

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL**  
**J L THOMAS LIAISON GROUP**

Wednesday 22 April 2009

**Present:-**

Councillor John Winterbottom (Chair)

Mr T Green, J L Thomas  
Mr S Cockram, J L Thomas  
Mr J Staddon, Residents Representative  
Mr J Henthorne, Residents Representative

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

24 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Vanessa Newcombe.

25 **NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2008**

The notes of the meeting held on 29 October 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

At the last meeting it was reported that a working party would be set up to look at the incidents over the summer period. John Leech advised that Councillor Winterbottom, officers, Bob Ratcliffe and managers from J L Thomas had met to talk through a series of improvements which would be reported under the process update part of the agenda.

26 **PROCESS UPDATE**

Terry Green reported that the new drier was installed last September, but it was not until early February that trials and commissioning was fully completed, and from this time an improved rate of throughput had been achieved. They are now regularly achieving an increased throughput rate of around four tonnes per hour compared with the previous drier. They are hopeful that this can be further improved to an increase of around six tonnes per hour. This will be subject to DEFRA approval following recent validation trials. The benefits of increased throughput are:

- Reduced raw material stock levels and improved stock rotation
- A reduced processing week – from early February they have regularly been able to complete weekly processing by 6pm on Saturdays and sometimes earlier. This remains the target unless abnormal circumstances occur.

Alongside the drier, the new press scrubbing system was providing much improvement compared with the old system. The concentrated odours from the drier and pressors are now much cooler and less moist, resulting in improved incineration efficiency by No. 2 boiler. The room air of both the drier and press rooms is now normally visibly clear compared to the sometimes visible plume that was sometimes noticeable previously.

New state of the art electrical control panels were installed to the large flakt and small flakt towers in November, including a new build switchroom for the small flakt. This is providing improved reliability of both odour control systems with more infinite control of the equipment and enhanced information feedback to the process computer system. The overall cost of these works was around £65,000. This is in addition to the £1 million invested in the new drier and press scrubbing system earlier in the year.

Recently, a fuel supply ring main had been installed to the boilers which provides a constant fuel supply pressure. This results in improved reliability of the boilers in terms of flame failure and also reduces the risk of chimney smoke which has sometimes briefly occurred on previous occasions.

A summary of routine and capital expenditure for the previous five months was circulated to the Group and Terry Green advised that he would produce this for future meetings also.

It is expected that current volumes of raw material will decline in the coming months to around 60-70% of current levels. This is due to seasonal fallen stock/knacker material reduction, and losses to competitors as a result of the severe price war the Company has been facing since last August and is likely to continue for another 12 months. This in itself is likely to reduce the processing week (currently 1,750-1,800 tonnes per week, expected to fall to 1,200 – 1,400 tonnes per week). They would be changing from operating a four shift system to a three shift system.

In August 2008 a meeting was held with Rob Ratcliffe, Liz Taberer, Councillor Winterbottom, John Leech and Alex Bulleid to identify a programme of possible odour improvement works for consideration by the Company with a means of reducing the level of complaints in 2009 compared to the unacceptable level of complaints in 2008. It was explained at the time that it was expected that with the substantial investment in the new drier and associated equipment, when fully commissioned, environmental benefits would be gained, and these benefits are now being realised.

A further meeting took place in December with Bob Ratcliffe, Liz Taberer, John Leech and Alex Bulleid to again discuss possible further odour improvement works. Bob Ratcliffe explained that whilst it was accepted that improvements had to be made to reduce complaint levels, the Company was facing severe financial constraints due to the recession and that the availability of further capital funding would need to be established with the Board of Directors.

The areas of discussion included:

- Benefits of a new drier and press scrubbing system, when commissioned
- Repeat odour modelling of emission sources – recently completed
- Conduct odour modelling of chimney stack heights/diameters – completed
- Install an extraction fan from the boiler house to drier room – a quote has been obtained and they are expected to proceed in August 2009
- Replace the odour extraction ducting (stainless steel) from the fallen stock area to JLT tower – awaiting quote, but ducting remains intact and is regularly inspected
- Install a simplified conveyor system from the pressors to the warehouse which will improve reliability – quotes obtained and awaiting approval to proceed
- Improved tallow drainage ex drier – awaiting quote
- Install ducting from large flakt to press room – currently on hold pending outcome of Aerox trials at Hartshill to be held in July 2009. John Leech and

Alex Bulleid have been invited to attend. This involves high speed oxidation of components of odour.

- Install tallow recycling tank for drier to improve efficiency – revised thoughts, may not now be necessary
- Replace warehouse doors with fast acting door – quote obtained but on hold as an aesthetic measure and not odour control related.
- Replace two bays of factory roof – roof remains intact but replacing two bays will provide longer term security. A quote has been obtained and will be reviewed in September/October 2009 subject to availability of funding as this would cost in the region of £80,000.
- Replace the wet cooling tower with an air condenser. This removes water vapour so there are no visible fumes coming from the factory in terms of steam – under review
- Boiler fuel ring main and controls – completed as there was poor consistent power to the boilers
- Aerox trials – trials planned at the Hartshill factory in July 2009.
- Consider installing neutralising agent sprays to effluent tanks, No. 2 boiler and pressors – local quote obtained and establishing an appraisal of similar equipment used at other Group sites to determine the benefits. There was the possibility of a common supplier for the equipment if successful.
- Replace catalyst agent for small flakt tower – due to be replaced imminently.

The above list of works remains active, but Terry Green advised that there is a need to be selective and invest in areas where a substantial improvement to odour control can be gained.

John Leech added that the new drier could have a significant impact on complaints and he would monitor this over the summer to see if there had been an improvement.

John Staddon asked whether the competition for raw materials was localised. Terry Green advised that a company based in Bradford was the main competitor and competition had spread throughout all renderers within the industry. This had caused some to lower their collection charges and sometimes at nil cost. The Company had gained some new customers but the losses far outweighed the gains. The Company will lose a major supplier from the south west from 4 May which amounted to 1,000 tonnes per week to the Group. Improvements to the processes and loss of tonnage would unfortunately result in three redundancies in Exeter.

The Canterbury factory would be closing at the end of May as they had lost a lot of tonnage to competitors. The tonnage involved, circa 400-450 tonnes per week, would be shared between the Exeter and Widnes plants.

Mr Henthorne referred to the Castle Cary pet food plant recently reported in the press which had seen significant improvements in the number of complaints following odour abatement works. He queried whether anything could be learnt from that. John Leech advised that he had recently been made aware of this and he would check details with the Environment Agency as there may be a difference in the process due to the type of raw material.

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

Mr Henthorne referred to vehicle complaints and asked whether there could be occasions where vehicle odours emanated from the factory, and also asked where vehicles are sprayed outside the city. Terry Green advised that there was a greater risk of odour if vehicles stand on the yard. Steve Cockram added all vehicles are fully enclosed and trailers are fully sheeted, and that they do insist that every

vehicle uses the scent and they are all supplied with this. Unfortunately odour can escape from the natural airflow around moving vehicles

There are no controls as such outside the factory, but there are controls in terms of use of vehicle regulations and animal by-products regulations by DEFRA. The Council did carry out a lengthy process some time ago to monitor vehicles in Haven Road, in conjunction with representatives from the Company.

The scent is used to try to mask any odours and they do periodically remind drivers of set procedures regarding the use of scent. Certain types of materials are more at risk to odours than others. They make every attempt to arrange vehicles 'at risk' to come into the city outside of normal hours so they are not caught in traffic. Alex Bulleid added that if there were any odour complaints from vehicles, complainants were encouraged to call as soon as possible, with the registration number if possible, so she can call the factory to investigate immediately.

Councillor Winterbottom advised that he had placed an article in the local St Leonards newsletter but had received no contact since that time.

Alex advised that they had received another two complaints since the report was produced from Marsh Green Road on 15 April and today.

Apart from four occasions when odours were as a result of either boiler failure, a fault with the drier, flakt tower or raw material on the yard due to abnormal circumstances, the complaints had been due to mainly residual odours.

It was noted that there had been no complaints between 21 January and 1 April. This could have been due to weather conditions and wind direction.

Reference was made to three complaints on 27 November 2008 where comments in the report stated the odour as 'not offensive'. It was noted that this term was used as it was not in breach of the permit condition and comes within the regulations.

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### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Winterbottom advised that this would be his last meeting as he would become Lord Mayor in May. He expressed his thanks to J L Thomas for their cooperation and good working relationship since he had been a member of this Group. Terry Green added that he welcomed the interest Councillor Winterbottom had expressed in the factory both at and outside of this meeting.

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### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was arranged to be held on Wednesday 21 October 2009 at 5.30pm in the Bad Homburg Room, Civic Centre.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.25 pm)

Chair