



**Y PWYLLGOR ANSAWDD, DIOGELWCH A PHROFIAD  
QUALITY, SAFETY AND EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE**

<b>DYDDIAD Y CYFARFOD: DATE OF MEETING:</b>	13 February 2025
<b>TEITL YR ADRODDIAD: TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	Withyhedge Environmental Incident Management Update
<b>CYFARWYDDWR ARWEINIOL: LEAD DIRECTOR:</b>	Dr Ardiana Gjini, Executive Director of Public Health
<b>SWYDDOG ADRODD: REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Megan Harris, Consultant in Public Health Geri Arthur, Health Protection Manager

**Pwrpas yr Adroddiad (dewiswch fel yn addas)  
Purpose of the Report (select as appropriate)**

Er Sicrwydd/For Assurance

**ADRODDIAD SCAA  
SBAR REPORT**

Sefyllfa / Situation

This report is for assurance and provides an update to the Committee on the situation at Withyhedge Landfill site near Haverfordwest.

An Incident Management Group was set up in April 2024, consisting of Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC), Public Health Wales (PHW), National Resources Wales (NRW), Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDUHB), and other agencies as relevant to operate under the Environmental Health Incident Management Team (IMT) Terms of Reference. The IMT has been Chaired by PHW or PCC.

The IMT has been in operation for over a year in response to issues raised of malodours and potential contamination of a local water source by the landfill at Withyhedge. Natural resources Wales is the regulator and Chair of the IMT.

The IMT held a series of engagement sessions in December 2024 and this report seeks to provide background to the Committee and assurance on the work being done as part of the IMT.

Cefndir / Background

The Withyhedge site is located at Bowling Farm, Rudbaxton which is approximately 4 miles north of Haverfordwest in Pembrokeshire. It's been operated since March 2022 by Resources Management (UK) Ltd, (RML) part of the Dauson Environmental Group which owns several other associated companies. The site currently operates under environmental permit: EPR/MP3330WP. The site is permitted to handle non-hazardous landfill and covers approximately 53 hectares. The site is managed in two phases, which are subdivided into 18 individual cells.

Since October 2023, NRW have been receiving 20-30 complaints per day of malodour, these have significantly reduced over time. Complaints have included 40 people detailing apparent

health effects such as stinging eyes, sore throats, headaches and exacerbations of existing respiratory conditions, although local GP practices have been contacted, and report no significant increase in consultations for health issues that may be associated with the landfill. Only 4 people have been reported to have attended their GP with health issues they ascribe to the site.

There have also been concerns about potential pollution of the water in Rudbaxton Brook due to overflow from a containment pond on site. The malodour is likely to be caused by the uncontrolled release of landfill gas and emissions from previously uncapped portions of the site and/or leakage of liquid leachate into surrounding watercourses. The site is now fully capped.

A local pressure group called 'Stop the Stink' has formed which communicates via Facebook. Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) now have a named person as part of the group that they communicate with. The Facebook group advises that there is no point in contacting healthcare providers as they won't confirm that health issues are caused by the site. This is contrary to the message we as a health board, and all partners, have tried to promote which is that you should contact your healthcare provider if you have health issues, whatever you think the cause may be.

The site voluntarily stopped taking waste in May 2024 and is planning to recommence waste acceptance which is likely to cause anxiety and concern to local residents. Although complaints have reduced, they are still coming into NRW. There is a phone line and reporting form on the NRW website. The site is due to reopen at the beginning of January 2025 and the reopening of the site will likely again cause additional tensions locally.

### Asesiad / Assessment

The air quality subgroup (AQG) of the IMT have agreed that the monitoring carried out so far indicates that there have been occasions where the levels of hydrogen sulphide have been above the World Health Organisation (WHO) threshold for 'annoyance', annoyance used here is a technical term. They acknowledge the distress of the people living in the area whilst trying to reassure them that the levels are not harmful. This is in terms of physical health and is not commenting on the effects on people's mental wellbeing. These assessments have not been well received by some local community members.

Reports have also indicated that there are likely to be other sources of hydrogen sulphide in an area with a large agricultural base and other odours and sources of odours have been noted both during site visits and when responding to reports of odours. Issues around investigation have been hampered by people reporting odours several days after they have occurred or being non-specific about where they have occurred which makes verification and investigation difficult. The local community have been critical of PHW's assessment of the independent monitoring reports, as while they state the amounts detected are not at harmful levels, they are unable to state this categorically which is often the case in public health messaging which is often trying to quantify uncertainty. At present the reports are produced from PHW monthly after the IMT have reviewed them.

Local GP surgeries and respiratory services within the health board have not reported a significant increase in consultations. However, there has been feedback on access to appointments and resident's view of the need for urgent appointments not being facilitated by the GP surgeries.

The local community do not understand why the site has not been closed and why this is not possible, also the fact it would not end the current nuisance. In addition, they possibly do not appreciate the legal duties of the regulator, the limits to the powers of both NRW and PCC, and the need to act fairly and proportionately to all parties and allow the operator a chance to remedy the situation. The site will need to be managed actively for decades after it is closed. Orphan landfills where the site operator has gone out of business or they have mismanaged the site and been stripped of their licence, are a significant issue for local authorities who will be required to manage them in their stead. Operating licenses often extend to 30 years post the site being closed to waste acceptance, continuing to produce gases that need to be managed.

The IMT have discussed the possibility that there is likely to be significant anxiety in the local community when RML recommence accepting waste. NRW have reviewed the new waste cell on the site and reviewed all documentation to ensure compliance. The IMT held a local engagement session for the community to enable them to air concerns and receive as much reassurance as possible. However, even a well-run and compliant site is likely to produce some odour and the local population are now 'sensitised' to odours, a phenomenon described in the literature.

Due to the high level of anxiety and dissatisfaction by the local community as well as the high political profile, a number of engagement meetings were held during December.

The political climate has slightly calmed following the election and change in First Minister, however there is likely to be concern that all appropriate action, both technical and legal has been taken and that there is no repetition of the situation of winter 2023/4. A briefing for local politicians was held on 4<sup>th</sup> December and was attended by representatives of the local MP, MS/ASau, and Councillors in advance of the public drop-in session on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

During the engagement session, local people expressed concern about the difficulty in following our advice to contact 111 or their GP. Call handlers at 111 have said they are unable to help and advised contacting their GP. People have struggled to get GP appointments. The local MP also raised this as a general issue during the session and has had meetings with Primary Care representatives in HDUHB.

The Health Board have no regulatory or enforcement role in this dispute. However, it is the health of our local population potentially affected, including the anxiety. PHW may have a role if a risk to human health can be demonstrated but this has not been the case so far, despite the ongoing monitoring.

The main risk to the Health Board is reputational, as the local population believe that health services should be doing more. Some local residents believe incorrectly that PHW should be able to shut down the site and may not differentiate between locally based public health and the national service.

### **Argymhelliad / Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to take assurance that the Incident Management Team, Chaired by Natural Resource's Wales, continues to assess and respond to the potential impact on population health. HDUHB Public Health remains engaged in the IMT for Withyhedge and will continue to monitor the situation and update as required.

<b>Amcanion: (rhaid cwblhau)</b> <b>Objectives: (must be completed)</b>	
Committee ToR Reference: Cyfeirnod Cylch Gorchwyl y Pwyllgor:	
Cyfeirnod Cofrestr Risg Datix a Sgôr Cyfredol: Datix Risk Register Reference and Score:	
Parthau Ansawdd: Domains of Quality <a href="#">Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)</a>	1. Safe
Galluogwyr Ansawdd: Enablers of Quality: <a href="#">Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)</a>	1. Leadership
Amcanion Strategol y BIP: UHB Strategic Objectives:	4. The best health and wellbeing for our individuals, families and communities
Amcanion Cynllunio Planning Objectives	10 Population health
Amcanion Llesiant BIP: UHB Well-being Objectives: <a href="#">Hyperlink to HDdUHB Well-being Objectives Annual Report 2021-2022</a>	4. Improve Population Health through prevention and early intervention, supporting people to live happy and healthy lives

<b>Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol:</b> <b>Further Information:</b>	
Ar sail tystiolaeth: Evidence Base:	NRW – Natural Resources Wales PCC- Pembrokeshire County Council PHW – Public Health Wales IMT – Incident Management Team as described in the Managing Public Health Risks from Environmental Incidents: Guidance for Wales v4.0b AQG – Air Quality Group which is a sub-group of the IMT RML – Resources Management Ltd, the landfill site operator
Rhestr Termiau: Glossary of Terms:	NRW – Natural Resources Wales PCC- Pembrokeshire County Council PHW – Public Health Wales IMT – Incident Management Team as described in the Managing Public Health Risks from Environmental Incidents: Guidance for Wales v4.0b

	<p>AQG – Air Quality Group which is a sub-group of the IMT</p> <p>RML – Resources Management Ltd, the landfill site operator</p> <p>Leachate is a liquid that drains (or leaches) from a landfill. It varies in composition based on the age of the landfill and the type of waste that is contained in the landfill. It usually contains both dissolved and suspended material.</p>
<p>Partïon / Pwyllgorau â ymgynhorwyd ymlaen llaw y Pwyllgor Ansawdd, Diogelwch a Phrofiod: Parties / Committees consulted prior to Quality, Safety and Experience Committee:</p>	

<b>Effaith: (rhaid cwblhau) Impact: (must be completed)</b>	
<b>Ariannol / Gwerth am Arian: Financial / Service:</b>	Nil
<b>Ansawdd / Gofal Claf: Quality / Patient Care:</b>	Nil
<b>Gweithlu: Workforce:</b>	Nil
<b>Risg: Risk:</b>	Nil
<b>Cyfreithiol: Legal:</b>	Nil
<b>Enw Da: Reputational:</b>	There has been considerable media interest. NRW are the lead agency in regard to this incident. Several government ministers were involved in the initial stages of this incident, including the previous First Minister, and the site lies within the remit of the current First Minister. Since the recent changes in Welsh Government, media attention has lessened and has been focussed on the roles of NRW and PHW.
<b>Gyfrinachedd: Privacy:</b>	Nil
<b>Cydraddoldeb: Equality:</b>	Nil