

Fire at Amey's Waste Management Park: Briefing to Community Liasion Group

As you may be aware, a fire broke out just after midnight on Sunday 8 September 2019 at Amey's Waste Management Park at Waterbeach. Please see below for background into the circumstances surrounding the fire.

The fire started in newly arrived waste which was in our holding area prior to being sorted. Holding areas are designed specifically to ensure that any smouldering waste or sources of ignition which may arrive at the site from delivered waste can be identified, isolated and extinguished before treatment or landfilling, and so our protocols worked well and prevented a more serious accident.

Both Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and Amey's teams moved quickly to isolate the fire and make the area safe. It was then quickly brought under control and the area of the site affected was handed back to Amey within 12 hours of it first being detected. The fire was declared to be extinguished on Monday morning and we can confirm it has had no impact on our collection and disposal operations.

We are still investigating the exact cause of the fire, however it seems likely that it was caused by either some form of smouldering waste (such as a disposable barbecue) that had been transferred from either a household waste recycling centre or a public bin or from lithium batteries being disposed of by businesses in construction waste.

Our industry has asked repeatedly for members of the public and businesses to be both vigilant and more careful when disposing of waste, and we will be repeating these messages in local communications.

As you will no doubt be aware, when an incident such as a fire occurs on any site, the Fire Service takes control and issue any advice or guidance through existing emergency and community channels. This includes alerting the media where necessary and, in this case, advising local residents to keep windows closed as a precaution. Their advice worked well and we are grateful to Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service for their rapid assistance over the weekend.

We also worked closely with the Environment Agency to ensure that everything possible was done to protect human health and the environment, which remains our first priority. We continue to engage with the EA and other relevant regulatory bodies to ensure our waste treatment operations and safety procedures remain leading examples of best practice in our sector.

While unfortunate, it is important that we recognise the fact that this fire was identified and isolated in a secure facility with protocols in place to tackle incidents such as a fire, and that it did not occur anywhere where members of the public could have been injured, such as a flytipping site.

It is also important that we address several misconceptions that commonly arise during incidents like this. On social media it has been suggested that the smoke from the fire was similar to that which residents



would experience permanently in the event that an energy from waste facility being given planning permission on the site. This is fundamentally incorrect and we would like to stress that EfW is an extremely well controlled process, which undergoes continuous monitoring to ensure emissions are safe at all times.

Amey is committed to learning lessons from the events of Sunday and will continue to work with our clients, and the UK's relevant statutory bodies to continually review and, if necessary, amend our safety protocols. We will also continue to engage with the public and local businesses to remind them of the importance of disposing of waste safely.

If you have any comments or questions on Sunday's incident, please do not hesitate to contact us via the details below.

Thank you.

Contact details:

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