

Permitting Decisions - Variation

We have decided to grant the variation for Three Nooks Wood operated by Mr Robert George Towers, Mr Richard George Towers, Mr Benjamin Richard Towers and Mrs Jane Marjorie Towers.

The variation number is EPR/MP3735ZY/V005.

We consider in reaching that decision we have taken into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements and that the permit will ensure that the appropriate level of environmental protection is provided.

This variation authorises the use of Grade A recycled waste wood as a fuel for the permitted biomass boiler C. The biomass boiler is subject to the Medium Combustion Plant Directive (MCPD) with the boiler classed as existing plant and also as the fuel is Grade A waste wood and the thermal input capacity is greater than 50 kg/hour this is a new 5.1 Part B (v) activity. A backup Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) boiler is added to the Permit, which is also subject to the MCPD, with the boiler classed as existing plant. The thermal rated inputs for permitted biomass boilers A, B and C are corrected, and the two carcass incinerators are removed from the Permit.

Purpose of this document

This decision document provides a record of the decision-making process. It

- highlights [key issues](#) in the determination
- summarises the decision-making process in the [decision considerations](#) section to show how the main relevant factors have been taken into account
- shows how we have considered the [consultation responses](#)

Unless the decision document specifies otherwise, we have accepted the applicant's proposals.

Read the permitting decisions in conjunction with the environmental permit and the variation notice.

Key issues of the decision

Intensive Rearing of Poultry or Pigs BAT Conclusions document

The Best Available Techniques (BAT) Reference document (BREF) for the Intensive Rearing of Poultry or Pigs (IRPP) was published on 21st February 2017. There is a separate BAT Conclusions document which sets out the standards that permitted farms will have to meet.

All new and redeveloped housing applied for in a permit variation must be compliant with the BAT Conclusions from the first day of operation. The BAT compliance of any existing housing has been subject to a sector review, however, for some reviewed permits, only generic limits have been included, and individual housing should now be considered. Any existing housing that undergoes redevelopment with changes to housing location or expansion beyond the existing footprint is classed as new plant.

BAT Conclusions review

There are 34 BAT Conclusion measures in total within the BAT Conclusion document dated 21st February 2017.

Although there are no changes to livestock housing as part of this variation, the Operator submitted a document with their application, reference 'Three Nooks Wood', confirming that the Installation complies in full with all the BAT Conclusions measures.

A full review of the measures the Operator applied to ensure compliance with the above key BAT measures was completed for the 2018 variation. As there are no changes to poultry housing as part of this variation, a BAT review has not been completed.

Industrial Emissions Directive (IED)

This permit implements the requirements of the European Union Directive on Industrial Emissions.

Odour management

Intensive farming is by its nature a potentially odorous activity. This is recognised in our 'How to Comply with your Environmental Permit for Intensive Farming' EPR 6.09 guidance.

Condition 3.3 of the environmental permit reads as follows:

“Emissions from the activities shall be free from odour at levels likely to cause pollution outside the site, as perceived by an authorised officer of the Environment Agency, unless the Operator has used appropriate measures, including, but not limited to, those specified in any approved odour management plan, to prevent or where that is not practicable to minimise the odour.”

Under section 3.3 of the guidance, an Odour Management Plan (OMP) is required to be approved as part of the permitting process if, as is the case here, sensitive receptors (sensitive receptors in this instance excludes properties associated with the farm) are within 400m of the installation boundary. It is appropriate to require an OMP when such sensitive receptors have been identified within 400m of the installation to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to minimise the risk of pollution from odour emissions.

The risk assessment for the Installation provided with the application lists key potential risks of odour pollution beyond the Installation boundary.

Odour Management Plan Review

As this variation does not increase odour emissions from the Installation, a revised OMP was not required.

Noise management

Intensive farming by its nature involves activities that have the potential to cause noise pollution. This is recognised in our ‘How to Comply with your Environmental Permit for Intensive Farming’ EPR 6.09 guidance.

Condition 3.4 of the permit reads as follows:

“Emissions from the activities shall be free from noise and vibration at levels likely to cause pollution outside the site, as perceived by an authorised officer of the Environment Agency, unless the Operator has used appropriate measures, including, but not limited to, those specified in any approved noise and vibration management plan, to prevent or where that is not practicable to minimise the noise and vibration”.

Under section 3.4 of the guidance, a Noise Management Plan (NMP) is required to be approved as part of the permitting process if, as is the case here, sensitive receptors (sensitive receptors in this instance excludes properties associated with the farm) are within 400m of the installation boundary. It is appropriate to require a NMP when such sensitive receptors have been identified within 400m of the installation to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to minimise the risk of pollution from noise emissions.

The risk assessment for the Installation provided within the NMP for the application lists key potential risks of noise pollution beyond the Installation boundary.

Noise Management Plan Review

As this variation does not increase noise emissions from the Installation, a revised NMP was not required.

Dust and Bioaerosols management

The use of Best Available Techniques and good practice will ensure minimisation of emissions. There are measures included within the permit (the 'Fugitive Emissions' conditions) to provide a level of protection. Condition 3.2.1 'Emissions of substances not controlled by an emission limit' is included in the permit. This is used in conjunction with condition 3.2.2 which states that in the event of fugitive emissions causing pollution following commissioning of the installation, the Operator is required to undertake a review of site activities, provide an emissions management plan and to undertake any mitigation recommended as part of that report, once agreed in writing with the Environment Agency.

In addition, guidance on our website concludes that Applicants need to produce and submit a dust and bioaerosol management plan beyond the requirement of the initial risk assessment, with their applications only if there are relevant receptors within 100 metres including the farmhouse or farm workers' houses. Details can be found via the link below:

www.gov.uk/guidance/intensive-farming-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit#air-emissions-dust-and-bioaerosols.

There are no relevant receptors within 100 metres of the installation boundary and so a DMP was not required.

Medium Combustion Plant (MCP)

There is one existing biomass boiler, for site heating requirements, with a thermal rated input of 1.115 MWth, which falls under the requirements of the MCPD. Table S1.1 and S3.1 of the Permit have been amended to incorporate the biomass boiler as an existing MCP unit. Monitoring and ELVs will be subject to a separate permit review for existing MCPs.

An existing backup boiler (LPG) with a thermal rated input of 1.529 MWth, for use in the event of a biomass boiler fault has been added to Table S1.1 and S3.1 of the Permit as part of this variation. The boiler falls under the requirements of the MCPD and has been added as an existing MCP unit. The boiler will not be operated (including testing) for more than 250 hours per year. As the backup boiler is considered to be low risk there is no requirement for emission limits but there is a requirement for MCP monitoring which will be subject to a separate permit review for existing MCPs.

Standby Generator

There is one standby generator with a thermal rated input of 0.555 MWth which will not be tested more than 50 hours per year or operated (including testing) for more than 500 hours per year (averaged over 3 years) for emergency use only as a temporary power source if there is a mains power failure.

Biomass Boilers

The Applicant has notified of corrections required in the Permit, as part of this variation, for the thermal rated inputs of biomass boilers A, B and C, which were originally permitted in 2014 (A and B) and 2017 (C). The biomass boilers have not been changed; this is an administrative correction.

Biomass boilers A and B are corrected from 0.1999MWth to 0.234MWth.

Biomass boiler C is corrected from 1.070MWth to 1.115MWth.

An assessment has been undertaken to consider the impact of emissions from the revised thermal rated input of the biomass boilers.

The Environment Agency has assessed the pollution risks and has concluded that air emissions from small biomass boilers are not likely to pose a significant risk to the environment or human health providing certain conditions are met. Therefore, a quantitative assessment of air emissions will not be required for poultry sites where:

- the fuel will be derived from virgin timber, miscanthus or straw, and;
- the biomass boiler appliance and installation meets the technical criteria equivalent to the eligibility for the former Renewable Heat Incentive, and;
- the aggregate boiler net rated thermal input is:
 - A. less than 0.5MWth, or;
 - B. less than 1MWth where the stack height is greater than 1 metre above the roof level of adjacent buildings including building housing boiler(s) if relevant (where there are no adjacent buildings, the stack height must be a minimum of 3 metres above ground), and there are:
 - no Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites or Sites of Special Scientific Interest within 500 metres of the emission point(s);
 - no National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves, ancient woodlands or local wildlife sites within 100 metres of the emission point(s), or;

C. less than 2MWth where, in addition to the above criteria for less than 1MWth boilers, there are:

- no sensitive receptors within 150 metres of the emission points.

This is in line with the Environment Agency's May 2013 document "Biomass boilers on EPR Intensive Farms".

The Environment Agency's risk assessment has shown that the biomass boilers meet the requirements of criteria C above and are therefore considered not likely to pose a significant risk to the environment or human health. No further assessment is required.

In accordance with the Environment Agency's Air Quality Technical Advisory Guidance 14, dated March 2025, for combustion plants under 2MW, habitats assessment is only required for European sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest if within 750m and for other nature conservation sites if within 100m. This proposal has no European sites or Sites of Special Scientific Interest within 750m and no other nature conservation sites within 100m so is considered acceptable and no further assessment is required.

Grade A Wood Burning

The Operator has applied to use grade A recycled waste wood as fuel for biomass boiler C with a net rated thermal input of 1.115MWth. Where virgin and waste wood are mixed the fuel is all considered a waste.

The biomass boilers are to be fed by grade A wood only or a mixture of Grade A wood and virgin wood

Grade A wood definition:

"Grade A waste wood" means visibly 'clean' recycled waste wood mainly originating from packaging waste, pallets, packing cases and process off-cuts from the manufacture of untreated wood products (as defined in BSI PAS 111: 2012).

The total capacity of the installation's biomass boiler using Grade A wood is 275 kgs/hour.

As the activity does not meet the criteria of a U4 waste exemption, it will fall under a directly associated activity or section 5.1 B) (a) (v) of the Environmental Permitting Regulations - 'The incineration in a small waste incineration plant with an aggregated capacity of 50kgs or more per hour of the following waste – wood waste with the exception of waste which may contain halogenated organic compounds or heavy metals as a result of treatment with wood preservatives or coatings'.

The biomass boiler has been added to Table S1.1 of the Permit as a Section 5.1B(a)(v) activity.

A site-specific description of waste source and procedure have been reviewed and accepted as satisfactory to ensure that only grade A waste wood will be accepted.

The Operator will only be permitted to accept this waste type. Table S2.2 of the permit includes relevant waste wood and descriptions. We are satisfied that the waste wood is from a manufacturing source and that it will not be contaminated.

Ammonia

There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) Ramsars or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 5km of the Installation boundary. There are four other nature conservation sites within 2km of the Installation boundary which are Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

As this variation does not change ammonia emissions from the Installation, an ammonia assessment has not been undertaken as part of this determination.

Decision considerations

Confidential information

A claim for commercial or industrial confidentiality has not been made.

Identifying confidential information

We have not identified information provided as part of the application that we consider to be confidential.

The decision was taken in accordance with our guidance on confidentiality.

Consultation

The consultation requirements were identified in accordance with the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations (2016) and our public participation statement.

The application was publicised on the GOV.UK website.

We consulted the following organisations:

- Local Authority – Environmental Protection – Fylde Borough Council
- Health and Safety Executive

No responses were received.

The regulated facility

We considered the extent and nature of the facility at the site in accordance with RGN2 'Understanding the meaning of regulated facility'.

Table S1.1 of the Permit has been updated to include the waste wood burner as a Section 5.1B(a)(v) activity.

The extent of the facility is defined in the site plan and in the permit. The activities are defined in table S1.1 of the permit.

The site

The Operator has provided a plan which we consider to be satisfactory, showing the extent of the site facilities.

The plan is included in the permit.

Nature conservation, landscape, heritage and protected species and habitat designations

We have checked the location of the application to assess if it is within the screening distances, we consider relevant for impacts on nature conservation, landscape, heritage and protected species and habitat designations. The application is within our screening distances for these designations.

We have assessed the application and its potential to affect sites of nature conservation, landscape, heritage and protected species and habitat designations identified in the nature conservation screening report as part of the permitting process.

We consider that the application will not affect any site of nature conservation, landscape and heritage, and/or protected species or habitats identified.

We have not consulted Natural England.

The decision was taken in accordance with our guidance.

Environmental risk

We have reviewed the Operator's assessment of the environmental risk from the facility.

The Operator's risk assessment is satisfactory.

Medium Combustion Plants

The assessment shows that applying the conservative criteria in our guidance on environmental risk assessment, all emissions may be categorised as environmentally insignificant/not significant.

General operating techniques

We have reviewed the techniques used by the Operator and compared these with the relevant guidance notes and we consider them to represent appropriate techniques for the facility.

The operating techniques that the applicant must use are specified in table S1.2 in the environmental permit.

The proposed techniques for priorities for control are in line with the benchmark levels contained in the Sector Guidance Note EPR6.09 and we consider them to represent appropriate techniques for the facility. The permit conditions ensure compliance with The Best Available Techniques (BAT) Reference document

(BREF) for the Intensive Rearing of Poultry or Pigs (IRPP) published on 21st February 2017.

Updating permit conditions during consolidation

We have updated permit conditions to those in the current generic permit template as part of permit consolidation. The conditions will provide the same level of protection as those in the previous permit.

Raw materials

We have specified limits and controls on the use of raw materials and fuels.

Waste types

We have specified the permitted waste types, descriptions and quantities, which can be accepted at the regulated facility.

We are satisfied that the Operator can accept these wastes for the following reasons:

- they are suitable for the proposed activities
- the proposed infrastructure is appropriate; and
- the environmental risk assessment is acceptable.

Waste codes are included as listed in permit table S2.2.

Emission limits

No emission limits have been added, amended or deleted as a result of this variation.

Monitoring

Monitoring has not changed as a result of this variation.

Reporting

Reporting has not changed as a result of this variation.

Management system

We are not aware of any reason to consider that the Operator will not have the management system to enable it to comply with the permit conditions.

The decision was taken in accordance with the guidance on Operator competence and how to develop a management system for environmental permits.

Growth duty

We have considered our duty to have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth set out in section 108(1) of the Deregulation Act 2015 and the guidance issued under section 110 of that Act in deciding whether to grant this permit variation.

Paragraph 1.3 of the guidance says:

“The primary role of regulators, in delivering regulation, is to achieve the regulatory outcomes for which they are responsible. For a number of regulators, these regulatory outcomes include an explicit reference to development or growth. The growth duty establishes economic growth as a factor that all specified regulators should have regard to, alongside the delivery of the protections set out in the relevant legislation.”

We have addressed the legislative requirements and environmental standards to be set for this operation in the body of the decision document above. The guidance is clear at paragraph 1.5 that the growth duty does not legitimise non-compliance and its purpose is not to achieve or pursue economic growth at the expense of necessary protections.

We consider the requirements and standards we have set in this permit are reasonable and necessary to avoid a risk of an unacceptable level of pollution. This also promotes growth amongst legitimate operators because the standards applied to the Operator are consistent across businesses in this sector and have been set to achieve the required legislative standards.

Consultation Responses

The following summarises the responses to consultation with other organisations, our notice on GOV.UK for the public, and the way in which we have considered these in the determination process.

The consultation commenced on 01/07/2026 and ended on 29/07/2026.

No responses were received from the organisations listed in the consultation section above or from the general public, other organisations or community groups.