



**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 17 APRIL 2013**, commencing at **2.00 pm**, in the **Bad Homburg Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter** to consider the following business. If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Jo Quinnell on **Exeter 265197**.

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

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## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### J L THOMAS LIAISON GROUP

Wednesday 28 November 2012

#### **Present:-**

Councillor Percy Prowse (Chair)  
Councillor Marcel Choules  
Councillor Rod Ruffle  
Mr J A Staddon, Residents Representative  
Mr N Parsons, J L Thomas  
Mr S Wellaway, J L Thomas

John Leech, Environmental Health Manager  
Alex Bulleid, Environmental Health Technician  
Richard Shears, Environmental Health Technician  
Jo Quinnell, Assistant Member Services Officer

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#### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Rob Sargent, J L Thomas, and County Councillor Vanessa Newcombe.

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#### **NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2012**

The notes of the meeting held on 18 April 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

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#### **PROCESS UPDATE**

Nick Parsons reported that there had been no significant changes to processes and that volumes of material processed at the factory remain the same.

In response to a question about the sniffing towers, Nick Parsons advised that there are three odour towers on site. A tube runs down the side of these to enable staff to identify what odours are being released from the top. Nick Parsons offered Councillor Ruffle a tour of the factory.

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#### **COMPLAINTS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

An additional report was circulated at the meeting which detailed an additional complaint received since the agenda was distributed, complaints summary, number of complaints received by complainant and road, days on which there were more than one complaint, and other issues witnessed during inspections.

The Chair made reference to another business which was situated near the Cleansing Department in Marsh Barton. Odours from this facility had been investigated by the Environment Agency as practices they are undertaking are outside of their planning consent. Potentially some complaints could be as a result of this, but it was difficult to distinguish, and Alex Bulleid suggested that where an officer investigated a complaint, they would be able to determine the source of the odour. The complaints listed in the report were therefore likely to be from J L Thomas premises. However, where complaints were emailed to the Council and officers were unable to investigate the complaint at the time the complaint was

made, due to the fact that in many cases the emails were received outside normal office hours, it was not possible to verify the exact source of the odour.

There had been a period, both at the beginning and end of July, where a significant number of complaints had been received. These were due to the poor quality of raw material being processed. If these two particular periods were removed, the number complaints during the period would be similar to previous years. Nick Parsons confirmed that the company could not control the quality of raw material they collected although they endeavour to collect the material as soon as possible after it has been produced.

With reference to the additional complaint circulated at the meeting, it was noted that the blood is collected but not processed at the Exeter factory. As the blood tanker was leaving the site for processing at another plant, this may have had a residual odour which could have been the basis of the complaint.

Alex Bulleid referred to the complaints summary, and advised that since 2003 when the factory changed the material processed, no other significant changes had taken place.

Nearly half the complaints came from seven complainants, and 29 complaints had been received over a 10 day period (see above). There had been a week of hot weather, and as a result of this, the material being processed had degraded more. In addition to that, a process problem had been identified where the factory lost production capacity during the week - they had an ending stock of 100 tonnes and had to start up early on the Monday morning to clear the backlog. Remedial and other works had been carried out, and this is subject to a maintenance system. The factory would be replacing equipment next year as part of programme of routine upgrades. Other factors included the wind direction, and that members of the public may have been sensitised from the odours on 30 July, which may have resulted in more complaints during the rest of the week.

It was noted that a complainant had been offered a tour of the factory to better explain the processes involved, but this offer was declined. Nick Parsons advised that the factory has an open door policy, and they would be willing to show anyone around the factory.

It was noted that over the last four years the tonnage received by the factory had been very consistent. It currently stands at approximately 70,000 tonnes, compared to around 80,000 tonnes 10 years ago.

As a result of other issues witnessed during inspections, which occurred after complaints, but did not attribute to them, the factory had put in corrective measures to ensure that these issues did not happen again.

The Chair commented that with this volume of complaints, he was happy that the factory was doing everything they could to alleviate problems. There would always be a residual odour. The majority of complaints received an instant response and an investigation was carried out. If complaints are made direct to the factory, they are able to investigate.

The residual odour does generate complaints, and as a result of this, the Council has asked the factory to review two areas of odour control.

One of the options was to replace one or possibly two of the treatment towers with a bio filter. This was a large peat bed which breaks down the odorous chemicals.

The second area for review is odour from the effluent treatment system. One solution to this issue would be to install a thermal oxidiser to replace the effluent treatment system. This had been looked at in the past but was not the right solution at that time. The effluent treatment system is an odour source and this alternative would result in significant changes to the way the factory operates so it will require careful consideration of whether it would be appropriate.

A study would be undertaken on these two options and a report would be submitted to the Council in March 2013. This report would be discussed at the next meeting of the Group.

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### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **Terms of Reference and Constitution**

The Terms of Reference for the Group pre-dates the current legislation, and therefore the Chair thought that they should be reviewed.

The Constitution states that two local residents should be invited to sit on the Group. The resident representatives should be nominated by the ward councillors, and should include a resident from either side of the river. Councillor Ruffle, together with County Councillor Newcombe, would try to identify a resident on the Alphington side of the river. Mr Staddon is the residents representative for the Countess Wear side of the river.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting would not be open to the general public, but the agenda and minutes would be made available on the website. The Chair also confirmed that the meetings would continue to be held at 2pm.

It was agreed that Officers would review the Terms of Reference. The revised Terms of Reference would be considered by members at the next meeting.

#### **Environment Agency**

With regards the business being investigated by the Environment Agency, mentioned earlier in the meeting, the Chair advised that he held copies of letters he wrote on behalf of the Cleansing Department, and Councillor Ruffle would contact the Cleansing Operations Manager to ascertain if the situation had improved.

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### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday 17 April at 2pm.

(The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 3.06 pm)

Chair

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## J L Thomas Liaison Group

### Terms of Reference

- (i) To maintain the exchange of information between Granox Ltd (trading as JL Thomas & Co) and the Council relating to the operation of the permitted animal by-products process operated at Canal Banks, Exeter.
- (ii) To report upon instances of complaints arising from the factory or the carriage of waste material to and from the factory, and to institute a monitoring and reporting system concerning these matters.
- (iii) To make suggestions for the improvement of the environmental conditions relevant to the operations of the permitted process having regard to the current Sector Guidance note.

### Constitution

- (i) One Councillor appointed by the Executive, to be the Chair of the Group, and three Councillors to represent the residents of Alphington, St Leonards and Priory wards and any other Councillor seconded to the group by the Chairman of the Group;
- (ii) Two representatives from Granox Ltd (trading as J L Thomas & Co);
- (iii) Two local residents (to be nominated by the Ward Councillors for St Leonards/Priory and Alphington to represent the area East and West of the Exe);
- (iv) Officers from the Environment Directorate of Exeter City Council.

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Complaint Date	Odour Date / Time	Address	Details
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WK/201207478

11/12/2012 11/12/2012 10:25 Water Lane C1 Vehicle complaint

#### Case Actions:

E-Mail From: DCC Highways Dept  
Sent: 10 December 2012 13:00  
To: Environmental Protection / Environmental Health

Issue type : - Unpleasant Odour  
Issue location: - Water Lane

Comments: - Dear Sir/Madam

A person has contacted DCC about HGVs using Water Lane. His main concern is those accessing J L Thomas during the night. He is concerned about the noise in a residential area and the nature of the material being carried. There are other businesses down the end of Water Lane and they only have one means of access along Haven Road and Water Lane. There are no highways restrictions on vehicle size or times of use for Water Lane and I have informed the complainant. Are there any planning or environmental restrictions for Water Lane considering the nature of the loads and times of use? Please could contact be made with the complainant regarding this query?

Case Comments Called complainant twice - no answer and no facility to leave message 12.12.12

Called and spoke to complainant. 13.12.12.

He is generally unhappy about odour from vehicles and from the factory itself. I described the controls in place and the actions that the factory take when complaints are received. I encouraged him to call us with details of specific problems.

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WK/201207641

19/12/2012 18/12/2012 08:32 Bagshot Avenue C1 Factory Complaint

#### Case Actions:

E-Mail The following customer has used the Report an Environmental Health Issue form at [www.exeter.gov.uk](http://www.exeter.gov.uk).

Please respond to the customer by telephone before 12:30

Customer Address: - Bagshot Avenue, Exeter, EX2 4RN. [View Map](#)

Report details: -  
Offender : - J I Thomas  
Issue type : - Unpleasant Odour  
Issue time : - 19:00  
Issue date : - 17/12/12

Comments: - The usual unpleasant odour contaminating the air that we breathe this evening. What has gone wrong? Please investigate and explain what is the cause this time.

Case Comments Complaint made out of hours so unable to make odour assessment.

Factory processing at time of call, with no faults and towers all were good.

AB tried to call complainant on number given but no answer and no capacity to leave message.

Called twice on 18/12 and twice on 19/12.

Left message at home tel. number as well but no response.

Complaint Date	Odour Date / Time	Address	Details
<b>WK/201207919</b>			
04/01/2013	29/12/2012 19:05	Salmonpool Lane C1	Factory complaint
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Case Comments	Received a call from the factory reporting that they had received a complaint over the Christmas period. At the time of the complaint the factory was closed and not running. There were no reported problems on site at the time of the complaint.		

<b>WK/201207984</b>			
07/01/2013	05/01/2013 14:00	Topsham Road C1	Factory Complaint
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
E-Mail	<p>-----Original Message-----  Sent: 05 January 2013 14:08  To: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  Subject: Odour 14.00 Topsham Rd st Leonard's.</p> <p>Our garden is unusable due to an odour from the carcass rendering plant in Marsh Barton. It is the most intense I have experienced it. This is a significant loss of amenity for us and our 2 young children.</p>		
Phone call made	Spoke to NP and informed him of the complaint over the weekend, explained the delay due to the complaint coming in via email. They will do a retrospective investigation of the operational conditions on site for Saturday, they were operating however they have no problems logged.		
Email	<p>Email response to complainant:</p> <p>Dear sir,</p> <p>Thank you for your email regarding the odour emitted from the PDM factory. Exeter City Council regulates the facility under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations.</p> <p>The factory is subject to regular inspections by ECC officers as well as additional visits as part of the Council's procedure for investigating complaints. During these inspections and investigations ECC officers check the operational parameters of the factory and compliance with the conditions of the permit issued under the above legislation.</p> <p>An ECC officer would normally investigated a complaint in person by attending the area affected and then going down to the factory to find out what has been happening. However, emailed complaints out of hours do cause problems for officers to investigate and subsequently retrospective investigations have to be undertaken. The factory was processing on Saturday however the operations on site were all within the operational limits set in the conditions of the permit.</p> <p>ECC will continue to monitor the site to ensure that they comply with the conditions of their permit.</p>		

<b>WK/201210135</b>			
05/01/2013	05/01/2013 15:35	Rivermead Road C1	Factory Complaint
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Case Comments	Complaint made direct to factory.		
	Factory processing normally at time of call.		

Complaint Date	Odour Date / Time	Address	Details
<b>WK/201208654</b>			
30/01/2013	29/01/2013 07:45	Bagshot Avenue C1	Factory complaint - weather overcast and windy
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Case Comments	Complaint made direct to factory out of hours.  Factory was running at time of call - all processing normally and towers on set points etc.		
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<b>WK/201209021</b>			
13/02/2013	13/02/2013 11:41	Rivermead Road C2	Noise Complaint about low humming noise overnight, possibly from JLT
<b>Case Actions:</b>			
Case Comments	Called and spoke to complainant. He described the noise as a low hum. He didn't notice it every night or all night but was unable to say if there was a pattern. I asked him to keep a note of when he heard it so we could try to connect it to working hours at JLT etc. he agreed to do this and to speak again in 2 weeks.		
Case Comments	Site visit and spoke to Neil/Nick - no changes on site which could account for noise. Possibly could be from existing plant but no obvious sources. They need more information before can proceed, but if we identify an issue they would be happy to resolve it.		
EPSU Officer Visit	Checked with NP during day and JLT would be operating all night.  Visit to witness if any noise audible at night.  Stopped on Marsh Green Road on way to complaint and was some fan-type noise from Exeter Power. Were also still working at Devon Contract Waste, but sound of forklift possibly only (?maintenance over night rather than operation of plant).  Walked along Rivermead Road and down to riverside path. Could hear faint noise from Marsh Barton direction. Source unknown. More of a broadband noise than a 'rumble'. Not loud and unlikely to be disturbing inside a house. Not indicative of any noise nuisance problem requiring further investigation at this stage.  Need to speak again to complainant about patterns etc.		
Case Comments	Called and left message for complainant 04.03.13 Complainant called back but I was out - I returned call and again could only leave message 05.03.13 Called and left message 13.03.13  AB spoke to complainant. He had rung factory again last night because of particular problem with noise. He was grateful that this had been resolved (see separate action) but did still suggest that he noticed noise from JLT every night. When pressed he could not say if there was a night he did not hear it.  I asked him if he felt it was a real problem which he wanted us to pursue further. He said probably not, although I got the impression that he did find the noise annoying.  We agreed to close the case, but that he would call us/factory if noise got worse.  He also asked a lot about how to make an odour complaint etc.		
Case Comments	Call from NP at factory to advise us that they had a noise complaint last night (12th) at 1945. The boiler was howling because of low oxygen. This was rectified when they received the complaint and did not recur.		

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