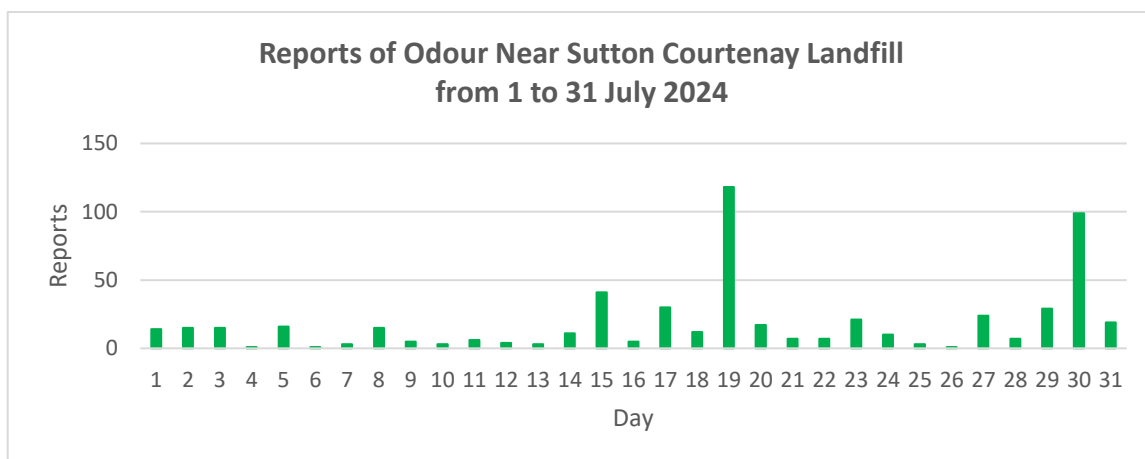
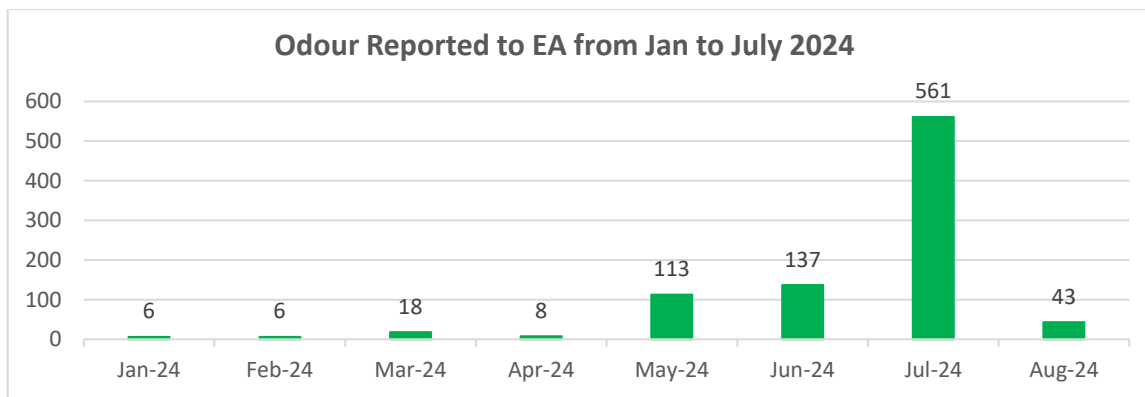


Sutton Courtenay Community Liaison Group – Environment Agency update August 2024

Background

We recognise the nuisance that unpleasant odours have been causing the local community since May this year. There are several sites in the area that have the potential to generate smells. While our officers have perceived other odours in the area, our investigation has found the FCC landfill at Sutton Courtenay to be the main source of reports in recent months. The charts below show the number of reports from residents of Sutton Courtenay, Appleford and Didcot this year and the number for the month of July alone. In general, more northerly winds can take odours towards Didcot while more south/south westerly is towards the villages of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford.



When will the smell end?

The issue at the FCC Sutton Courtney landfill has arisen from a large open pool of leachate forming at the southern end of the operational site closest to Didcot. As rainwater percolates through waste, it dissolves a range of substances which then collect at the base of the landfill as a polluted liquid. This is known as leachate which can contain trace levels of odorous contaminants including hydrogen sulphide which generates the eggy, sulphurous type of smell many residents are reporting.

Since we became aware of the problem, we have worked hard to ensure FCC resolve this issue and comply with their permit. The action plan we agreed with FCC has progressed and remedial work on site is nearly complete. Most of the surface leachate has now been removed from site with the remainder due to be gone within the first few weeks of August. By end of the month, the remaining engineering work should also be finished. This includes reducing the level of leachate in the operational cell, removing contaminated material, infilling and capping the area and installation of additional gas capture infrastructure. We expect there may be some nuisance odour until the end of August while the remaining engineering work is completed and takes time to become fully effective. We will continue to inspect the site weekly, respond to reports, undertake our own odour surveys, assess monitoring results and ensure FCC continue to progress their action plan.



Ponded leachate on site 8 July 2024



Remediated area 8 August 2024

What is the impact of the smell?

The main odorous element is hydrogen sulphide which the human nose is very sensitive to. We recognise that the odour is a nuisance and can be an irritant. Some people may experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches or dizziness even when the substance that causes the smell is not harmful to health at the levels experienced. If you have any health concerns or symptoms, we recommend that you contact your local GP or ring the NHS helpline 111. We have been working with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the local environmental health team to assess the extent of odour pollution and potential impact on health. UKHSA are an independent government agency who provide public health advice. Odour has been intermittent over several months at various locations around Didcot, Appleford and Sutton Courtenay, depending on wind direction. While the odour can be smelt at different locations, the indicative data shows that the levels of hydrogen sulphide are well below the World Health Organization (WHO) Air Quality Guideline for Europe. We will continue to undertake our own odour surveys and liaise with UKHSA if further monitoring is required.

Next steps

We expect to emissions from site to reduce and odour reports to decline over the coming weeks. Our focus has been getting the site compliant and stopping the smell. We haven't ruled out taking further enforcement action for offences related to this incident and breaches of the environmental permit. Any enforcement response we take will be in accordance with our published enforcement and sanctions guidance which you can find on our website.

Please continue to report odour to our 24/7 freephone pollution hotline on 0800 807060. We do pass anonymised details of the reports we receive to FCC so that they are aware of the impact they are having and to ensure they are doing all they can to mitigate odour and get this issue resolved.

For all other enquiries email: enquiries_thm@environment-agency.gov.uk (**not** to be used for reporting incidents).