



Special liaison committee meeting held at Northacre resource recovery centre on Thursday 18 July at 4.00pm

Present:

Mike Webster, group director, Hills Waste Solutions (MRW)
Ed Dodd, divisional director, Hills Waste Solutions (ED)
Simon Thomas, Northacre plant manager, Hills Waste Solutions (ST)
Monique Hayes, group communications officer, Hills Group (MH)
Martin Litherland, Head of Waste Management, Wiltshire Council (ML)
Jo Riley, Waste Contracts and Development Officer, Wiltshire Council (JR)
Dean Thomas, Planning department, Wiltshire Council (DT)
Cllr Francis Morland, Heywood Parish Council (FM)
Andy West, Westbury Dairies (AW)
Paul Wilkinson, Environment Agency (PW)
Paul Scotford, Environment Agency (PS)
Oliver Moores, Environment Agency (OM)
Cllr David Jenkins, Wiltshire Council (DJ)

Apologies

Sue Ezra, Westbury Town Council

Following introductions, ED confirmed that the purpose of the meeting was to disseminate correct information regarding the Northacre resource recovery centre (NRRC) and actions that Hills is taking in response to reports of increased fly activity in the area. Feedback from those attending was also being sought.

ED advised that:

- The NRRC and the activities undertaken are expected to have flies present and the plant is designed to cope with this.
- Hills had been in regular communication with both Wiltshire Council (WC) and the Environment Agency (EA) once an above normal increase in flies on the site had been noted.
- Hills had been speaking directly to residents who had lodged complaints with the company and this would continue.
- Hills had agreed a plan of action to minimise flies at the NRRC which had been agreed with the EA.
- Hills actions need to result in a significant reduction in the number of flies at the site.

ST explained that:

- No waste had been received at the NRRC in the week leading up to when the first complaints regarding flies were received.
- The fact that the NRRC was not receiving waste at the time was due to a new conveyor system being installed as part of the planned commissioning phase and not related to the level of flies.
- A door in the refinement area and another at the workshop were damaged.

ST set out the actions plan that Hills was implementing to bring about an effective reduction in flies on site:

- All areas of the building which are not under negative pressure had been sprayed on 15 and 17 July and there has already been a noticeable reduction in the number of flies. Spraying will be repeated as required.
- All internal areas were 'fogged' on 18 July and this will be repeated as required.
- Fly traps will be installed above all doors in the offices section of the building.
- Use of mobile atomisers (these spray a very fine mist that inhibits fly and odour movement) for the use at doors where appropriate.
- Spraying new waste when it enters the NRRC to destroy fly larvae.

ED confirmed that Hills is working closely with the EA on the matter.

ED stated that Hills had been receiving mixed feedback from residents and this was making it difficult to establish if methods being employed were effective.

AW confirmed that the dairy had noted an increase in flies and gave a summary of the fly management system they employ. AM confirmed that the dairy kept historical data on fly numbers and would share this information with ST.

DJ confirmed that he had received a number of complaints from local residents and businesses who believed that the NRRC was the main cause of the problem. DJ stated that people are looking for answers and good communications from Hills and the EA as to what is happening and a plan of how it will be tackled.

ED advised that Hills had been concentrating on implementing controls to tackle the increase in flies and had not spent sufficient time on relaying information to local residents and businesses. ED confirmed that this would be addressed in the next days.

ED advised that Hills had been contacted by a local resident on behalf of an action group and confirmed that such groups may be allowed to join the liaison committee once it was clear who the interested parties represented and its constitution.

MRW said that the messages from this meeting need to be taken back to the local community by everyone present.

AW asked if anything could be done to wheelie bins when they are collected from households. ED explained that Hills do not collect the wheelie bins from households and communicating with residents about waste collection was a role for Wiltshire Council.

ML stated that it was not practical to sanitize waste in wheelie bins before it comes to the NRRC. ML confirmed that Wiltshire Council had issued advice to householders on the steps they can take to manage their own waste and reduce fly numbers, such as cover any prepared food, wrap food waste before placing in a bin and ensuring that bins lids are firmly closed.

FM enquired if there were any other potential sources that had been identified which could be attributed to the increase in flies. FM stated that the problem was on the increase and that places several miles from the NRRC had reported an increase in flies. FM said that the public needed to be reassured that the technology being employed at the NRRC was robust and enquired if any design problems had been identified.

MRW confirmed that there are similar plants in other countries where typical weather temperatures were much higher and the design measures in the plant are sufficient. MRW confirmed that the fly management system is not currently capturing the number of flies it should be and that Hills is making modifications to improve effectiveness.

ED detailed the procedures Hills employs at its other waste management sites and stated no similar problems are being experienced and confirmed that any site treating waste would be very attractive to flies in the current hot weather conditions.

MRW stated that Hills believed the NRRC was a contributing factor to the fly problem and PW confirmed that the EA are looking at a number of sites in the Westbury area as sources of the fly problem, as well as collecting samples of flies to identify the type. OM confirmed that the EA would be investigating the regulated sites (where the site holds an environmental permit and falls under the EA jurisdiction), but that Environmental Health Officers from Wiltshire Council would be able to investigate sites that are non-regulated, such as the housing development on Slag Lane, which was reportedly the site of an old landfill site.

FM enquired as to what species of fly was being found and PW confirmed it as either the 'lesser house fly' or 'common house fly'.

DJ enquired about the doors and queried why some were open. ED confirmed that the doors to the bio treatment area were currently shut and had been for more than a week as no waste had been received at the site. ED advised that the doors that were open are to access the refinement area. ED advised that the doors to the waste reception area are fitted with a mist suppression system, however during maintenance the doors need to be open to undertake the work. ED confirmed that in future during maintenance, mobile sprayers and atomisers will be used.

JR questioned if the EA had experience of other similar sites and if they could share experience on how these issues could be managed. PS stated that a good pest control policy was important along with regular monitoring and the ability to implement preventative action plans early when weather conditions change.

ED stated that the situation had escalated very rapidly and whilst this had tested systems to their limits, which is exactly what the commissioning phase was meant to do, it had compounded due to the extremely warm weather.

FM suggested that delivery of waste to the site be diverted until Hills were satisfied that the issues had been solved. ED explained that this would be considered.

ML advised that delivery of waste to the site was due to restart in w/c 21 July and that 240 tonnes would be delivered per day. ED confirmed that this was the amount that was being delivered prior to the site being closed for 10 days to install a conveyor belt in the refinement hall.

ST advised that Hills will investigate the feasibility of installing systems to treat all new waste coming into the site with pesticides / growth inhibitors to either kill fly larvae or slow their development and in the meantime will use 'fogging' methods to distribute pesticides into the bio-hall where existing waste is being treated. ST confirmed that pest control experts would be employed on a contract basis going forward to deliver a structured pest control plan across the NRRC.

Ed confirmed that a 'residents contact number' would be made available for people with concerns to contact the NRRC.

FM suggested that figures should be released on the number of complaints being received by all parties to reassure the public that the problem was decreasing.

PW suggested that the Environmental Health Officers could be more proactive in getting the facts out to the public on what is being done by Hills and the measures the public can take themselves to restrict fly activity.

OM queried what communications Hills had distributed. MH explained that a statement from Hills had been provided to all local media and posted on the website. Hills had also corresponded with all those who had contacted the company direct.

OM agreed that the 'residents contact number' would be a good idea and stressed the importance of advising the public that Hills was working on ways to reduce flies at the site.

It was agreed that Hills would implement a system of counting flies, similar to the tried and tested method used on other Hills sites and at the adjacent dairy, in order to monitor the situation and which will also highlight any future issues giving the site staff time to put counter measures in place.

It was agreed that both Wiltshire Council and the Environment Agency would provide Hills with details on the geographical areas that complaints had been received from in order that a map could be drawn of areas affected.

It was agreed that a further meeting would be held on 1 August at 10.00am at the Northacre resource recovery centre.