

27 September 2007

Mr Struan Stevenson MEP
SCCO
83 Princes Street
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Dear Struan

POLLUTION ISSUES IN LINWOOD, RENFREWSHIRE

Thank you for your letter dated 11 September 2007 relating to the concerns of one of your constituents regarding pollution in Linwood, in particular the use of allegedly contaminated land for development as well as concerns about Linwood Moss landfill site situated on the periphery of the town. I feel it is appropriate to deal with these as separate matters.

Contaminated Land

SEPA has received complaints from members of the local community via the editor@linwoodsucks.com website concerning various sites alleged to be contaminated land due to former uses that have, or are, to be developed. With reference to these alleged contaminated land site issues raised, the sheltered housing complex being the one most referred to, I can advise that SEPA has referred the complainants to the Local Authority, in this case Renfrewshire Council, as they are the regulatory body under the contaminated land regime for the issues brought to SEPA's attention. The complainants have advised that they will discuss the specific issues of concern directly with the Council.

Linwood Moss Landfill Site

SEPA has also received complaints from members of the local community via the editor@linwoodsucks.com website alleging that illegal waste management practices were being carried out at the site, and that there had been escapes of liquid wastes from the site.

SEPA officers have inspected the site on three occasions since the initial allegations; the first immediately after the complaint was received, the second with one of the complainants and the third to undertake scientific investigations involving sampling at the site for laboratory analysis.

It is, I hope, worthwhile giving you some background to the site and its problems before addressing the allegations made by the complainants.



Sir Ken Collins

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Linwood Moss landfill site, operated by Renfrewshire Council, is regulated by SEPA via a waste management licence which is aimed at minimising pollution of the environment and harm to human health. The site is inspected to ensure that it is operated in compliance with the licence. The site sits on top of a moss, as the name suggests and has been in operation for several decades and took incinerator ash from the Council's incinerator that was located to the south of the site. Skip loads of waste were also deposited at the site from civic amenity sites. The incinerator closed in 1992 and the site has taken waste from excavations/roadworks since then.

The site is scheduled to close and be restored and has had a long history of problems with surface water management and leachate generation (contaminated liquid from the decay of waste). Part of the solution to manage this problem has been the pumping of leachate/surface waters from low points of the site back up to higher parts of the site and back into the waste mass, a process known as re-circulation. This has been ongoing in conjunction with the removal of leachate from on-site lagoons to tankers which then take it off-site for disposal. SEPA has been working positively with the Council over many years to resolve/mitigate problems at the site.

For detail, one aspect of the complaints about the site centred on allegedly hazardous liquid waste being brought by tanker onto the site and emptied into a lagoon on high ground at the site. SEPA believes that the complainants have observed the tankers removing leachate from the site for off-site disposal and assumed that they were emptying liquid into it instead, a case of mistaken identity. However, to assuage the complainants' fears and satisfy ourselves, SEPA has taken samples of liquids from various parts of the site for laboratory investigations involving a wide range of parameters in order that any compounds/chemicals etc. that should not be there are identified. Renfrewshire Council, the licence holder, has also been looking into these allegations.

The complainants have also expressed concerns about breakouts of liquids from the site and the rusty discolouration of these areas as a result. SEPA officers have noted several points where breakouts of a ferruginous nature i.e. rusty coloured water due to contamination with compounds of iron have occurred. The water in the lagoons on-site is discoloured by these compounds which have leached from waste that has been deposited in the site during its past operations, most likely from incinerator residues. These breakouts, usually minor, have occurred before at the site usually as a result of heavy rainfall which causes problems with leachate/surface water management. However, these problems have generally been contained within the site boundary and no pollution issues have been identified off-site.

With regard to the complainants' statement that SEPA "have been investigating this for months and yet have not come forward with test results we know could have been available within 48hrs", I can advise that SEPA officers explained to Mr Smith during the visit to the site on 12 June 2007, a visit where he accompanied SEPA officers around the site to show us all the areas of concern, that it could take several months to arrange, collect and analyse any samples taken and interpret the results obtained especially as regards their adhoc and unknown nature. He appeared to accept this at the time.

At this moment in time SEPA does not have the full results of the laboratory investigations into the samples taken from the site. Therefore, it is not appropriate to comment further until these reports are available and, more importantly, interpreted. However, SEPA will advise you in writing of our findings as soon as is practicable.

With regard to other questions/statements in the first and second paragraphs of item 6 of Tom Burke's correspondence to you of 12 September 2007, I can advise that these relate to a time, likely to be many years before SEPA regulated the landfill (SEPA has regulated from 1996 onwards, which was when SEPA came into being), and for which we have no available records of which I am aware. The incinerator mentioned was closed in 1992 and again we have no records of which we are aware regarding how it was operated and whether wastes were partially burned or not. Consequently, SEPA has no way of confirming one way or the other any of the questions or statements in this paragraph.

I trust this addresses your constituent's concerns, and I will contact you again once the report of the laboratory findings is available.

Yours sincerely L

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'K Collins', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

SIR KEN COLLINS