

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SOUTH WEST WATER LIAISON GROUP

Tuesday 11 October 2011

Present:-

Councillor Lesley Robson (Chair)

Nick Murch, South West Water
Jim Cockburn, South West Water
Jack Board, South West Water

John Leech, Environmental Health Manager (JL)
Jo Quinnell, Assistant Member Services Officer

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APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Sheldon, Councillor Newby and Mary Evans.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2010

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

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MATTERS ARISING

Nick Murch reported that he had been seconded to his current position and had taken over from Helen Richards, who was now in another role within SWW.

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OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Jack Board circulated some photographs, and comments were made on these as follows:

Photograph 1 – The aeration plant had been refurbished. Each tank had been drained in turn. The first tank took two weeks to complete, but this process was now speeding up. This photo shows a full tank before refurbishment. The aim was to ensure that air was introduced into the effluent in fine bubbles; this made the aeration process more efficient and also saved power.

Photograph 2 – One of the empty tanks. There are 680 domes in each tank which deliver air to the effluent. It now takes approximately a week to replace the domes.

Photograph 3 – The propeller creates movement of sewage in the tank. The domes send air out in fine bubbles. The finer the bubble, the longer it stays in suspension.

Photograph 4 – The tank is starting to be filled. An air pattern test is carried out to look at the efficiency and check for any leaks before filling.

Photograph 5 – The full tank after refurbishment.

Photograph 6 – A new screen is currently being trialled. The cost of the screen is £250k. Nick Murch added that the biggest problem was plastic toiletries, cotton wool buds and baby wipes. The effects that plastics have on sewage was huge, with 90% of breakdowns caused by these, and therefore the introduction of a more efficient screen could have a significant on the impact of the operation of the works.

Photograph 7 – This is a blocked sump pump. This would normally be covered and have odour control. Cleaning out of the sump takes around 30 minutes to an hour, and during the process there is a risk of odour release. However, this was one of the basic operations undertaken on a regular basis and therefore would not be reported to the City Council. Any work being undertaken by the works that would take longer than a day would need to be passed on, so an explanation can be given to any calls from the public.

When some domes were replaced in the tanks, it had been noticed that some of the plastic had gone brittle. This would take 3-4 days to replace and the City Council would be informed when works would start – currently scheduled for 31 October.

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COMPLAINTS

Problems were being experienced with odours from the new sewer serving the Rydons development. John Leech reported that a complaint had been received on 24 August, but the wind direction established that it was not coming from the sewage works and therefore was attributed to odour from the new sewer.

Discussion was held as to the possible causes of odours. The new pumping station installed to raise the sewage from the new development at the Rydons was designed to serve the whole development. At present only part of the site had been developed and therefore sewage was remaining in the pumping station for some time prior to being pumped to the new sewer, and during this period the sewage was becoming septic and odorous. A site meeting had been held with Persimmon to discuss the operation of the pump and it was proposed to change the level at which the pump operates thus reducing the length of time the sewage remains in the tank. John Leech confirmed he was still awaiting confirmation from Persimmon that this work had been undertaken.

It had also been suggested that there could be a problem with the length of the rising main, but on further investigation, it had now been proved that this was not the problem.

Nick Murch would have further discussions with Persimmon as ultimately SWW will take on the responsibility for the pumping station.

Councillor Robson also raised raised odour issues at the bottom of Glasshouse Lane. It was suggested that this could be due to the siphon and SWW would investigate further. The problem could be made worse due to the problem with the pumping station at the Rydons as the sewage from this development crosses the river at this point.

Nick Murch circulated the list of complaints received by SWW. There had been a rise in August, but they attributed this to when they were undertaking the cleaning of the tanks.

He reported that there were a couple of other complaints received, but these had been taken off the list as the problem was pinpointed to a sewer, and not from the sewage works.

It was confirmed that the SWW helpline number was 0800 169 1144.

John Leech requested that any complaints received through SWW should be passed to the City Council and vice versa.

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nick Murch reported that they were looking at cleaning out the two digesters. It was last done approximately 15-17 years ago. However, this required some investment, and the funds had not yet been identified. If investment is found and these works are to be undertaken, it was unlikely to be before April 2012.

The works could take 1-2 months per digester, and this would reduce tanker imports at that time.

He would inform the Group if and when this will take place, and if a further meeting was required at that time.

Jack Board advised that the regular maintenance of the primary scrapers would still be carried out throughout the year.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be arranged in due course for October 2012.

An additional meeting would be arranged, if required, to discuss works to clean out the two digesters.

(The meeting commenced at 2.10 pm and closed at 2.50 pm)

Chair