



**Minutes of the Northacre Resource Recovery Centre liaison committee meeting
held in-person at Northacre 16 June 2026 at 4pm**

Present

Wiltshire Council

Sarah Valdus (SV)
Dean Thomas (DT)
Adrian Hampton (AH)

Wiltshire/Westbury Councillors

Councillor Boaz Barry (BB) - Wiltshire
Councillor Gordon King (GK) – Wiltshire and Westbury East

Westbury Town Council

Councillor Matthew Dean (MD) – Westbury West

Heywood / Chapmanslade Parish Councils

Councillor Francis Morland (FM)

Environment Agency

Tom Fowler (TF)

Hills Waste Solutions

Paul Scriven (PS)
Simon Allen (SA)

The Hills Group

Chris Waddell (CW)

	ACTION
1. Apologies	
No apologies Also invited: Councillor Mike Phillips Wiltshire Council Councillor Robert Smith Councillor Carole King RSVP - stepped down due to Mayoral duties – Westbury North George Nicholls Arla Foods	
2. Comms issues	
CW apologised on behalf of Hills about recent comms IT issues that were not unique to this liaison committee and assured the committee that Hills would ensure invites were sent and received and that Hills would follow up where any further issues remained.	CW to monitor issues
3. Previous minutes	
Accepted	

4. Update on site operations and environmental compliance

PS reported on the biofilter issue and explained that watering had in recent weeks failed in the biofilter leading to over-watering of the filter materials leading to reduced airflow.

The faulty meter was replaced and over the weekend commencing Friday 12 June, this new meter also failed.

The old meter has been temporarily reinstalled as Hills have been able to calibrate against known faults and use an analogue back up meter.

MD and BB asked when the first replacement occurred.

PS said it had taken several weeks to identify the issue and that Hills contractors were brought in to investigate pressure differences and excess leachate production in the filter.

MD asked if EA were first to find the issue as suggested by local news reporter.

TF explained that the discovery was a combination of Hills' efforts and those of the EA working with Hills in checking fans and flow rates in the filter.

BB expressed concern that there were repeated issues over the years with filters and asked why Hills systems didn't ever seem to work. BB added that odours were particularly bad at Westbury train station.

MD added that he had also received a number of complaints about the station.

SA didn't accept that the plant consistently didn't work and explained that this is a multi-million-pound plant and the biofilter represented a large investment including expensive material costs. SA explained that where there were issues with the automated watering system that those issues were rectified as soon as possible and that daily checks and manual processes installed to provide back up. While SA accepted residents' frustrations he also said that having spent 40 minutes in local housing estates before the meeting that he could not detect odours and was surprised about complaints from Westbury Station as prevailing winds would blow any odours in the opposite direction.

MD asked if this was 'as good as it gets' and asked when things would be back to normal.

SA and PS said more monitoring is happening and that increased airflow should improve the efficiency of the biofilter and therefore further reduce the likelihood of odours.

GK asked how many times under the EA's EPR monitoring had Hills been issued a section 36 enforcement notice since the plant opened.

TF one Section 36 notice had been issued in relation to the biofilter exchange five years ago and that waste inputs were temporarily reduced as a result of that notice.

GK asked if there was a specific odour management plan (OMP)

TF said the OMP was subject to continual evaluations and adaptations and that therefore the most recent OMP had not been signed off.

SA confirmed that there was an existing approved OMP but the recently submitted review had not been approved by the EA

GK asked TF if Hills used best methods.

TF confirmed that they did and explained that in addition the new stack height was still in discussion and that the biofilter might not be the main reason for odours offsite.

PS said that the proposed stack could increase from 12m to 27m but that Hills would make sure other areas of plant were running optimally first.

MD said no residents from his ward complained about proposed new stack which would be tiny compared to any future EfW stack in the area.

SV asked about other possible reasons for odour.

PS said that Hills was looking at ventilation issues generally.

SV asked if odour was escaping the plant.

PS said it is possible this might be the case, with recent biofilter issues.

SA explained the efficiency of the biofilter is the most critical part of controlling any potential odours from this facility and that the increased stack height was the last part of any overall improvement to the operation of the plant.

TF explained that evidence was complaints at weekends when people were at home were less and complaints during the week would suggest any odours are coming from the building rather than the stack.

GK asked if those emissions were sufficient to spread beyond site.

TF explained that typically levels were at 3-4 at boundaries of site and that in some residential areas the EA had detected level 1-2 in residential areas. TF acknowledged intermittent issues reported at the Station and on a new housing estate in the last few weeks.

GK said the station issues were constant.

TF said this was unlikely because of prevailing wind directions.

MD asked for explanation of EA's odour scoring.

TF

- 0 = no odour
- 1 = very faint odour
- 2 = something there but not specific
- 3 = identifiable and noticeable
- 4 = strong enough to put people off eating
- 5 = permeates clothes and hair
- 6 = could make people feel ill

GK asked why water was introduced to the biofilter.

PS said that the filter's microorganisms needed moisture, the right temperature and in this case fuel which came from the organic content of the plant's airstream.

MD asked if the composition of waste e.g. food waste tonnages reduction, affected the facility.

PS said no effect on facility.

TF said that as food waste was dried in the plant it made no difference if included in the waste stream or not. He said that a reduction in food waste might mean less odour but that wasn't conclusive.

BB asked if the site would change overall due to new waste streams.

SV asked if less food waste would make site processes operate less efficiently.

FM asked if calorific values are higher with less food waste.

PS a report by Entсорга confirms that specific processes will not be affected by the removal of food waste.

SA emphasised that calorific values were within ranges needed and that plant in terms of odour control was not less efficient. In fact, with less food waste in the residual waste stream, it is likely that potential odour from the site would reduce. The contract with the council is a landfill diversion contract with 60,000 tonnes of material per year coming through the plant with approximate outputs of 50% as RDF, 25% as landfill and 25% moisture. So, with less food waste, which is very wet the proportion lost through moisture loss will reduce.

MD asked about future plans for plant if tonnages reduce.

GK asked if Hills expected increased tonnages (i.e. up to 30,000 more per year) within the terms of the contract.

SA said the contract allowed for 60,000 tonnes per year until 2038. There were currently no plans to increase inputs above 60,000t. At this time there is no plan to change the facility, but Hills is in negotiations with Wiltshire.

MD asked about if shortfalls in tonnages meant reduced hours or lorry movements.

SV said that Wiltshire Council and Hills were in contract negotiations.

FM asked at what point plant became uneconomical.

BB asked if plant could run on just 25,000 tonnes.

SA confirmed plant could run on reduced tonnages.

BB asked about liability cap.

MD asked whether food waste removal was definite as it was statutory.

SV Yes

FM asked if Hills would face similar problems to other plants where 12-month local authority derogation of waste stream legislation was in place.

SA said Hills has a contract with the council to accept 60,000t of waste per year and there were provisions in place under the contract if the Council under delivered.

PS said Hills has no knowledge of other MBT contracts.

MD said in 31 authorities with derogation MBTs are seen as a negative way of managing waste.

SA said Hills unlikely to continue with an MBT beyond end of contract as MBTs are now old technology

MD asked if food waste would be processed at Northacre.

SA said there were no current plans to process food waste at Northacre.

FM asked if solution is for waste to go straight to incinerators and if Northacre would become a transfer station.

SA agreed that this was a potential solution in the future,

MD expressed residents' concerns about odours from waste movements between Northacre and any future EfW with reception area.

SA said outputs currently go to the Netherlands or Landfill and that it is unlikely that odours would be worse if an EfW facility was next door.

TF Incinerators are seen as a far better solution than MBTs.

<p>MD expressed concern about future lorry movements, odours from lorries and that the local B-road infrastructure was not good enough to accommodate an incinerator.</p> <p>SA said both the MBT and NRE have the relevant planning permissions where traffic movements have been assessed.</p> <p>MD concluded that better filtration, the proposed stack and reduced food waste would improve the odour issues.</p> <p>SA agreed that these factors could only improve any potential odour leaving the site.</p>	
5. Planning applications	
<p>PS no planning applications other than the stack height extension as previously discussed.</p> <p>MD asked who would pay for the stack.</p> <p>PS said that will be dealt with under the contract but not known at this stage.</p>	
6. Any other business	
<p>MD asked if Westbury Town Clerk and local MP Andrew Murrison and his researcher could attend in future.</p> <p>SA said terms of reference would need to be reviewed.</p> <p>MD asked about going through the environmental report at next meeting.</p> <p>SA encouraged queries before the next meeting.</p> <p>BB asked if Hills would send anyone to the Area Board Meeting.</p> <p>SV said that was for Wiltshire Council to discuss with Hills.</p> <p>BB asked the EA about monitoring stations similar to those at Calne landfill.</p> <p>TF explained that organic compounds at Westbury can't be monitored in the same way as Calne's monitoring as Calne's issue is specifically H₂S related and in response to a far higher volume of complaints.</p> <p>GK asked if Hills had a gas flare at Calne</p> <p>SA confirmed yes.</p> <p>FM complained that further to earlier discussions about comms' IT issues that he hadn't received minutes and when looking for them he found a copy of the annual environmental report on Facebook. FM suggested that Hills or Wiltshire Council was hiding information and that EA was pushing content onto social media.</p> <p>SV said it wasn't the case and that Wiltshire was not intending to hide anything.</p> <p>MD said that everything should go via committee including press statements.</p> <p>SA confirmed that Hills was not hiding anything from the committee and the report FM had found on Facebook had been published on the Hills website for all to see. He also said that the committee was no less well informed than anyone else and that the Hills documents mentioned were freely available on the Northacre website. He did agree that the liaison committee should be notified if any such reports were published in the future.</p> <p>FM asked about an increase in complaints for the last reporting year.</p> <p>SA agreed complaints had risen as per the annual report but that recently the plant was running more efficiently.</p>	<p>CW to review</p>

<p>MD asked about infrastructure issues with cranes.</p> <p>GK asked about maintenance plans.</p> <p>PS said that cranes had been an issue and that conveyors were prone to breakdown due to heavy or sharp items in the waste stream, but all equipment was subject to a robust planned preventative maintenance schedule.</p> <p>TF reminded everyone that the EA's enhanced odour patrols were continuing and that they expect the situation to improve.</p>	
<p>7. Next meeting</p>	
<p>September - date to be confirmed and communicated as soon as possible. Hills noted that Mondays were an issue.</p>	<p>Hills</p>

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