2008	Feltrim Avenue	Factory complaint - weather is cold but sunny with slight breeze
Phone call made	Call to complainant to find out details of complaint. Problem had been about for the last 30mins or so around the area, she had just got back from a walk and the smell was making her feel sick		
Phone call made	Call to the factory to find out if they had any problems on site. Nothing reported but they will do an internal investigation to have a look.		
EPSU Officer Visit	<p>RS walked the area nothing in Feltrim Ave but around the Bell Isle area the towers were noticeable, mild tower smell with an organic component to the odour in the background. RS visited JLT towers running within set levels. There was an odour around the small flakt which was quite strong, the effluent tanks were being pumped out and there were vehicle movements going on in the yard area containing fallen stock, however I could also smell the composting site next door. Walked along the canal next to the composting site and a quite strong organic smell was being given off by the site, this may well of been contributing to the odour at the complaints property.</p>		
Phone call made	call to the complaint , no answer will try again later.		
Phone call made	called no answer		

JL Thomas & Co. Ltd, Canal Banks, Exeter

Complaints since the last meeting

Complaint Date	Odour Date	Address	Details
WK/200811030 10/10/2008	10/10/2008	Marlborough Road	Factory complaint - weather cool and clear
Case Comments	<p>AB investigating earlier complaint - was occasionally strong but very clean chemical treated air smell along Topsham Road and at top of St Leonards Avenue. Not considered offensive due to nature of odour.</p> <p>No process problems at factory.</p> <p>Complainant particularly interested in nature and concentration of chemicals in 'residual odour'. AB to investigate and call back.</p>		
WK/200811031 10/10/2008	10/10/2008	Feltrim Avenue	Factory complaint - weather sunny and warm
Case Comments	<p>JL and AB investigated. Was occasional clean treated air smell, but was also raw material smell evident on Trews Weir Reach and a similar but less strong smell along Topsham Road.</p> <p>Towers all OK and smelling good.</p> <p>Currently no process problems however two lorries parked on yard following breakdown yesterday/last night. The smell from these is evident on the yard area. The most odorous lorry will be moved into the airlock until it can be emptied.</p>		
WK/200811034 10/10/2008	10/10/2008	Trews Weir Reach	Factory complaint - weather sunny and breezy
Case Comments	<p>Complaint regarding the above factory. The smell is getting worse.</p> <p>JL and AB investigated. Was occasional clean treated air smell, but was also raw material smell evident on Trews Weir Reach and a similar but less strong smell along Topsham Road.</p> <p>Towers all OK and smelling good.</p> <p>Currently no process problems however two lorries parked on yard following breakdown yesterday/last night. The smell from these is evident on the yard area. The most odorous lorry will be moved into the airlock until it can be emptied.</p>		
WK/200811035 10/10/2008	10/10/2008	Norwood Avenue	Factory complaint - weather sunny and breezy
Case Comments	<p>Smell was bad at weekend and all week.</p> <p>JL and AB investigated. Was occasional clean treated air smell, but was also raw material smell evident on Trews Weir Reach and a similar but less strong smell along Topsham Road.</p> <p>Towers all OK and smelling good.</p> <p>Currently no process problems however two lorries parked on yard following breakdown yesterday/last night. The smell from these is evident on the yard area. The most odorous lorry will be moved into the airlock until it can be emptied.</p>		
WK/200811044 10/10/2008	10/10/2008	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint - weather warm and breezy
Case Comments	<p>Complaint that can smell the factory on Rivermead Road and Topsham Road - 'usual smell but also a sweet smell'</p> <p>JL and AB investigated. Was occasional clean treated air smell, but was also raw material smell evident on Trews Weir Reach and a similar but less strong smell along Topsham Road.</p> <p>Towers all OK and smelling good.</p> <p>Currently no process problems however two lorries parked on yard following breakdown yesterday/last night. The smell from these is evident on the yard area. The most odorous lorry will be moved into the airlock until it can be emptied.</p>		
WK/200811045 10/10/2008	10/10/2008	St Bernards Close	Factory complaint - weather sunny and breezy
Case Comments	<p>Smell first noticed at 1400.</p> <p>JL and AB investigated. Was occasional clean treated air smell, but was also raw material smell evident on Trews Weir Reach and a similar but less strong smell along Topsham Road.</p>		

JL Thomas & Co. Ltd, Canal Banks, Exeter

Complaints since the last meeting

Complaint Date	Odour Date	Address	Details
WK/200811361 14/10/2008	14/10/2008	Feltrim Avenue	Factory complaint - weather overcast and cool
Case Comments	<p>AB in area between 1500 and 1530. Was occasional, but not strong, process type smell on path beside river. Could not detect odour on Feltrim Avenue, Trews Weir Reach, Topsham Road etc. Was brief period of dark smoke from chimney at approx 1525 - did not detect any odour associated with this at that time and location (Trews Weir Reach). Report from NH that when they went out at 1300-1400 could detect occasional but strong tower smell - have subsequently reduced dosing on SF to reduce redox level. Also informed that was another period of dark smoke at approx 1545 - caused by No 2 boiler running too 'rich' - ie too much fuel causing incomplete combustion. This may result in an odour and tallow flow is being adjusted accordingly. These two periods of dark smoke could account for the complaint.</p>		
WK/200811362 14/10/2008	14/10/2008	Feltrim Avenue	Factory complaint - weather overcast and cool
Case Comments	<p>AB in area between 1500 and 1530. Was occasional, but not strong, process type smell on path beside river. Could not detect odour on Feltrim Avenue, Trews Weir Reach, Topsham Road etc. Was brief period of dark smoke from chimney at approx 1525 - did not detect any odour associated with this at that time and location (Trews Weir Reach). Report from NH that when they went out at 1300-1400 could detect occasional but strong tower smell - have subsequently reduced dosing on SF to reduce redox level. Also informed that was another period of dark smoke at approx 1545 - caused by No 2 boiler running too 'rich' - ie too much fuel causing incomplete combustion. This may result in an odour and tallow flow is being adjusted accordingly. These two periods of dark smoke could account for the complaint.</p>		
WK/200811719 20/10/2008	18/10/2008	St Leonards Avenue	Factory complaint - weather mild
Case Comments	<p>Call made direct to factory over weekend. No contact number left by complainant. No process problems. TG investigated - was very little breeze and was hard to find odour. Once located, was occasional slight treated air smell.</p>		
WK/200811721 20/10/2008	18/10/2008	Gras Lawn	Factory complaint - weather mild
Case Comments	<p>Call made direct to factory over weekend. Caller left no contact number. No process problems. TG investigated - was very little breeze and was hard to find odour. Once located, was occasional slight treated air smell.</p>		
WK/200811722 20/10/2008	18/10/2008	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint - weather mild
Case Comments	<p>Complaint made direct to factory over weekend. No process problems. TG investigated - was occasional slight treated air smell.</p>		
WK/200811723 20/10/2008	18/10/2008	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint -weather mild
Case Comments	<p>Call made direct to factory over weekend. No process problems.</p>		
WK/200811787 21/10/2008	21/10/2008	Chandlers Walk	Factory complaint - received by email
E-Mail	<p>Hello, I live about a mile away from the rendering plant in Marsh Barton. Over recent weeks I have noticed that the smell coming from it has become very regular (almost constant now) and very strong (so much so that I am unable to open my windows). Yesterday, when taking a run a along the river the smell was so strong that I had to cut short my outing. This situation is significantly impairing my enjoyment of the area. Please could you advise what mechanisms are in place to control and monitor the discharge from the plant and most importantly what is being done to resolve the current situation. Many thanks</p>		

JL Thomas & Co. Ltd, Canal Banks, Exeter

Complaints since the last meeting

Complaint Date	Odour Date	Address	Details
WK/200811931			
23/10/2008	23/10/2008	St Leonards Road	Factory complaint- weather overcast and warm
Phone call received	Factory complaint, the smell is bad usually noticeable on a Wednesday.		
EPSU Officer Visit	RS walked the area around Radford Road and couldn't pick up any odour, went down to the factory no reported problems at the moment.		
	The JLT tower was switched off for two minutes to change over some bearings this morning. The lorry's that were parked up over night were taken in to the factory airlock at 7.00 am this morning.		
	The towers were all running within set limits and smelling ok.		
	Whilst on site this complaint came in and I went back out to the area to investigate. The area had a clean chemical smell which was noticeable but not unpleasant.		
<hr/>			
WK/200811938			
23/10/2008	23/10/2008	Feltrim Avenue	Factory Complaint. Weather dry but cool.
Phone call made	Rang factory to log complaint. they will get back to me tonight with the results of there internal investigation.		
Phone call made	RS rang the complainant, the complaint has been it and out all day and has noticed the smell on a number of occasions. Described as very unpleasant.		
Phone call received	Call from the factory, no reported problems at the factory this afternoon all the towers are running within the set levels and nothing in the yard.		
EPSU Officer Visit	RS visited the area. Occational strong tower smell, wind quite strong and blustary.		
<hr/>			
WK/200811946			
23/10/2008	22/10/2008	Feltrim Avenue	factory complaint,
Case Comments	Call from complainant saying that the smell from the factory yesterday was very bad around the river / canal area. Didn't report it yesterday as they are using a log. But due to making a complaint today was letting us know. Have called the factory and logged it.		

This page is intentionally left blank