



Exeter City Council

To the Chair and Members
of the J L Thomas Liaison Group

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AGENDA FOR J L THOMAS LIAISON GROUP

The **J L Thomas Liaison Group** will meet on **WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL 2010**, commencing at **5.30 pm**, in the **Yaroslavl Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter** to consider the following business. If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Elaine Sherring on **Exeter 265197**.

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.

	Pages
1 Apologies	
2 Notes of meeting held on 11 November 2009	1 - 6
3 Process update	
4 Complaints received since the last meeting	7 - 10
5 Any other business	
6 Date of next meeting - 3 November 2010	



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Agenda Item 2

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

J L THOMAS LIAISON GROUP

Wednesday 11 November 2009

Present:-

Councillor Percy Prowse

Mr T Green, J.L.Thomas

Mr S Cockram, J.L.Thomas

Mr J Henthorne, Residents' Representative

John Leech, Environmental Health Manager

Alex Bulleid, Environmental Health Technician

Howard Bassett, Member Services Officer

30

CHAIR

Councillor Prowse was appointed Chair.

31

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Choules, Newcombe and John Staddon.

32

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2009

The notes of the meeting held on 22 April 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

33

PROCESS UPDATE

The list of improvement works remained active, Terry Green having advised at the previous meeting of the need to be selective and invest in areas where a substantial improvement to odour control can be gained. There had been no significant change to the process plant but progress was continuing with the various improvements works listed below:

- Installation of an extraction fan connecting the boiler house to drier room was expected to be completed within two weeks.
- A substantial quote had been received for the replacement of the odour extraction ducting with stainless steel ducting from the Fallen Stock area to JLT tower. Because of financial restraints capital expenditure would not be secured for this at present, however, the ducting had been examined and necessary repairs made. Regular inspections were made to ensure the ducting remains in serviceable condition.
- A quotation had been obtained for installing a simplified conveyor system from the pressors to the warehouse to further improve plant reliability. A further quote had also been obtained prior to the meeting. Both quotations would be considered in due course.
- No progress had been made regarding the installation of a tallow drainage system ex drier. This was not a high priority at present in the programme of improvement works.

- The installation of ducting from the Large Flakt to the press room was on hold pending the outcome of Aerox trials at the Hartshill plant in the Midlands. A preliminary mini Aerox trial had been carried out at Hartsill which had proved unsuccessful. John Leech/Alex Bullied would be advised and invited to attend if further trails were planned.
- The installation of a tallow recycle tank to improve drier efficiency was no longer necessary as there was sufficient means of diverting tallow to the drier using existing equipment.
- New warehouse doors had been installed. This was an aesthetic improvement and not odour control related.
- The replacement of two bays of factory roof to provide longer term security against wind damage was on hold at the moment as previous substantial repairs were considered to be satisfactory to ensure the integrity of the roof.
- There was no progress on the replacement of the wet cooling tower with an air condenser.
- Boiler fuel ring main and controls had been completed.
- Neutralising agent sprays would be installed to the outside of effluent tanks before Spring 2010.
- The catalyst agent for the small Flakt tower had been replaced shortly after the previous meeting.

There was an ongoing need to be selective in respect of planned improvement works because of financial restraints due to the current economic climate. Since June, the plant had changed from being open on a 24/7 basis to being open five and a half days per week, 6am on Monday until 6pm on Saturdays. There had been a decline of around 300 tonnes per week of raw tonnage resulting in the plant processing from late pm Monday to early pm Saturday. On this basis, it had been normal to experience two shutdown periods each week due to zero stock levels, the downtime being utilised for plant maintenance. Reduced tonnage had arisen from a national decline in red meat consumption and also a loss of raw materials to competitors as a result of an on-going price war which had began in August 2008.

In response to the Chair, John Leech stated that the list of possible odour improvement works had been compiled following a meeting with Directors of the Company in August 2008 in order to introduce improvements over a period of time because of a significant number of complaints over the summer of 2008. As outlined above, Mr Green had stated that the various works were being prioritised and balanced with environmental gain and the situation was being monitored by Environmental Health officers. Environmental Health officers also monitored complaints with visits made to the plant to check the residual odour and to determine whether smells were being caused by fugitive emissions as opposed to normal tower emissions. If so, the Company would be requested to take remedial action as a matter of priority.

Mr Henthorne enquired about the number of complaints in 2009 compared with 2008. The Chair stated that he had lived at his present address for 23 years and acknowledged that weather conditions impacted on the incidents of smells. To a degree, he was used to the presence of smells and therefore did not feel the need to pursue a complaint on every occasion. He stated that sometimes complaints were received regularly and that there were also long periods without complaints. He stated that he could not remember the last time he had experienced a smell.

Alex Bulleid circulated a list of a further six complaints received since the dispatch of the agenda together with a complaint analysis.

Mr Green advised that John Leech or Alex Bulleid were notified at the earliest opportunity when complaints were received by the factory and that every endeavour was made to investigate the cause.

Referring to the breakdown of complaints, Alex Bulleid stated that odour complaints were down every quarter in 2009 compared with 2008 apart from the first quarter, which was identical. There were a number of factors affecting the level of complaints.

Mr Henthorne stated that he had lived in the area for 15 years from 1994 onwards and that this was his third meeting of this Group. Prior to a number of problems in 2008, he had not complained for five years. He was at a loss to understand what had gone wrong and how the problems could be resolved. He stated that both he and Terry Green recognised that problems relating to chemical smells were treatable and that JL Thomas had spent significant sums over the years but that the problem was still there as evidenced by the number of complaints in 2008 and were possibly as bad this year. The areas to the south and south west of the plant, such as Alphington, did not make the same number of complaints as those areas to the north of the plant in the line of south westerly winds. Most complaints came from the eastern side of the river. Although the Group met twice a year, there did not seem to be any change in the overall position. Mr Henthorne suggested that there were two types of smells – a residual odour which was chemical in origin and the smell of animal by products being transported by the lorries. During the summer time it was sometimes necessary to close the windows of his bungalow, making conditions uncomfortable especially at night time leading to poor sleep. In addition, he referred to a choking sensation he sometimes experienced as a result of the smell caused by air swirling around in pockets in the same place.

Mr Green confirmed that the smell of raw material could be associated with vehicles arriving at the factory, but for some time the risk of this had much reduced. Great effort had been made to plan the arrival times of vehicles to avoid the need to park on the yard prior to tipping. Daily raw material intakes had also been reduced to ensure tipping room was normally available inside the factory. Alex Bulleid stated that there were a number of possible small scale factors that could cause the change in conditions that led to smells.

John Leech stated that any smell hanging in the air was dependent on prevailing wind conditions. Further dilution of smells following departure from the plant depended on wind conditions. Mr Green stated that there had been 104 complaints received to date in 2009 compared with 181 in 2008. Possible factors for this reduction was that wind directions had been more variable in 2009 compared to 2008 where there was a greater preponderance of south westerlies. In addition, there had been a reduction in operating hours at the factory. Mr Green stated that the Company took its environmental responsibilities very seriously and that considerable expenditure was routinely spent on environmental control. A schedule of expenditure for the period March – September was circulated to Members.

The Chair stated that the Group meetings were of value in order to ensure that the level and nature of complaints were being monitored.

It was agreed that a factory tour would be arranged for the Chair and Mr Henthorne in the near future.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Mr Henthorne enlarged on his complaint dated 26 May 2009. He stated that he had first been aware of the smell/stench standing outside his bungalow. He described it as rank/"smell of death" a description which he felt mirrored the comment of another complainant referring to the smell of road kill. He suggested that the use of the word "odour" was inappropriate and that terms such as smell, stench, stink and rank more accurately reflected the true nature of the problem associated with the plant. He believed that, in this instance, the problem related to material being carried by lorries to the plant.

He had decided to visit the plant that evening and arrived at about 6.30pm remaining for about 30-40 minutes. He had been advised (in a not particularly customer friendly manner) by a factory operative that a lorry had recently arrived. However, just before Mr Henthorne had decided to leave the yard, the same lorry had departed which he felt still smelt. Terry Green explained that pressurised hot water was used to clean vehicles inside the factory after tipping and this was very effective. In addition, all vehicles were finally sprayed with scent at the weighbridge before leaving the premises.

Mr Henthorne referred to statements recorded from historical Group meetings made by Mr Dennis, former General Manager of JL Thomas, with regard to the previous practice of using netting to cover articulated trailers. Mr Cockram commented that for many years netting had not been allowed and these had been replaced with tarpaulin sheets. Mr Henthorne enquired who owned the lorries and whether DEFRA were responsible for ensuring that the contents of lorries were properly secured.

Mr Cockram explained that the transport operations operated in compliance with the Animal By-Products Regulations which were enforced by DEFRA vets at abattoirs. Third party hauliers as well as their own vehicles were used for abattoirs collections all of which were supervised by DEFRA vets. He also advised that JL Thomas operated some fully enclosed vehicles which were used for various types of other collections, but these were not suitable for abattoirs.. Mr Henthorne compared the process with collecting dog faeces from dog bins where, although smells were evident from the bins themselves, no smells emanated from the collection vehicles as they were completely enclosed. Mr Green stated that only in recent years had rendering competitors in the north of England opted to replace netting on their lorries with tarpaulin sheets. John Leech referred to the sheeting of lorries during the last outbreak of Foot and Mouth and advised that no vehicle related complaints had been received during the outbreak. He advised that the City Council went through certain procedures when investigating a complaint in respect of the movement of material.

Mr Henthorne referred to the transportation of bones from butchers which were also transported in enclosed vehicles but which smelt when the doors of the vehicles were opened.

He questioned the urgency in treating the material on the 26th May and suggested that, in the driver's rush to get away, the vehicle had not been washed properly. He asked what had gone wrong on that occasion. Mr Green suggested that the problem might have emanated from the air lock or have been compounded by the extra volume of material dealt with on this day because the previous day had been a bank holiday.

Mr Green stated that it was normal practice for all lorries on route to the factory to stop and apply scent to vehicles before entering the City boundary.

John Leech and Alex Bulleid confirmed that the City Council would continue to monitor the position.

35

CROWN PET FOOD PLANT AT CASTLE CAREY

Alex Bulleid read out the report of Liz Taberer, JL Thomas' Group Environmental Manager on the impact of carbon filtration technology at the Crown Pet Food Plant at Castle Carey. This report had been requested as it had been reported that incidents of complaints of smells from the Castle Carey plant had reduced substantially since the works had been undertaken.

The report concluded that the use of similar technology for the JL Thomas Plant was not appropriate and that the measures used in the Exeter plant were equal to, or better than, these techniques. In addition, the Castle Carey plant dealt with pet foods which was therefore different in nature to the material processed at JL Thomas. Mr Green also reported that, on a recent visit to Castle Carey, he had noticed that the plant, which was adjacent to a number of industrial units, was shut down and therefore an assessment of emissions at the time had not been possible.

36

OTHER OPERATIONS IN THE AREA

It was noted that other smells were sometimes reported from the factory area which related to the Hide and Skin plant on Marsh Green Road and also the Council operated Green Waste site adjacent to JL Thomas' south east boundary. Mr Green advised that he reported any smells from the Green Waste Site to Alex Bulleid in case complaints relating to these smells were attributed to JL Thomas.

37

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were noted.

21 April 2010 at 5.30pm.

3 November 2010 at 5.30pm.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.40 pm)

Chair

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Complaint	Odour Date	Address	Details
WK/200913095			
16/11/200	16/11/2009	Rivermead Road	Complaint direct to factory 16/11/09
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	Complaint direct to factory at 08:37 16/11/09.		
	TG confirmed factory not processing - 10 minutes before the complaint odour treatment had been switched from the large Flakt tower to the JLT tower - this could have placed the factory at risk as the towers were switched over.		
WK/200913141			
17/11/200	17/11/2009	Feltrim Avenue	Factory complaint : Weather sunny with a very slight breeze
Case Actions:			
Phone call made	DK phoned TG at JLT to let him know about the complaint.		
Phone call	From Neil @ Factory to say that the wind is blowing in the direction of Feltrim Avenue. There is no fault with the processes and everything in working correctly. The towers are smelling 'chemical' but normal.		
WK/200913153			
17/11/200	17/11/2009	Knightley Road	Factory Complaint - weather sunny, cold with a slight breeze.
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	JL in area 12:30 - 13:00 met NH from factory - very slight treated air odour detected in Rivermead Rd - no odour in Knightley Rd at time of visit. Odour not offensive. There was also an odour of smoke in the area from a small bonfire on the allotments on the other side of the river.		
	The wind was slight and variable W/SW.		
	No process problems.		
WK/200913557			
24/11/200	24/11/2009	Bagshot Avenue	Factory complaint, wind very strong SW, wet and over cast. Factory had reported earlier a breakdown.
Case Actions:			
EPSU Officer Visit	Following a call from the factory RS went out to investigate if there was a problem being generated from the breakdown. RS walked the Belle Isle area, Feltrim, Norwood and Rivermead Road area. Detection of any odour was difficult due to the blustery conditions. There was a slight odour present in the Belle Isle park area and the Rivermead Road area however the wind was shifting all the time and any odours detected were dispersed relatively quickly.		
	In discussion with NP from the factory, the break down will take approximately 8 hrs to fix. Due to the location of the problem the crane is going to have to be in the factory all day. As a result lorries containing fallen stock are being held on the yard. All deliveries that are possible to delay or cancel have been contacted; however, this is proving problematic due to operational factors within the PDM group. NP will keep Exeter City Council Env Health updated.		
Phone call	Complaint about the smell from the factory, described as acrid - sulphurous chemical odour. Explained that there was a breakdown on site at present RS has gone to the area prior to the complaint coming in and will report back.		
WK/200913573			
25/11/200	25/11/2009	Bagshot Avenue	Factory complaint- Windy, clear now but has been cloudy and wet
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	AB investigated. Was strong, localised odour (?tallow) at junction of Rivermead Road and Topsham Road. This lasted approx 5 minutes. For remainder of investigation (approx 40 minutes), was slight, clean tower smell. Two raw material lorries parked in factory and in airlock following breakdown yesterday - nothing on yard at time of call however. Was brief loss of incineration at 0935, however boiler firing rate returned to normal before stand-by incinerator started up. This could have resulted in a brief period of odour and may be what was detected by AB.		

Complaint	Odour Date	Address	Details
WK/200913579			
25/11/200	25/11/2009	Rivermead Road	Strong odour coming from the above factory
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	<p>AB in area at time of call. Had been strong, localised odour (?tallow) prior to call being received however at time of call and subsequently was slight, clean tower smell.</p> <p>Two raw material lorries parked in factory and in airlock following breakdown yesterday - nothing on yard at time of call however.</p> <p>Was brief loss of incineration at 0935, however boiler firing rate returned to normal before stand-by incinerator started up. This could have resulted in a brief period of odour and may be what was detected by AB.</p>		
WK/200913642			
26/11/200	26/11/2009	Gras Lawn	Factory complaint - weather sunny and mild
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	<p>AB investigated in area - was noticeable tower smell - probably from small flakt.</p> <p>RS visited site - towers all OK and processing normally. One lorry of cows parked on yard temporarily because access to fallen stock area blocked by crane. This will be inside factory within 30 minutes.</p>		
WK/200913643			
26/11/200	26/11/2009	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint - weather mild and sunny
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	<p>AB investigated in area - was noticeable tower smell - probably from small flakt.</p> <p>RS visited site - towers all OK and processing normally. One lorry of cows parked on yard temporarily because access to fallen stock area blocked by crane. This will be inside factory within 30 minutes.</p>		
WK/200913691			
30/11/200	27/11/2009	Rivermead Road	Factory complaint- wind wsw, overcast with showers
Case Actions:			
Phone call	<p>Call from the factory informing us that they had received a complaint from Rivermead Rd, The factory was processing and the towers were running within set parameters. No problems were reported at the time of the complaint.</p> <p>RS and AB will go out and investigate.</p>		
EPSU Officer Visit	<p>RS and AB walked the area from Belle Isle to Salmon Pool Lane. Odour from the towers was detectable around the end of Rivermead Rd and Salmon Pool Lane. Towers were noticeable but clean and not strong.</p>		
WK/200914225			
08/12/200	04/12/2009	16 Feltrim Avenue	Loud noise coming from the above factory during the night
Case Actions:			

Complaint	Odour Date	Address	Details
Case Comments	call from JLT to report complaints received by them over the weekend: 2345 04/12/09 1350 05/12/09 1420 05/12/09		Boiler was 'howling' as result of running on gas - reduced the volume by manually controlling the firing rate however problem not resolved until shut down. Will restart today (07/12) on gas and will monitor situation. Have engineer coming out on Wednesday to assess.
Case Comments	Call from factory - complaint received at 2115 on 07/12/09 - therefore switched to tallow Will restart on gas today when RS and AB are on site to assess		
Phone call made	Another complaint received, regarding last night - RS made call to the complainant, no answer and no messaging facility .		
Phone call made	Call to the factory to inform them of the complaint about the noise last night. NP was interested to find out the time of the problem last night as they switched back from the gas last night after a complaint. They have no details for the complaint last night and are wondering if this is the same person. RS was in the area last night between 4 and 5.30 (was SW wind, overcast and raining). The factory was running on gas and there was an audible tone. This was audible from Belle Isle all along Rivermead Road. Due to road traffic noise the tone was not audible on Topsham Road however in the side streets off Topsham Rd it was. At the time of the walk around RS called the factory to see what could be done to reduce the noise and they would look into the problem, as they could find no solution the factory switched back to tallow later in the evening.		
EPSU Officer Visit	site visit by AB and RS noise clearly audible on site and noticeable on the far side of the river eg Norwood Avenue. Not resolved unless firing rate dropped to ~60% Factory are running on gas because it is significantly cheaper than tallow at the moment and are processing at 100% firing rate because have lots of material.		Agreed to run on tallow until Thursday when have boiler engineer visiting. Will then reassess but accept that may need to implement noise insulation works to area of noise source and/or run on tallow in the meantime.

WK/200918316

10/03/201 10/03/2010 Marsh Green Road Factory complaint-weather clear with strong breeze

Case Actions:

Phone call Call received of strong smell coming from JLT

Case Comments Phone call received from NP earlier in day to inform us that were commissioning new equipment on number 2 boiler and, although the incinerator was being run, the main process room had become quite fumey at times as a result of interruptions to the dryer.

AB investigated complaint - when went into complainant's premises, odour was strongly chemical but when left there was more of a process-type odour. At site, all three towers smelt very clean. Works to boiler going well and nearly finished. Repairs were being undertaken on effluent settlement tank pipework however. This may have been cause of transient process type smell witnessed. These works will be completed today.

Complaint	Odour Date	Address	Details
WK/200918352			
11/03/201	11/03/2010	Water Lane	Complaint regarding strong odour coming from lorries coming and going from the above factory
Case Actions:			
Attachment	email received		
Attachment	Letter from Ben Bradshaw		
Attachment	Response to Ben Bradshaw letter.		
Case Comments	Called complainant, explained situation as per letter and gave him contact details in event of a complaint		
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WK/200918985			
24/03/201	23/03/2010	Matford Lane	Factory complaint - weather wet and windy
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	Call received as AB and JL returning from routine downwind assessment. Fault with process at factory resulted in poor combustion in boiler and fume in process room. Incinerator started up and plant restarted ASAP. Odour downwind was combination of clean tower smell plus occasional process/press type smell. Not strong however or very constant so not considered breach of conditions in the circumstances.		
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WK/200919037			
25/03/201	25/03/2010	Marsh Barton	Factory complaint - weather wet
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	AB investigated - was occasional and slight, clean treated air smell on Marsh Green Road. Was stronger odour on Willeys Avenue/Water Lane - probably small flakt. No process problems and towers all OK.		
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WK/201000048			
06/04/201	01/04/2010	Feltrim Avenue	factory complaint - cloudy and a bit breezey
Case Actions:			
Phone call made	Call to factory to report complaint - no officers available to investigate		
Case Comments	SF first stage dosing probe fault identified at mid day. Re-Calibrated probe but would have taken a couple of hours to stabilise acid dosing at correct level.		
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WK/201000148			
06/04/201	03/04/2010	St Leonards Avenue	Complaint made direct to factory - weather wet and windy
Case Actions:			
Case Comments	Received complaint details from factory. Site was shutting down at time of call and all towers etc operating normally. Wind slight southerly. Called complainant to inform of outcome of investigation but no answer. Message left.		