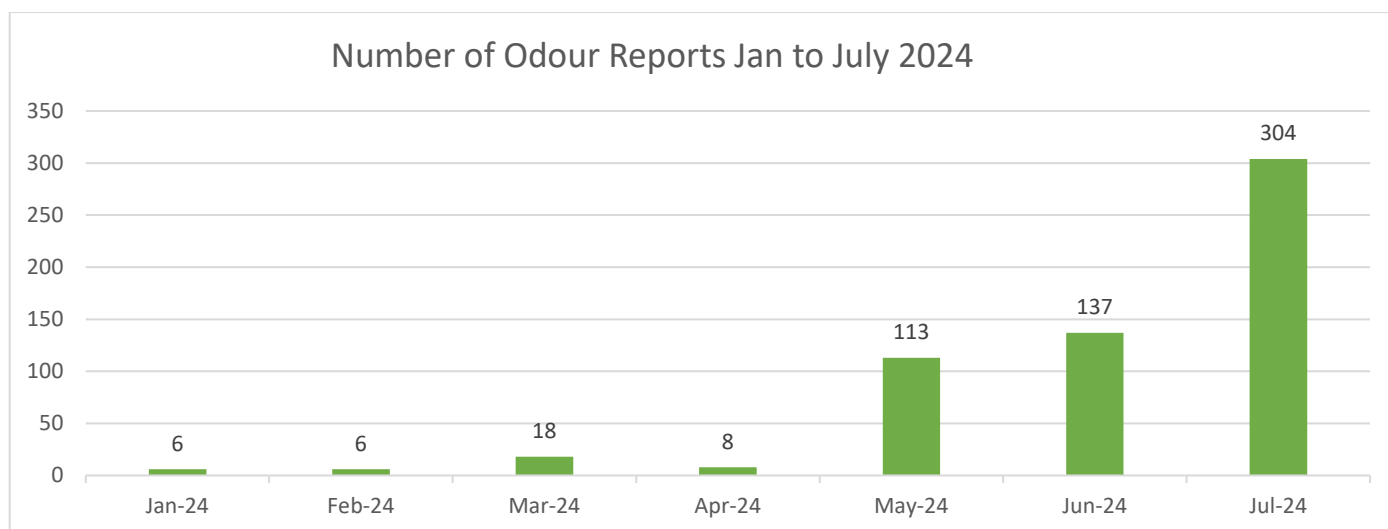


## Sutton Courtenay Community Liaison Group – Environment Agency update July 2024

### Background

Since May, there has been a large increase in reports of odour to our pollution hotline number from residents in Sutton Courtenay, Appleford and Didcot (see bar chart below). In the last week, beginning 15 July, we have seen a sharp rise in reports coinciding with the warmer weather. We recognise the nuisance that unpleasant odours are causing to the local community. 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.



This briefing provides an overview of the problem and the action we are taking to ensure FCC resolve this issue as quickly as possible.

### What is the source of odour?

No operational landfill will ever be completely odour free due to the nature of waste materials and the operations and processes that occur on site. However, the level and type of odour arising from such operations should not be prolonged and impact the quality of life of residents. We expect all operators to follow good practice to minimise offsite smells and comply with their environmental permit. The issue at the FCC Sutton Courtenay landfill has arisen from a large open pool of leachate forming at the southern end of the operational site closest to Didcot (see picture on next page). 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 elevated levels of odorous contaminants including those that generate the eggy, sulphurous type of smell many residents are reporting.

Landfills such as the one at Sutton Courtenay are engineered with impermeable materials to stop leachate escaping into the environment, particularly into groundwater or nearby watercourses. Ordinarily, leachate is collected via a sealed drainage system to collect and remove it from the site to an authorised treatment facility, without causing an odour.



This picture shows the pool of leachate that has formed on the Sutton Courtenay landfill.

## Environment Agency Action

We are taking action to ensure FCC tackle this problem and comply with their permit. Our officers assess permit conditions which include measures to control odour. We categorise any non-compliances based on the environmental risks and impact. We can also take enforcement action over non-compliances in order to gain improvements. This can include warnings, enforcement or improvement notices or for serious failings, cautions or prosecution. We have an Enforcement and Sanction policy to guide our enforcement decisions. Our aim is to get the site back to complying with their permit and we will use the tools available to us in a proportionate and transparent way to achieve this.

The solution is to remove the ponded leachate from the site as quickly as possible. We have seen the number of tanker lorries removing the leachate increase and we have approved the temporary use of a treatment plant on site which will help reduce levels quicker. As well as increasing removal rates, we have approved additional engineering on site that will contain and prevent further ingress of ground and surface water into the ponded leachate. FCC have also completed extensive temporary capping on site that will help with gas management and reduce leachate being generated. The operator has also deployed odour suppression units on the landfill, and we have asked for additional air quality monitoring to be undertaken on and off the site.

Our officers are in regular contact with FCC and we continue to regularly inspect the site and undertake our own surveys. Unfortunately, while leachate is treated and removed over the coming weeks, the landfill may continue to generate nuisance odours. Our current focus is to work with FCC to ensure they resolve this issue as quickly as possible and get the site back to complying with their permit.

We do understand the impact smells are having on the local community. 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](mailto:enquiries_thm@environment-agency.gov.uk) (**not** to be used for reporting incidents).

