

Web pages launched on chemical site clean-up

Dedicated web pages to provide more information on the clean-up work currently being undertaken at an old factory site near Hauxton were launched by South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Environment Agency on Friday (21 May).

The web pages include information on what is happening and why, how the clean-up is being done and some common questions and answers on the work.

Councillor Sue Ellington, portfolio holder for environmental services at South Cambridgeshire District Council said: 'We know people want to get more information on what is going on at the site, and we've developed these pages in conjunction with the Environment Agency to help answer some of the questions people have.'

The land used to be owned by Bayer CropScience which produced agrochemicals including pesticides and herbicides. Over time, the chemicals have contaminated the soil and ground water on site and pose a potential threat to the Riddy Brook and River Cam, so must now be cleaned-up.

Work on-site is causing intermittent smells to be produced as contaminated soil is dug-up releasing odours which were previously trapped underground. The Environment Agency and South Cambridgeshire District Council are working with the contractor (Vertase) to limit the impact of these odours on neighbouring villages and with the Health Protection Agency (HPA) to assess any health risks.

Air quality around the site is checked daily (and more frequently if required) and air samples from the site are collected monthly for subsequent analysis. The HPA has advised that the levels of compounds identified so far are unlikely to pose a risk to health. The company which is doing the clean-up work, Vertase, is using deodourising systems to mask smells from the soil excavation and treatment.

Environment Agency Area Manager Geoff Brighty commented: 'Everyone involved with the site is working hard to minimise the nuisance odours caused by the clean-up work. Our role is to ensure the site is cleaned-up safely, and we are working closely with the HPA which advises on human health. It is likely that there will be intermittent smells until the work is completed. But to safeguard our environment into the future, this work must be carried out now.'

'We really appreciate how patient local people have been so far, and the help they have given us with identifying particular problems. This has already led to changes to site operation, and we are continually reviewing the work as it progresses.'

People can download an odour log from the South Cambridgeshire District Council web pages at www.scambs.gov.uk/bayersite, or ring the Environment Agency's hotline on 0800 80 70 60 to report odour problems.

Geoff continued: 'It is particularly important that people tell us the exact time and date when they noticed the smells so that we can compare this with weather patterns and wind directions to identify when problems might occur and alter working practices if necessary.'

Any concerns people have about the odour affecting their health should contact their family doctor or NHS Direct on 0845 4647

ENDS

Media enquiries:

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All Environment Agency news releases, both regional and national, can be found on our web site: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

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Notes for editors

The web site can be found at: www.scambs.gov.uk/bayersite

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