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From Lord de Mauley
Parliamentary Under Secretary

Des Fitzgerald,

Thank you for your email of 12 November to the Secretary of State about strong odours in Walsoken, Norfolk. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I am sorry to hear of the odour nuisance issues that local residents have been experiencing. I can assure you that the Environment Agency takes the issue seriously and is in contact with the Council about it.

As you are aware, in 2008 and 2010 the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council issued abatement notices in respect of statutory nuisance, and is leading on the odour nuisance issues relating to the site. The Council is continuing to carry out its own odour nuisance monitoring and assess compliance with its abatement notice to support any enforcement action it may decide to take.

The Environment Agency liaises with the Council regularly, sharing information on developments and issues relating to the site. It also carries out its own odour assessments in the area of the site to assess compliance with the permit, and liaises with the operator to drive forward improvements.

The wording of the odour condition in the permit requires Environment Agency officers to witness any breach of condition before they can take any enforcement action. It is true that they cannot use Environmental Health Officers' evidence for that purpose. However, the Environment Agency can potentially use local authority evidence and expert opinion to corroborate its view on whether the odour is polluting, or as supporting evidence in enforcement proceedings.

Environment Agency Environment Officers visit the area on average twice a month to carry out routine odour assessments, but also carry out odour assessment in direct response to complaints made to the organisation.

Between April and November this year, Environment Agency Environment Officers made 13 visits to Mr Stratton's waste site to carry out odour assessments. The Environment Agency assesses odour intensity on a scale of 0 to 6 and recorded the following results:

Odour Intensity	Frequency
0 - No odour	2
1 - Very faint odour	1
2 - Faint odour	0
3 - Distinct odour	9
4 - Strong odour	1
5 - Very strong odour	0
6 - Extremely strong odour	0

In env Report.