



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

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21 November 2023

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your follow up letter of 13 November 2023 concerning the Environment Agency's (EA) decision not to attend Staffordshire County Council's Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 November 2023.

I have discussed the points in your letter with the EA, and I understand it has not changed its decision to decline this invitation. As set out in my previous response, in part this decision is informed by prior experiences of attending this Committee where despite assurances, Councillors have used the opportunity to challenge the EA's regulation of the site in a manner outside the remit of the Committee and addressed health related questions to the EA. Therefore, the EA's decision not to attend is intended to support the committee's objective to scrutinise advice provided by relevant health authorities.

I know how important it is that the EA works closely with the local community. I am pleased with the commitment the EA has consistently shown in working with its partners to ensure transparency and clarity over the issue with the hydrogen sulphide air quality monitoring data around the Walleys Quarry Landfill site.

To keep the community updated, the EA held a public meeting in October, continues to share new information as it becomes available with health partners at the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG), and publicly to all via its [Engagement HQ website](#). This includes all hydrogen sulphide data collected using the updated calibration methodology from September 2023.

I understand the health authorities at the SCG have made it clear the most important thing the EA can contribute to improving their health risk assessment is to progress the independent peer review of the methodology to assess whether historic data can be updated for that purpose. This methodology will be subject to an independent peer-review by a group of experts, led by Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor, Gideon Henderson. The group contains five members from five academic institutions (all of which are independent from Government and the EA).

I am reassured that this is where the EA are focusing their efforts. It has on 17 November brought the Scrutiny Committee and health partners attention to an [update](#) on the progress of the peer review that was made public the previous day.

I know that the EA remains committed to ensuring elected members of Staffordshire County Council are kept updated. I understand it is progressing a SCG action to agree how best to do that in the right way through the right forums.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.



REBECCA POW MP