

# Briefing 5: Reports of odour in Calne

25 June 2025

## Introduction

The Environment Agency is continuing to investigate odour complaints made in Calne and the surrounding area. We are also working with Wiltshire Council and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to understand the extent of the odour pollution and its impact on you.

Following our last briefing issued on 6 June, we have continued our inspections of Lower Compton Landfill and off-site odour monitoring in the community. Although there are many other potential odour sources in the area which may be responsible for some of the reports received, we believe Lower Compton Landfill is the main source of the odour experienced by residents in the surrounding area in recent months. Work is ongoing to reduce odour from this site.

We also took part in a public meeting held at Calne Town Hall on 11 June and would like to thank everyone who attended for your time and questions. We are aware some members of the community have concerns about health impacts related to the odour and apologise that we were not able to provide answers to some of the questions raised. Having consulted the UKHSA and provided them with our hydrogen sulphide monitoring data, we are providing their feedback in this briefing note.

## Odour reports:

We have continued to see a reduction in odour reports. In May, we received 216 reports of odour. In June, to date, we have received 24 reports. The reduction in numbers of complaints correlates to a change in weather conditions, with westerly winds dispersing odour away from Calne. In addition, our off-site monitoring and continuing inspections of Lower Compton Landfill indicate that the actions taken by Hills Waste Solutions are reducing levels of odour from the landfill site.

## What actions are the Environment Agency taking?

**Off-site monitoring:** Our officers have continued to carry out odour monitoring, including use of handheld hydrogen sulphide detection equipment. This equipment takes spot samples of hydrogen sulphide. It's important to note that a spot sample is a snapshot of the gas concentration at a single point in time, at one location, and therefore there are limitations when comparing to average values over time, such as those used by UKHSA.

We are sharing hydrogen sulphide monitoring data with the UKHSA. UKHSA's findings on this data are included in this briefing note.

**Site Inspections:** Officers have carried out further inspections of Lower Compton Landfill, including walkover surveys using methane and hydrogen sulphide detection equipment, and an inspection of the capping works at the northern end of the landfill.

Our site inspections and off-site surveys both indicate that odour from Lower Compton Landfill has reduced in recent weeks.

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## Actions and timescales

We have served Hills Waste Solutions Ltd with a Regulation 36 enforcement notice under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016, to complete capping work to the northern end of the landfill by 18 July 2025 and install permanent gas infrastructure over the same area by 31 July 2025.

We are carrying out regular inspections to check progress with the capping work. Capping work is progressing at pace, with the contractor working extended hours and weekends after Hills Waste Solutions sought and obtained permission from Wiltshire Council. This is a temporary arrangement covering the work required under the notice.

We expect that the work will be completed within the dates set by the notice, and that odour will continue to reduce as the work is completed.

## What are the next steps to be taken?

We will continue to monitor progress with the work required under the notice. When completed, we will assess if this work has delivered a significant reduction in odour and odour reports. If not, we will not hesitate to require the operator to take further steps.

We will also require the operator to review their management systems, once the root cause has been established, to ensure there is no repetition in the future.

## UKHSA feedback

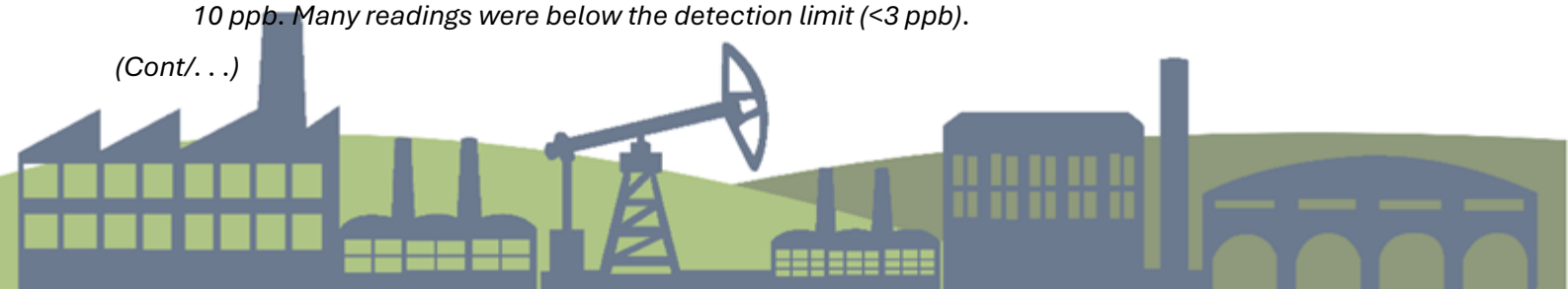
### Background:

- *The UKHSA (an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care) has been supporting the Environment Agency since April 2025, when they contacted our Environmental Hazards and Emergencies (EHE) team within UKHSA regarding a significant number of odour complaints near regulated landfill sites in Calne, Wiltshire.*
- *As the suspected source of the odours is landfill gas, primarily composed of methane ( $CH_4$ ) and carbon dioxide ( $CO_2$ ) which contains trace amounts of hydrogen sulphide ( $H_2S$ ), the Environment Agency conducted monitoring at Lower Compton Landfill and shared the data with UKHSA.*

## Is the gas making people ill? Is it safe?

- *It is not possible to entirely rule out the risk of health effects as there are many unknowns about the peak concentrations and duration of emissions. Hydrogen sulphide can be smelt at very low concentrations, and cause symptoms associated with annoyance, but these levels are below concentrations where toxicological effects would be expected.*
- *Concentrations of  $H_2S$  on the active landfill exceeded the World Health Organization (WHO) odour annoyance threshold of 4.86 parts per billion (ppb), with the highest measurement taken on 23 May reaching 649 ppb. A subsequent survey on 13 June measured 333 ppb at the same location within the active cell. For both surveys other site readings also exceeded the 4.86 ppb threshold but were below 10 ppb. Many readings were below the detection limit (<3 ppb).*

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- *In residential areas, none of the recorded H<sub>2</sub>S concentrations exceeded the WHO 24-hour short-term exposure health risk guideline of 104 ppb, and therefore the risk to public health is considered low, based on the indicative monitoring that has been undertaken so far.*
- *UKHSA is unable to conduct a full public health risk assessment based on indicative data, but levels of hydrogen sulphide at residential properties that have been measured are low and do not cause UKHSA to be currently concerned from a public health perspective. We do acknowledge though that odours can become a nuisance that can affect people and that steps should be taken to reduce odour emissions.*
- *The levels of hydrogen sulphide recorded may result in people experiencing an unpleasant smell. The human nose is extremely sensitive. Many things have a strong smell at levels at which there are no direct harmful effects to health. However, strong smells can be unpleasant and can impact on wellbeing, leading to stress and anxiety. Some people may also experience symptoms, such as watery eyes, stuffy nose, irritated throat, cough or wheeze, nausea, headaches, or dizziness as a reaction to strong smells, even when the substances that cause those smells are below levels that are harmful to health*
- *Anyone experiencing persistent symptoms, and/or require health advice, should, as always, contact NHS 111 or their GP surgery.*

## Report odour and keep informed

Please use our 24hr incident hotline **0800 80 70 60** to report odour you believe to be from activities we regulate. Although we are unable to provide feedback for individual reports, the information you provide will be used to inform our investigation and understand the scale of the impact.

Alternatively, reports can now be made online here: <https://www.gov.uk/report-environmental-problem>.

Please pass this briefing note to any other parties interested in the issues covered that you may be aware of.

We will communicate further updates by briefing note when we have information to share. To be added to the circulation list please email: **Wessex\_Engagement@environment-agency.gov.uk** .

