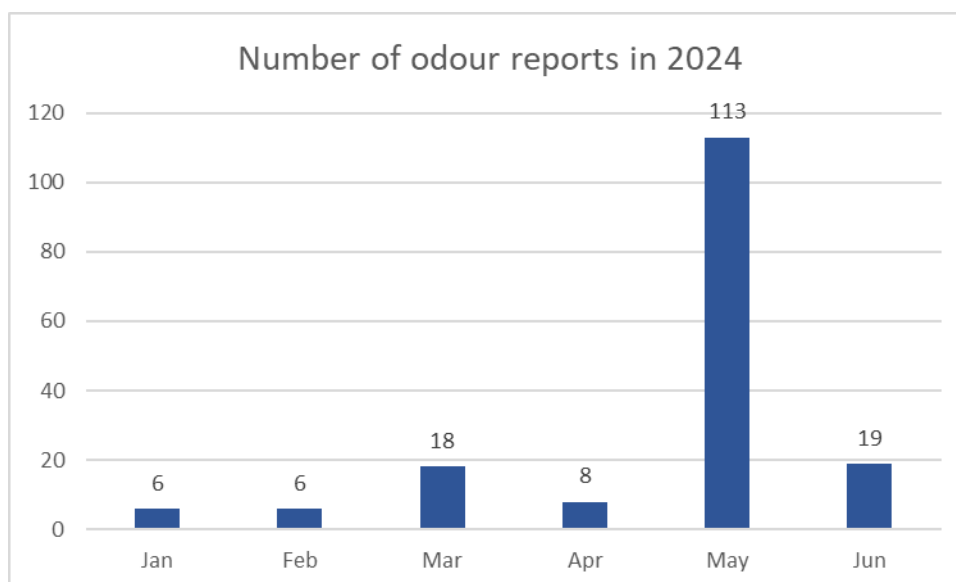


## Sutton Courtenay Community Liaison Group – Environment Agency update June 2024

### Odour reports and investigation March to June 2024

In our last briefing note, we provided an update on our investigation into ongoing odour complaints between January and March 2024. The graph below shows the number of reports we have received each month since the start of the year. There are several sites in the area that have the potential to generate odour. Our investigation has confirmed that the FCC landfill is the source of the majority of odours being reported to us in recent months. This briefing provides some further detail and the actions we are taking to ensure FCC resolve the current odour that is impacting residents of Sutton Courtenay, Appleford and Didcot.



During March this year, we received 18 reports of odour. Twelve were during the last week of the month. Most of the calls were from residents in Sutton Courtenay. We inspected the landfill site on 26 March. FCC confirmed they had identified a fault with a section of gas main on site which was subsequently repaired. At the time, this appeared to be the likely source of odour. However, we continued to receive odour reports into April. We know it can be very hard to describe smell - many of the callers were using words such as egg, sulphurous and sewage or bin like odours being detected.

We inspected the site again on 10 April, focussing on FCC's management of the current operational cell. Our officers detected a strong egg/sulphurous smell close to the operational cell. We could see that a large body of surface water next to the cell had become contaminated with waste. We confirmed with FCC that removal of leachate was a priority for odour control.

During May, there was a large increase in the number of odour reports to our pollution hotline. This coincided with the ambient air temperature warming up and wind direction frequently moving to a north westerly direction meaning residents, particularly around Ladygrove, were now reporting odour. We received over 100 reports in May, peaking at 45 during the second week of the month. The callers often described an egg/sulphurous smell and reports were usually concentrated in the mornings between 07:00-11:00 and the evenings 20:00-23:00. We undertook 5 surveys during May around the area but on these occasions our officers were unable to detect an odour. We did detect leachate odour offsite prior to site inspections on 26 April and 1 May.

We inspected the site on 1 May. Our officers detected a strong leachate odour offsite. FCC informed us of the actions they were doing to resolve the situation which included increasing leachate removal rate and installing a temporary storage tank. They produced an action plan and committed to providing the EA with regular updates.

The site was inspected again on 17 May 2024. FCC confirmed they had increased the weekly rate of tankering. However, it appeared to us that the ponded leachate had increased since our last inspection. We were not satisfied that FCC were taking all the appropriate measures to reduce and remove ponded leachate quickly enough and a breach of permit was recorded. Further action was discussed with FCC including the potential use of a reverse osmosis plant. This equipment would allow more leachate to be treated on site and help reduce odour. We are supportive of any mechanism FCC can deploy to resolve this situation as quickly as possible. However, we need to ensure their proposals do not cause other environmental issues. We are currently waiting for FCC to submit further technical info so we can review whether the temporary use of reverse osmosis is appropriate. Following this inspection, FCC also installed a dedicated line and increased the rate of extraction.

## Next Steps

We expect any site we regulate to be well managed and not impact the local community. Unfortunately, we expect odours will continue to impact residents until FCC remove the ponded leachate. Given the number of odour complaints in May, we have classified this as a significant category 2 incident. We will ensure FCC continue to do all they can to resolve this situation as quickly as possible. Recording breaches of permit is normally the most successful measure we can take in getting an operator to improve their performance. We will consider more formal enforcement action if that is appropriate and in line with our enforcement and sanctions policy.

Please feel free to share this update with residents and encourage them to continue to report odours to our pollution hotline 0800 807060.

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).

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)