

“An anaerobic digestion (AD) company has been ordered to pay fines and costs totalling almost £26,000 after failing to control odour from one of its plants.



South Tyneside magistrates court heard that BioConstruct New Energy’s plant at Wardley Colliery released unregulated gases into the air, affecting local residents.

Andrew Turner, area environment manager at the Environment Agency (EA) in the north-east, said: “We understand how awful it is for residents to suffer when waste sites fail in their obligation to ensure there is no odour coming from their sites.”

In June 2020, the EA received more than 25 complaints about smells coming from the plant, with officers attending to verify the reports.

They found several breaches of the company’s odour management plan, including a failure to properly maintain the gas flare, which increases the risk of having to vent raw gas out through the pressure release valve. The gas flare was subsequently repaired.

However, odour at the plant continued to be a problem. The EA issued two enforcement notices in July and September 2021 to bring the site back into compliance. They required improvements in the odour management plan and for the company to install odour abatement units. Neither were complied with by the deadlines set.

BioConstruct, based at Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, pleaded guilty to breaching its environmental permit by allowing odour to be released and to failing to comply with two enforcement notices. It was fined £16,000 and ordered to pay costs of almost £10,000.

The court accepted that the company had shown remorse and accepted responsibility for the offending. It also accepted that the offences had not been commercially motivated and that steps had been taken to remedy the problem.

The court heard that the company had previously been fined in 2019 for causing off-site odour pollution at another of its plants in Middlesbrough”.

Materials Recycling World - 2nd March 2023

BBC News - 17 May 2023

Waste plant to expand despite 'disgusting smell'

A controversial anaerobic digestion plant in Northamptonshire is set to expand.

Fernbrook Bio, a plant off the A14 in Rothwell, treats 49,000 tonnes of waste, which will more than double to 100,000 tonnes annually after a council vote.

However, local residents have expressed concerns about the "awful stench" created by the plant.

The plant director, Jamie Williams, said Fernbrook Bio will also undergo £500,000 of improvements, including work to help trap the smell.

Mr Williams said the plant's expansion will see 4,000 homes using biogas created there and 55,000 tonnes of digestate will be used on farms nearby, replacing the need for chemical fertiliser.

North Northamptonshire Council's (NNC) strategic planning committee approved the new measures and improvements at a meeting on 15 May, according to the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS).

The committee was assured work to increase monitoring of the smell will take place.

Rothwell Town Council had objected to the expansion and said one resident had written to it last year to complain about the "absolutely disgusting stench [that] ruined much of our spring and summer."

Rothwell and Mawsley's NNC councillor, Cedwien Brown, said the plant's owners had "promised time and time again" that once adjustments were complete, the problem of the smell would be resolved.

"This has never happened and 13 years on I can assure you that the area most certainly does smell and it's absolutely disgusting," councillor Brown told the committee.

Anaerobic digestion plants process organic matter, such as food waste, farm waste or sewage, through anaerobic digestion, breaking it down into gas and solid residue.

The process generates a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide, also known as biogas, as well as water and a bio-fertiliser known as digestate.

While biogas can be used to generate heat and electricity, digestate is most commonly used as fertiliser, since it is rich in nutrients.

Councillors call for Anaerobic Digester to close after odour pollution reported

13th February 2020 – Basingstoke Gazette

TWO of the town's councillors have called for a controversial anaerobic digester to be closed after parts of the town were affected by "foul odours".

Hampshire County Council's Stephen Reid, who represents Basingstoke South West, and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Dan Putty, who represents Hatch Warren and Beggarwood, have joined growing calls from residents for the plagued plant, near Farleigh Wallop, to be shut down.

Cllr Reid has told the Gazette that he wants the plant to be shut down by the Environment Agency (EA) "so residents can be protected from the odour pollution that it is causing across residential areas".

Cllr Putty added that whilst walking around the area, the smells have progressively got worse, and that he and residents are at "the end of (their) tethers".

The EA confirmed that an audit will be carried out tomorrow (February 14).

Speaking last week, he added: "Reports of odour pollution have been increasing.

"The operators have installed a new bio-filter and everyone hoped that when it became fully effective, it would improve the situation. If anything the problem has got worse, and the number of complaints about the stench have increased."

In an appeal for the EA to temporarily close the plant, Cllr Reid said that last week the smell was particularly bad.

On Thursday, February 6, much of Hatch Warren and Beggarwood was affected for many hours.

"In other words, an area containing hundreds of homes was affected, and for a sustained period of time," he continued.

"The smell is most unpleasant: like rotting vegetables and gas. It is not an agricultural smell at all.

"The Environment Agency is now suggesting that the new bio filter has not been installed correctly. I find that troubling, as the operators had said that they use this type of filter in other installations and are familiar with it. That leads me to worry that there could be other faults in the design or build at the Digester site.

"To me the obvious and correct action to take is to shut it down, audit its design and build, take corrective action and then re-open. It is unfair to ask local residents to live with this problem whilst there is no confidence that it can be eliminated.

"The only people who can impose that sanction are the Environment Agency and I call on them to act decisively.

"From my perspective as a Councillor I observe a plant that is causing distress to a wide community, where the operators have not been able to identify a solution and I have to say on behalf of my residents 'enough is enough'."

The plant, which opened in 2013 and run by Tamar Renewable Power, was taken over by Biogen in 2018.

Last year, permission was granted for a scheme to build a screen to help reduce noise and odour pollution.

However, according to Cllr Putty, the issues are urgent.

"The whole area has been hit," he told the Gazette. "The operators really should have known better. When it was built I was told that everything would be sealed. There would be no odour coming out of the plant. But here we are having to put up with it.

"It smells as if the sewer is just next to me. I am very much with Stephen Reid that something has to happen.

"I am at the end of my tether with that. We cannot go on like this."

A spokesperson for the EA said: "The Environment Agency is aware of the issue at Farleigh Wallop and is focused on ensuring that Biogen is doing everything it can to minimise odours from the site.

"We are only able to revoke or suspend permits where we consider that the operation poses a serious risk to the environment or human health and all other ways to reduce the odour have been exhausted.

"We also have to consider the Regulators Code of Conduct, which encourages us to work with businesses to achieve compliance in the first instance.

"Biogen has carried out various engineering works aimed at preventing odour emanating from the facility. An audit of these works and other technical aspects of the site is due to be carried out by the Environment Agency on 14 February."