

Formal Complaint Letter to Natural Resources Wales / Local Authority

Subject: Complaint Regarding Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S) Exposure in Johnstown – March 2025 Monitoring Results

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally raise a serious complaint regarding ongoing hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) exposure in the Johnstown area, following the publication of monitoring data collected in March 2025 near the Community Centre.

The data clearly shows that the **odour threshold of 4.7 ppb**, the level at which 50% of people can detect the unpleasant smell, was exceeded in **547 out of 2,401 15-minute intervals**, amounting to **approximately 23% of the entire monitoring period**.

This finding alone demonstrates a **persistent and repeated odour nuisance**, which is not only disruptive to quality of life but can also contribute to stress, sleep disturbance, and mental health impacts. **The peak level recorded was 17.97 ppb, almost four times the recognised odour detection limit.**

Despite this, the monitoring report (attached) attempts to downplay the results by referencing **workplace exposure limits** set by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). These thresholds, **5,000 ppb (8-hour average) and 10,000 ppb (15-minute STEL)**, are designed for **industrial settings**, not **public residential areas**, and are **entirely inappropriate benchmarks for assessing public health impacts in this context.**

Location-Specific Public Health Concerns:

The monitor in question is situated:

- **At a community centre**
- **Adjacent to a children's play area and park**
- **Next to two football pitches**
- **In the middle of a housing estate**

This makes the use of workplace limits all the more inappropriate, and raises serious concerns for the **health, wellbeing, and environmental justice of local residents**, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and people with respiratory conditions.

We urge you to:

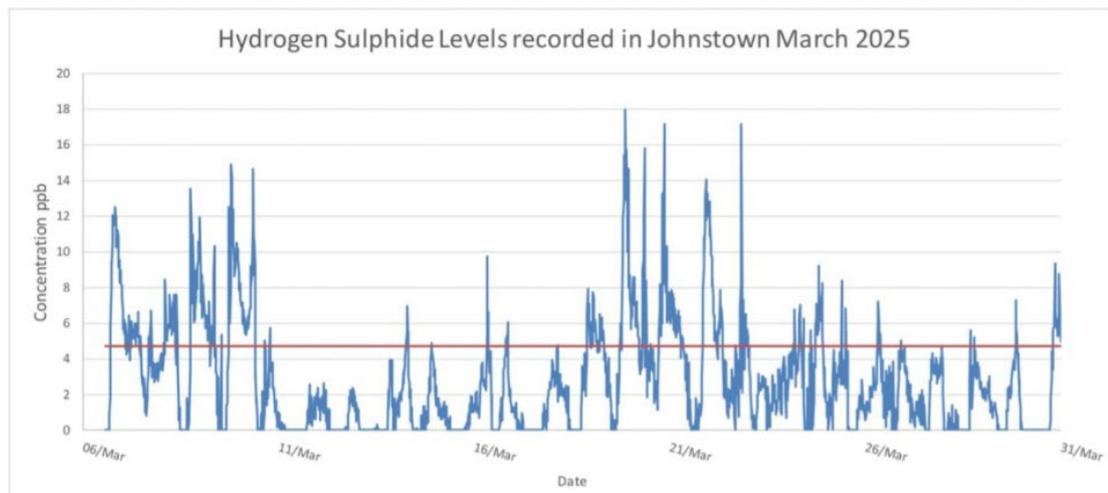
1. **Cease the use of occupational exposure limits** in reporting or justifying ambient public exposure.
2. **Acknowledge the public health implications** of frequent odour events and the cumulative impact on community wellbeing.
3. **Implement enforcement actions** or call for the revocation of the environmental permit if the source cannot be properly controlled.
4. **Undertake further monitoring** across the wider community, particularly at sensitive receptors such as schools and homes.

This situation is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Gittins

(On behalf of concerned residents)



Senedd Petition Update Submission

Title: Additional Information in Support of Petition to Revoke the Environmental Permit for Hafod Landfill

To the Petitions Committee,

As a follow-up to our petition regarding the Hafod Landfill Site, I submit the following critical data arising from the March 2025 hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) monitoring exercise in Johnstown.

Key Findings:

- The **odour detection threshold (4.7 ppb)** was exceeded in **23% of recorded 15-minute intervals** throughout the month.
- The **peak concentration (17.97 ppb)**, while below industrial workplace safety limits, is almost **4 times the level at which odour is detectable to the public**.
- These figures confirm what residents have consistently reported: **frequent, foul odours that interfere with daily life**.

Misuse of Exposure Standards:

The accompanying official report attempts to dismiss these findings by comparing them to Health and Safety Executive (HSE) workplace exposure limits, which are designed for occupational settings—not for ambient exposure in residential areas. This is a serious error and undermines trust in the monitoring process.

Location of Monitoring:

The monitor was installed at a **community centre**, which is:

- **Adjacent to a children's playground and public park**
- Close to **two football pitches used by young people**
- Surrounded by housing, making this a **community hub** and not a workplace

To cite industrial workplace thresholds in such a setting is **utterly inappropriate and misleading**. This community includes **young children, families, and vulnerable individuals** who should be protected by the highest standards of environmental oversight—not subjected to industrial-scale pollution with no recourse.

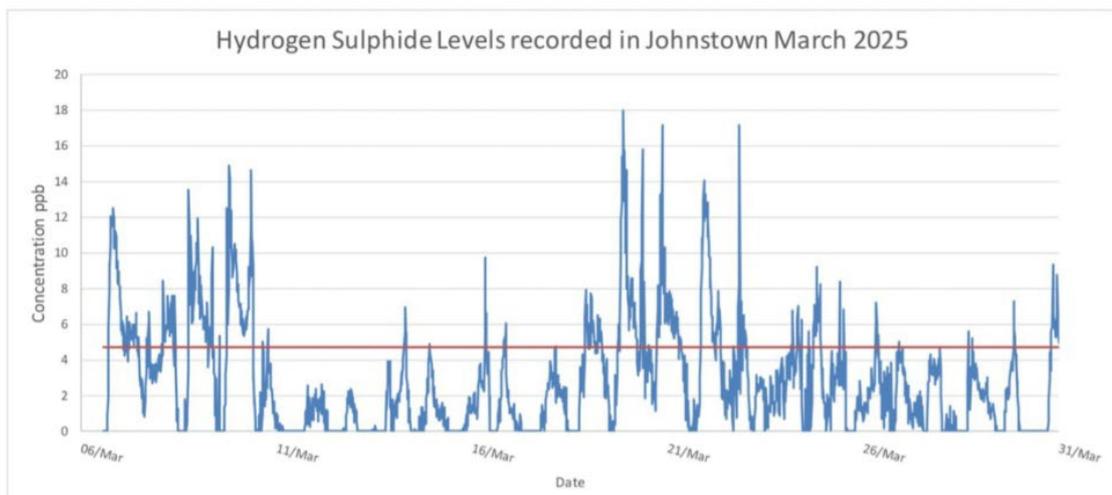
Conclusion:

The data confirms ongoing exposure to **odour nuisance levels of H₂S** at a **public, residential location**. We reiterate our call for:

- **Revocation of the environmental permit** for the Hafod Landfill
- Independent, health-focused monitoring frameworks that reflect the realities of residential exposure
- Urgent action to protect this community from further environmental degradation

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Gittins

Petitioner



FAO : Carolyn Thomas
Chair of the Senedd Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament / Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN
United Kingdom

29TH May 2025

Subject: Petition P-06-1510 – Hafod Landfill: A National Disgrace Demanding Immediate Action

Dear Carolyn Thomas MS,

Given that our first committee hearing was held on 28 March and we are now approaching a third committee meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to respectfully reiterate the seriousness of our long-standing plight. I sincerely apologise for the length of this submission, but I cannot overstate the importance of each of the 19 points raised, one for every year our community has endured this unacceptable burden. This may well be our best and final chance to achieve the outcome we have worked toward for so long on behalf of exhausted and deeply frustrated residents. I therefore respectfully ask that all 19 points be read in full, not as a list of complaints, but as a compelling case for public health, environmental justice, and community dignity.

At the last meeting of the Senedd Petitions Committee, Petition P-06-1510 was again brought forward for discussion, reflecting the urgency and sustained public concern surrounding the continued operation of Hafod Landfill. The Committee acknowledged the rapid return of this petition to the agenda as unprecedented in its frequency, and expressed a strong preference to defer further decisions until the full committee, including its Chair and local Member, Carolyn Thomas MS, could be present. The committee members recognised both your keen interest in the matter and the importance of your voice being heard at this critical juncture. The petition has thus been held open, pending a more comprehensive discussion at the next scheduled hearing, in which your leadership and local insight are expected to play a pivotal role.

First and foremost, thank you sincerely for your ongoing commitment to Petition P-06-1510. I am extremely grateful that the Committee has kept this petition open and scheduled a third hearing on 16 June 2025. Your engagement has brought renewed visibility to an issue that has blighted our lives for 19 years. The Committee's willingness to listen and engage has restored a measure of hope to a community that for too long felt ignored and abandoned. Your involvement has already made a difference, and I hope this submission conveys both our deep appreciation and the urgent need for final, corrective action.

1. Clean Air and Accountability Are Not Luxuries.

Our community is not asking for special treatment or favours. We are asking for what every person in Wales should be entitled to: clean air, health protection, and environmental accountability. These are not luxuries; they are fundamental rights. For nearly two decades, residents of Johnstown and nearby villages have been forced to endure conditions that would not be tolerated elsewhere. We have documented evidence of regulatory breaches, and persistent pollution. This is not a matter of perception or exaggeration; it is supported by the many protests, long standing campaigns, and lived

experience of all the local residents. What is lacking is not information, but the political will to act upon it.

2. 47 Permit Breaches: NRW's Compliance Assessment Report

In November 2024, NRW published a Compliance Assessment Report (CAR) that revealed 47 separate non-conformities with the site's environmental permit. The report, released publicly in January 2025, paints a damning picture of ongoing operational failings, insufficient controls, and an overall lack of compliance. These breaches are not isolated or technical in nature; they have a direct and ongoing impact on air quality, odour emissions, and public health. The fact that such a volume of violations could accumulate without triggering decisive regulatory intervention is, in itself, a profound indictment of the oversight regime. NRW have failed continually to take reasonable enforcement. In December 2023, Enovert were issued a rare, unique and serious enforcement notice by Natural Resources Wales due to ongoing failures at the Hafod Landfill site. Yet, despite this formal intervention, in 2024, we suffered the worst and most persistent period of foul odour that local residents have ever experienced. This demonstrates beyond any doubt that, even under regulatory pressure, Enovert remains incapable of effectively controlling the stench impacting our community. The enforcement action, rather than leading to meaningful improvements, has only highlighted the company's inability or unwillingness to manage the site to acceptable standards.

3. Real-Time Monitoring: WHO Thresholds Breached

In March 2025, a real-time air quality monitor installed at our community centre recorded hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) levels that exceeded the conditions of the permit and World Health Organization's public health thresholds. These findings were deeply troubling, not only because of the health implications, but because they confirmed what residents have been reporting for years, that the air in our neighbourhoods is unsafe. The monitor is strategically located in the heart of our community, adjacent to children's play areas, a sports field, and residential homes. The horrific stench is smelt across 6 km² area, but there is no other comparable monitoring equipment installed anywhere else in that 6 km² area, subsequently trivialising the lived experience of all concerned who live beyond the area of our monitored Community Centre. Families here live with chronic exposure, and now, for the first time, we have irrefutable evidence of what we have long suspected, and destroys the subjective claims of NRW's ridiculous 'Sniff Tests'.

4. Leachate Mismanagement and Climate Change: A Worsening Crisis

The persistent stench affecting Johnstown is increasingly linked to failures in managing landfill leachate, polluted liquid that forms when rainwater filters through waste material. These leachate levels are clearly not being controlled adequately at Hafod Landfill. This problem is being compounded by more frequent and intense rainfall events in North Wales, driven by the accelerating impacts of climate change, a situation the Climate Change Minister must surely be aware of and must acknowledge. As weather patterns shift, the volume and intensity of rain is overwhelming the site's ability to manage runoff and drainage effectively. When this leachate builds up, it releases the powerful odours and airborne toxins we suffer with, further degrading air quality and public health. This raises serious questions about the long-term viability of landfill sites like Hafod in a changing climate. If the site cannot cope with existing meteorological conditions, how can it be allowed to operate for another 37 years, with the projected detrimental effects of climate change. Continued failure to address this will be catastrophic for our community, a grim and unacceptable future of worsening odour, pollution, and health risks for generations to come.

The continued reliance on so-called "temporary capping" across large areas of the Hafod Landfill site is unacceptable and indicative of a broader failure in site management. What was intended as a short-term control measure has, in practice, become a long-term solution—one that is wholly inadequate for the scale and severity of the odour issues experienced by the community. The use of lightweight plastic liners, loosely secured with sandbags, fails to provide a robust barrier against landfill gas emissions. In severe weather, these covers are prone to flapping, tearing, and being displaced entirely, allowing odours to escape unchecked. This approach does not meet any reasonable definition of best practice and falls short of public expectations and environmental standards. It is increasingly clear that

without proper, engineered capping and durable gas control infrastructure, the site will continue to emit foul and intrusive odours regardless of weather conditions or temporary **fixes**.

5. Misuse of Occupational Exposure Limits

In its analysis of this data, NRW inexplicably applied the EPA permitted 'work place / occupational' exposure limits criteria, thresholds designed for adult workers in controlled industrial environments using personal protective equipment. These limits are entirely inappropriate for evaluating ambient air quality in residential areas. Wrexham Council repeated this error during its Scrutiny Committee meeting on 28 March 2025, citing "compliance" with these irrelevant benchmarks. This is not a matter of technical interpretation it is a dangerous misapplication of scientific standards that puts vulnerable populations at risk. The WHO's 24-hour guideline of $7 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ shown in the graph presented at the Homes & Environmental Scrutiny Meeting, and in previous communications, is designed to protect the public, especially children, the elderly, and those with existing health conditions. Ignoring it is not just flawed methodology it is a betrayal of public duty, and incompetence.

6. 18 Years of Regulatory Inertia

This failure to apply appropriate standards is part of a broader pattern that has persisted for 18 years. Time and again, regulators have deferred meaningful enforcement, allowing the operator to continue with business and with a 'benefit of the doubt' approach as usual, despite clear evidence of harm. Residents have submitted complaint after complaint to NRW (who's accurate complaint logging and recording has previously been questioned), supported by social media testimonies, site protests, local petitions and ultimately the Senedd Petition. Yet we see the same cycle: delay, denial, prevarication and dismissal. Regulatory inertia has become the norm. The authorities have shown more interest in preserving the status quo than protecting public health.

7. No Health Risk Assessment in 18 Years

Despite almost two decades of continuous operation and community exposure, there has never been a comprehensive health risk assessment for residents living near Hafod Landfill. This omission is not a mere oversight, it is a systemic failure. Scientific literature has clearly linked prolonged exposure to H_2S and airborne particulate matter (PM_{10} and $\text{PM}_{2.5}$) with a range of health effects: respiratory conditions, neurological symptoms, developmental impacts in children, cardiovascular issues, and increased mortality. Our community has lived through odour, illness, anxiety, and the stigma of proximity to this site for 18 years. We deserve answers, accountability, and protection.

8. Council and Regulators Lack Basic Competence

Wrexham Council's Public Protection Office has admitted it cannot interpret the monitoring data, stating they are "having difficulty understanding the monitoring numbers" in the Homes and Environmental Scrutiny Committee Meeting, on 28th March 2025. This level of confusion from those charged with safeguarding public health is not just disappointing it is deeply alarming and offensive. It points to a skills gap and a lack of preparedness that undermines public confidence. Residents should not have to educate themselves in air quality science to hold their local authority to account. Yet that is precisely what we have been forced to do.

9. Cabinet Minister's Comments Are Deeply Misleading

We were deeply shocked by Deputy Minister Huw Irranca-Davies' assertion in his letter to the Petitions Committee that closing the Hafod Landfill site would not eliminate odour problems. From the outset, the permitting process requires a comprehensive landfill restoration plan precisely to address the eventuality of closure. To suggest otherwise is not only misleading, but also dismissive of the years of suffering and environmental degradation endured by this community. The implication, made by a Deputy Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, that noxious and nuisance odours from landfill sites are somehow inevitable and must simply be tolerated, is staggering and reflects a troublingly defeatist stance. It betrays the principles of environmental justice and sets a dangerous precedent for communities across Wales living near landfill sites. This is not just an administrative failure; it is a national disgrace.

10. Failure to Issue an Abatement Notice

Despite widespread and persistent complaints, Wrexham Council has refused to issue an abatement notice, citing NRW's lead role and primacy in these matters. Yet NRW has consistently failed to take enforcement action, creating a stalemate in which no one acts. Compare this to Walleys Quarry in Staffordshire, where the local authority's issuance of an abatement notice prompted swift regulatory intervention. In Wrexham, all we receive are apologies, rhetoric, deflections, contradictory statements, and abdication. The result is predictable, continued exposure and continued suffering.

11. No Scrutiny at the Scrutiny Committee

The Homes & Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held by Wrexham Council on 28 March 2025 was, in many ways, emblematic of the broader failure to meaningfully interrogate and challenge the status quo. Public Protection Officers appeared before the Committee ill-prepared to scrutinise, and showed a disturbing level of deference to both NRW and Enovert. Rhetoric and platitudes were accepted without question, and unsubstantiated claims of "best practice" and "effective management" went unchallenged. Particularly egregious was the acceptance of Enovert's suggestion that one of their 'best practices' and reliable measures for controlling emissions during extreme weather conditions, is the use of 'sandbags' dropped on top of temporary capping. The very idea of such an example put forward as 'best practice' would be laughable if the consequences weren't so serious. This was not scrutiny. It was passive endorsement masquerading as oversight.

12. "Sniff Tests" and Data Misrepresentation

The so-called "sniff tests" used by regulators have been totally undermined and discredited by the very first monthly results of real-time data monitoring, showing significant exceedance of the public health thresholds. Yet NRW, Enovert, some Wrexham Officers and Councillors, continue to lean on outdated and subjective methodologies while misapplying inappropriate workplace-occupational exposure limits. This is not science, it is a bureaucratic charade. It echoes the story of the Emperor's New Clothes, where everyone maintains a fiction while the truth is plain to see.

13. Schoolchildren Speak the Truth

In recent weeks, children from local schools have begun to speak up about their experiences. Many have made presentations in classrooms, and describe their world where the air smells of rotting eggs, where headaches, nausea eye irritation are prevalent, and where the stench permeates their classrooms and bedrooms. These children may lack the vocabulary of science or policy, but they know when something is wrong. Their courage shames those in power who remain silent.

14. This Is Not Wrexham's Waste

It is worth reiterating that this landfill does not exist to serve Wrexham's waste needs. It imports waste from outside the area. Yet it is our residents who bear the burden, in the form of degraded air quality, health risks, and a diminished sense of place. This is not just unjust; it is indefensible. No community should be forced to suffer in perpetuity so that others can dispose of their refuse more cheaply.

15. The Future Cannot Be Sacrificed — 37 More Years of Harm?

The current environmental permit allows for operations until 2062. That is 37 more years of emissions, odour, monitoring failures, and broken promises. For a community that has already endured 18 years, this is not just a timeline; it is a sentence. It means our children will grow up in its shadow, and their children may too. Every year that passes without action compounds the harm. The psychological toll, the reputational damage (Stinky Johnstown), the devaluation of property, and the disintegration of community cohesion will not repair themselves. The permit must be revoked before more irreversible damage is done.

16. A Callous Dismissal of Residents' Reality

Perhaps the most revealing, and insulting, comment to date came from the Principal Environmental Public Health Specialist at Public Health Wales who outrageously suggested during the Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 28th March 2025, that residents should "just close their windows and take respite from the area." Such a remark is not only flippant and offensive, but it encapsulates the institutional indifference and lack of empathy that have characterised this entire ordeal. Being advised to abandon your home to escape toxic air is not a public health strategy, it is a dereliction of duty. It is an affront to the dignity of every resident forced to live under these

conditions. Such comments demonstrate how far removed some officials have become from the lived reality of our community, and how urgently we need decision-makers who are willing to stand up for what is right, not retreat behind dismissive platitudes.

17. The 2020 Fire :A Stark Warning Ignored

On 27 May 2020, a major fire at the Hafod Landfill site released thick black smoke that enveloped nearby villages and parts of Wrexham town. The fire, which covered 1,000 square metres, required multiple fire crews and burned for several days. Residents were told to stay indoors with windows and doors closed. NRW could not begin monitoring air quality immediately, by which point the worst of the pollution had already been released. PM10 concentrations recorded after the fire reached 702 µg/m³, **more than 14 times the legal daily limit**. Despite widespread concern, no public inquiry was launched. The incident became yet another example of institutional failure and missed opportunities.

18. The Time for Action Is Now

We remain grateful for the Committee's attention and your recognition of the seriousness of this issue. This is not just a local nuisance; it is a public health emergency with long-term environmental implications. We urge you not to be swayed by procedural inertia, vague assurances, or bureaucratic shrugs and language. If Enovert has not resolved the problem after 18 years, then it will not resolve it in 37. If NRW has failed to regulate, then stronger mechanisms must be applied. The evidence is overwhelming. The suffering is real. Enough is enough. We implore you: do not allow this to continue. Revoke the permit. Restore justice.

19. The Truth Must Be Spoken — Like the Child in the Emperor's Tale

The situation at Hafod Landfill has become a tragic parody of the allegorical story of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Officials nod, reports are filed, and phrases like "best practice" and "ongoing improvement" are repeated, while children struggle to sleep, sick with nausea and headaches. The harm is real, yet scrutiny is absent. The truth remains unspoken. We now plead with the Senedd Committee to be that lone child in the tale, the one who dares to say what everyone knows:

- **The Emperor has no clothes.**
- **The site is not safe.**
- **Oversight is not effective.**
- **The public is not protected.**
- **Prevarication has become the norm.**

The time for patience has passed. Our community needs clarity, honesty, and decisive action. We have endured this reality for 19 years. We cannot survive another 37. Please, help us bring this nightmare to an end, once and for all.

May I respectfully offer a personal appeal to you, Carolyn, in light of your longstanding connection to North Wales, and with Wrexham in particular. Your unique insight into the realities we face lends real weight to this cause. As Chair of the Petitions Committee, your leadership in progressing this petition has already made a meaningful difference, restoring a much-needed sense of hope and visibility within our community. Your understanding of the regional context, combined with your strong commitment to public accountability, gives us not only confidence that our voices are being heard, but also genuine hope for a positive and just outcome. We trust that, under your guidance, this committee will stand with us in acknowledging the scale of this injustice and detrimental effect on our residents, and taking the decisive action needed to bring it to an end.

Sincerely,



Steve Gittins
Lead Petitioner

Date:01/06/2025

Carolyn Thomas
Chair of the Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Re: Petition P-06-1510 – Supplementary Submission Regarding Further Evidence Misapplication of Exposure Thresholds in Wrexham Council Report (Item 5, Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee, 29 April 2025)

Dear Petitions Committee,

I write to formally submit further evidence and raise a serious concern regarding the treatment of public health risk in relation to Hafod Landfill Site, as presented in **Item 5** of the **Wrexham Council Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee**, held on **Tuesday, 29 April 2025**.

This report includes **Appendix 4**, page 13, where the following passage appears:

“The highest recorded 15 minute concentration of H₂S was 17.97 ppb... This value is significantly under the maximum values outlined in the Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) stated workplace exposure limits and the human irritant level. However, as can be seen the odour threshold limit was exceeded on a number of occasions...

The monitoring shows that... the levels of H₂S are not expected to result in any direct physical health effects, based on the available **workplace exposure limits**. However, the results show that odour is being experienced.”

This is a **deeply misleading and scientifically inappropriate application of exposure standards**.

The **HSE’s Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs)**, referenced here (EH40/2005), are designed for **healthy adult workers in industrial settings**, exposed **up to 8 hours per day, five days a week**. They are not – and must not be – applied to the **general public**, who may be exposed **24/7**, and whose population includes vulnerable individuals: **children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with respiratory or chronic conditions**.

In stark contrast, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** sets the **ambient air guideline for hydrogen sulphide (H₂S)** at just **5 ppb (parts per billion)** to prevent **odour nuisance and associated health complaints**. The HSE’s 8-hour WEL, by comparison, is **5,000 ppb – 1,000 times higher** – and has no validity in assessing chronic community exposure in a residential setting.

Comparison of Public vs Occupational Exposure Limits to Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S)

To compare public and occupational exposure limits for hydrogen sulphide (H₂S), we must convert both into the same units—**either ppm or µg/m³**. This is essential because occupational limits are typically given in **ppm** (for air in workplace environments), while public health and environmental guidelines use **µg/m³**, which reflect broader, continuous exposure risks.

Long-Term Exposure (Chronic)

- **Occupational limit (8-hour TWA): 5 ppm ≈ 6,968 µg/m³**
- **Public limit (24-hour average): 150 µg/m³ ≈ 0.108 ppm**

Result: Public exposure limits are about **2.15%** of the occupational limit—**more than 46 times stricter**.

Short-Term Exposure (Acute / Odour)

- **Occupational STEL (15-minute): 10 ppm ≈ 13,937 µg/m³**
- **Public odour annoyance threshold (30-minute): 7 µg/m³ ≈ 0.005 ppm**

Result: Public threshold is about **0.05%** of the occupational short-term limit—**roughly 2,000 times stricter**.

Why This Difference Matters

- **Occupational limits** apply to **healthy adults** working limited hours (e.g. 8-hour shifts) with protective equipment and oversight.
 - **Public limits** protect **everyone**—including children, the elderly, and those with health conditions—who may be exposed **continuously** in residential areas near sites like landfills.
-

Importance of Compliance Monitoring

It's critical to **differentiate** between occupational and public exposure thresholds when monitoring emissions from facilities like landfills:

- **Occupational monitoring** ensures worker safety during site operations.
- **Public monitoring** ensures the broader community is not exposed to harmful or nuisance levels of H₂S.

Failing to distinguish between the two can result in underestimating community health risks, overlooking odour nuisance issues, or applying incorrect standards for enforcement and environmental permitting.

Summary of Misapplication

Concept	Inappropriate Use in Report	Correct Approach
Thresholds Applied	EH40/2005 WELs (5,000–10,000 ppb)	WHO Ambient Air Guidance (5 ppb)
Population Considered	Adult industrial workers	General population (including vulnerable groups)
Exposure Duration	Occupational (e.g., 8 hrs/day, 5 days/week)	Potentially continuous (24/7)
Consequence	Public nuisance and risk significantly understated	Community health impacts properly contextualised

Formal Objection

I therefore raise a **formal objection** to the methodology employed in this report. By using **occupational exposure thresholds** to assess **residential public health risk**, the report significantly under-represents the **ongoing impact of hydrogen sulphide emissions** from Hafod Landfill.

This substitution is **methodologically incorrect** and **regulatorily unsound**, and it risks **dismissing the very real health burdens** that residents continue to report: headaches, nausea, disrupted sleep, and severe odour annoyance.

The appropriate frame of reference for interpreting such data is the **WHO's 5 ppb limit**, not the HSE's occupational standard of 5,000–10,000 ppb.

Request for Action

In light of the above, I respectfully request that the Petitions Committee:

1. Note this **misapplication of risk thresholds** as a serious issue in the oversight of environmental reporting and seek an immediate abatement notice.
2. Seek clarification from Wrexham Council, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Enovet, as to why WELs were cited in a public health context, and do they know what they are doing !
3. Give immediate consideration to the revocation of the Hafod Landfill environmental permit, in light of this and other compounding evidence of regulatory inadequacy.

I trust that the Committee will take this matter seriously. Please confirm receipt of this submission.

Yours sincerely,
Steve Gittins
Lead Petitioner

Addendum – P0-06-1510

Who sets occupational H₂S exposure limits?

1. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – UK

- The HSE sets **Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs)** for hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) under the **EH40/2005** regulations.
- These limits apply **only to occupational settings**, e.g., factories, waste facilities, etc.
- Current HSE WELs for H₂S:
 - **5 ppm (parts per million)** over 8 hours (long-term)
 - **10 ppm** over 15 minutes (short-term)

These are meant for **healthy adult workers**, not the general public.

◆ Who sets public health exposure limits for H₂S?

2. World Health Organization (WHO)

- The WHO provides **ambient air quality guidelines** intended for **the general population**, including sensitive individuals like children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions.
- WHO guideline for hydrogen sulphide:
 - **0.005 ppm (5 ppb)** — based on **odour nuisance prevention and low-level health effects** from chronic exposure.

3. Environment Agency (EA) – England

4. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) – Wales

- These regulators **issue and enforce environmental permits** for landfill and industrial sites.
- However, they often **do not explicitly set a numerical public exposure threshold for H₂S** in permits.
- Instead, they rely on a combination of:
 - **Site-specific odour management plans**
 - Complaint-based enforcement
 - **Generic guidance from DEFRA or Public Health England (now UKHSA)**

There exists a regulatory gap in which odour nuisance is typically addressed reactively rather than proactively. The failure to adopt or acknowledge the WHO's ambient air quality guideline for hydrogen sulphide (H₂S), set at 5 ppb, allows some operators or local authorities to inappropriately substitute occupational Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs) as benchmarks for public exposure. This practice is fundamentally flawed, as **WELs are designed for healthy adult workers in controlled industrial settings, not for continuous exposure by the general population**, which includes vulnerable individuals. Such misapplication not only distorts risk assessments but actively **endangers public health by downplaying the harmful impacts of prolonged low-level H₂S exposure**.

Steve Gittins

Lead Petitioner

To: [REDACTED]
Subject: **Systemic Misapplication of Hydrogen Sulphide Exposure Limits and Failings in NRW's May 2025 Update on Hafod Landfill**

Dear [REDACTED]

Whilst I have your attention, and I have subsequently viewed on-line, ‘**How we are regulating Hafod Landfill**’, I am compelled to address many inaccuracies.

While NRW’s May 2025 update on Hafod Landfill is presented as a detailed and responsive document, it falls short in several key areas. The tone of cautious optimism belies the reality of persistent, unresolved community harm, unsubstantiated regulatory claims, and a lack of measurable success. Below, we set out the key concerns that undermine the credibility and effectiveness of this update, and introduce a fundamental issue that demands immediate correction: **the misapplication of hydrogen sulphide exposure thresholds.**

1. Fundamental Error: Misuse of Occupational Exposure Limits for Public Health Assessment

I formally raise serious concern regarding the treatment of public health risk associated with hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) emissions, most recently evidenced in Appendix 4 (p.13) of the report submitted to the Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee (29 April 2025). It states:

“The highest recorded 15 minute concentration of H₂S was 17.97 ppb... This value is significantly under the maximum values outlined in the Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) stated workplace exposure limits and the human irritant level... the levels of H₂S are not expected to result in any direct physical health effects...”

This reflects a fundamental and deeply concerning **misapplication of regulatory standards**. The use of **HSE Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs)**, intended solely for controlled, short-term occupational settings, to assess **chronic residential exposure** in communities near Hafod Landfill is both **scientifically invalid and regulatorily inappropriate**.

Key Distinctions Between Occupational and Public Limits

Exposure Type	Limit	Equivalent (ppb)	Intended For
HSE 8-hour WEL (TWA)	5 ppm	5,000 ppb	Healthy workers, industrial setting
HSE 15-min STEL	10 ppm	10,000 ppb	Acute work exposure
WHO ambient guideline	150 µg/m ³	~108 ppb	General public (24h exposure)
WHO odour threshold	7 µg/m ³	~5 ppb	Public nuisance/health symptoms

WELs are **not designed** to protect vulnerable groups (children, elderly, chronically ill) from 24/7 exposure in residential environments. WHO’s ambient air guidelines, especially the 5 ppb odour threshold, are the appropriate benchmarks. Yet NRW, Enover and Wrexham Council continue to **evaluate community impact using irrelevant occupational standards**, leading to a **systematic understatement of public health risk**.

2. Lack of Tangible, Measurable Outcomes

NRW claims “improvements” and “a decreasing trend in complaints” without providing:

- Month-by-month complaint data
- H₂S concentration trends over time
- Before-and-after comparisons for interventions like gas well installations or capping

Instead, we are offered subjective phrases like “tentative decreasing trend,” which **lack verifiability**. Where is the empirical evidence of a sustained reduction in odour and H₂S levels, validated by independent review?

3. Vague Assurances and Ambiguous Language

The update uses generalised statements that deflect accountability:

- “Officers conduct regular visits” – No detail on outcomes or enforcement.
- “Actions to be completed” – No timeline or metrics.
- “Appropriate measures” – Used to defend inaction, even amid continued impact.

Notably, NRW’s view that no breach occurs if “appropriate measures” are taken, **regardless of outcome, undermines the intent** of the environmental permit.

Regulatory compliance cannot be detached from real-world consequences.

4. Claims of 'Best Practice' Without Evidence

Technical actions such as gas well installations and liner repairs are mentioned without **audit, validation, or performance data**.

- The use of **sandbags** to weigh down liner sheets in high winds is cited without scrutiny.
- There is no post-installation evaluation of **temporary capping** measures.

Can you provide engineering assessments or external audits confirming these as best practice? Otherwise, these are at best unproven and at worst inadequate

5. Lack of Public Involvement and Transparency

There is no indication that affected residents:

- Receive Hafod Liason Group minutes. I was informed by a member of the committee to submit a FOI to the NRW. That is not engagement or transparency.
- Have timely access to monitoring data or decision-making criteria
- Can influence the environmental oversight process

The group appears closed, institutional, and opaque.

6. Overreliance on Pending Data and Deferred Accountability

The update repeatedly defers action or disclosure:

- “Preliminary data under review...”
- “Joint statements pending...”
- “Reports to be released...”

This tactic allows NRW to **avoid scrutiny indefinitely**.

Publish current data, enforcement logs, and compliance status **effectively**, not “in due course.”

7. Continued Dismissal of Community Harm

Despite recognising that “odours are still being experienced,” **no relief or remedial support** is offered to residents, such as:

- Health monitoring
- Health Risk Assessments

Residents are **asked to endure and report**, but **offered no direct protection or relief**.

What concrete steps are being taken to support those exposed in Johnstown and surrounding areas?

Summary Demands and Formal Objection

To restore public trust and regulatory credibility, we formally request:

1. **Immediate correction** of the public record: WELs are **not valid** for assessing residential exposure risk.
2. A **review and explanation** from Council and consultants (e.g., Enovet, NRW) on why **inappropriate** exposure limits were cited, in the H & E Scrutiny Committee Meeting.
3. **Adoption of WHO 5 ppb guidelines** as the appropriate reference point for public health assessment.
4. Full publication of:
 - Odour complaint data (2024–2025)
 - Permit enforcement logs and inspection records
 - Independent assessments of gas control and capping efficacy
 - Membership and minutes of the Hafod Stakeholder Group
5. A transparent, time-bound roadmap for:
 - Site remediation, or
 - Permit revocation if public impact continues

Conclusion

By continuing to rely on occupational thresholds and vague reassurances, NRW, Enover, and Wrexham Council are failing to uphold their public health responsibilities. This letter is both a formal **objection to flawed methodology** and a renewed request **scientifically sound data and publicly accountable action**.

Please confirm receipt of this letter, and I await your promised response.

Sincerely,

Steve Gittins

On behalf of the affected residents of Johnstown and surrounding communities

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your attention and your promise of a response below.

While I have this opportunity, I would like to formally set out my priority questions, as detailed in the attached document.

Given the time and effort taken to provide a detailed response, I would appreciate it if you could reply within **7 days**. I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards, Steve Jones

Dear Mr Gittins

Thank you for your e mail, I have spoken with [REDACTED] and he has advised me that he will respond in full to the points raised in your e mail by the end of this week.

In terms of communications, - at our recent Stakeholder Group meeting we agreed that all parties are to ensure proactive communication between parties and with the community, this includes accurately representing what is said in meetings and working together for the benefit of the community.

- All parties to work together to support and strengthen the good work of the Hafod Liaison Group, ensuring continued representation and to improve communication from the meeting to the community via NRW Citizen web page - [How we are regulating Hafod Landfill, Wrexham - Natural Resources Wales Citizen Space - Citizen Space](#).

Your local members are fully involved in this process and they have a roll in ensuring effective communications and I have copied them into this response.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED] Thank you for your reply. Can I ask through what channels you are effectively communicating to the local community, please, so I can look out for them.

Regards,
Steve Gittins.

Good morning Mr Gittins

[REDACTED] has shared your e mail with me and I have asked for the questions which you raise to be answered within 7 days.

As Chair of the newly formed stakeholder group I am committed to ensuring effective communication between all the stakeholders involved which, importantly, includes the local community.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]



Health and Safety Executive (Wales)

Ty William Morgan
6 Central Square
Cardiff
CF10 1EP
United Kingdom

Cc:

HSE Wrexham Office
Unit 7 & 8 Edison Court
Ellice Way
Wrexham Tecology Park
Wrexham
LL137YT

4th June 2025

Subject: Urgent Call for Regulatory Review – Misapplication of H₂S Exposure Limits & Public Health Risk from Landfill Gas (Ref: EA LFTGN03)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to raise urgent and serious concerns regarding the systemic misapplication of occupational exposure limits in the context of Landfill sites and the **public health assessments** related to hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) emissions from landfill sites, specifically Hafod Landfill in Wrexham. This concern forms part of the supporting evidence for **Petition P-06-1510** currently before Senedd Cymru.

Misuse of Workplace Exposure Limits in Public Health Contexts

The continued use of the **Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs)**, as detailed in EH40/2005, to assess public health risk from landfill emissions is wholly inappropriate. These limits were designed exclusively for healthy adult workers in occupational settings wearing PPE, and do not account for continuous or long-term residential exposure, especially among vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing conditions.

Despite this, local authorities and site operators regularly cite WELs in public communications, reports, and regulatory assessments, claiming compliance based on thresholds that have no relevance to public safety.

Calculated Comparison – A Staggering Demonstration of Regulatory Failure

To clarify the magnitude of this misapplication, I have converted both occupational and public health thresholds into the same unit, **parts per billion (ppb)**, as used in actual environmental monitoring near Hafod Landfill:

- **HSE Short-Term Occupational Limit (STEL): 10 ppm = 10,000 ppb**
- **WHO Ambient Air Guideline for Public Health: 0.005 ppm = 5 ppb**

This represents a 200,000% difference, a staggering and indefensible gap that illustrates the real danger in using the wrong exposure criteria.

This is not simply a matter of miscommunication, it is a fundamental regulatory failure. Applying occupational thresholds to general public exposure not only understates health risks but actively facilitates **regulatory complacency**, where the suffering of residents is dismissed despite measurable exceedances of safe public exposure levels.

It answers the recurring question from those living near landfill sites: *“Why does nothing change, even when the smell is overwhelming and symptoms are widespread?”* The answer lies in the **misuse of irrelevant industrial standards in a public health context**.

Lack of Enforceable Public Protection – A Regulatory Blind Spot

At present, the UK lacks a clearly defined and enforced **ambient air exposure limit for hydrogen sulphide** applicable to the general population. While the **World Health Organization (WHO)** guideline of **5 ppb** is internationally recognised as protective of public health, UK regulators—including **Natural Resources Wales (NRW)** and **Environment Agency (EA)**, have not formally adopted this limit in enforceable permit conditions.

Instead, landfill operators are typically bound only by odour management plans, complaint-driven enforcement, and vague references to tolerability. This results in **landfill sites operating without effective constraints**, despite significant and ongoing impacts on community health and well-being.

Relevant Regulations and Guidance

The failure to manage landfill gas emissions in accordance with appropriate health thresholds contravenes the spirit, and arguably the letter, of several key regulatory provisions:

1. **The Landfill (England and Wales) Regulations 2002:**
 - *Schedule 2, Paragraph 4(1):* “Appropriate measures must be taken in order to control the accumulation and migration of landfill gas and to prevent air pollution.”
 - *Schedule 2, Paragraph 5(1):* “Measures must be taken to minimise the nuisances arising from the landfill, including those due to emissions of odours.”
2. **Environment Agency Landfill Technical Guidance Note EA LFTGN03:**
 - *Section 5.2:* Requires appropriate and ongoing monitoring of landfill gas emissions, particularly H₂S.
 - *Section 8.3:* Details the necessity of monitoring trace components of landfill gas for impact and compliance assessment.
3. **EA/NRW Permit Guidance for Landfill Operators:**
 - Landfill operators must develop environmental management plans to prevent harm and nuisance; however, these are often outdated and fail to integrate ambient air quality standards for H₂S.

The cumulative effect of ignoring or failing to adopt WHO standards and using WELs instead is to leave local populations **entirely unregulated**, subject to continuous exposure to pollutants that would never be tolerated in other environments.

Climate Change – A New Urgency

This issue is further compounded by the increasing frequency and intensity of rainfall due to climate change, which elevates leachate production and exacerbates gas migration from landfill cells. Regulatory frameworks largely designed decades ago, are now **outdated and unfit for purpose**, yet still relied upon by operators and authorities to justify inaction.

Requests for Immediate Action

In light of the above, I respectfully request that the **Health and Safety Executive (Wales)**:

1. **Confirm publicly** that EH40/2005 WELs are not suitable for use in assessing public health risks from landfill gas emissions.
2. **Engage with Natural Resources Wales, UKHSA, and DEFRA** to establish or adopt an enforceable public exposure limit for hydrogen sulphide, such as the WHO's 5 ppb guideline.
3. **Support an urgent review** of landfill site permits, such as that of Hafod Landfill, where WELs have been used as inappropriate benchmarks for community exposure.

Conclusion – A National Disgrace Demanding Correction

Residents living near Hafod Landfill and likely all other affected sites up and down the country who have experienced years of avoidable suffering, while authorities continue to claim that emissions are “within safe limits.” Yet these limits are misappropriated, and are categorically unsuitable for public protection and the current regulations effectiveness are adversely affected by increased periods and intensity of rainfall due to climate change. The operators are unable to manage increased levels of leachate, and the policy and permit is outdated, and non-protective.

The situation of fugitive noxious odours (Hydrogen Sulphide) from landfill across the UK sites is now rightly regarded as a **national disgrace**, as often reported on national TV and media platforms, is one that erodes public trust and undermines confidence in environmental and health protection frameworks.

I urge the HSE to provide clarity, leadership, and accountability on this issue, in adopting the WHO limits as a regulatory mandate. Communities need and deserve regulation that is based on **appropriate science**, not misplaced assumptions.

I am compelled to make this approach following disappointing claims by Enovert Landfill Site in Johnstown, with regulatory over-site by NRW, that they are working within the permit framework. However, in doing so, they have cited incorrect and inappropriate threshold criteria in their report to the Wrexham Council Homes & Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting in March 2025. This misrepresentation only reinforces the wider concern that regulatory standards are being misappropriated or selectively interpreted to the detriment of public health, further justifying the urgent need for review and reform.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am available to discuss this further at your convenience.

A prompt response would be highly appreciated, given the urgency of the situation.

Yours faithfully,

Steve Gittins

From : Steve Gittins
Lifelong Resident of Johnstow.
Lead Petitioner, Petition P-06-1510

To : [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Natural Resources Wales

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Misleading Public Assurances Regarding Hafod Landfill Environmental Data and Oversight

I am writing in direct response to your recent public media statement concerning the environmental performance of the Hafod Landfill site. I must challenge both the tone and substance of your comments, which regrettably recycle a litany of tired platitudes and sidestep the fundamental failures that have allowed this public health nuisance to persist for 18 years.

Your assurance that "*Enovert continues to provide accurate and verifiable data*" may sound comforting to an uninformed audience, but the reality is far more troubling. The data being cited by both NRW and Enovert is **incorrectly based on occupational exposure thresholds (i.e., Workplace Exposure Limits, WELs)** which are wholly inappropriate for evaluating the chronic environmental exposure endured by the local community.

Let me be clear: **the HSE's WELs are designed for healthy adults in controlled industrial environments**, employing the use of PPE, typically for 8 hours per day, 5 days a week. These thresholds **do not, and must not, serve as benchmarks for ambient air quality** in residential areas, where **vulnerable individuals**, including children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions, are exposed 24/7.

The correct comparator is the World Health Organization's ambient air guideline for hydrogen sulphide (H₂S), which is set at 5 parts per billion (ppb) to prevent odour nuisance and protect public health. By contrast, the HSE's 8-hour limit is 5,000 ppb—a figure **1,000 times higher**—and dangerously misapplied in this context. To continue relying on these flawed criteria while proclaiming compliance is disingenuous and undermines public health and trust.

Furthermore, your reference to "unannounced inspections" and "improvement work by the operator" rings hollow when viewed alongside the lived reality of residents who continue to suffer from foul odours with no meaningful accountability. The claim of a "steady drop in odour complaints" should not be interpreted as success; it simply reflects **despair, resignation, or the futility of repeated reporting**.

Equally hollow is your commendation of the Deputy Minister's visit to Hafod. The visit was pre-announced and, by your own admission, showcased a **fully prepared and sanitised site**, an exercise in optics rather than meaningful oversight. That NRW would frame such a visit as evidence of transparency or accountability borders on deluded self-congratulation.

Perhaps most staggering is your statement that "*more work is needed to understand the causes*" of odour exceedances. Let me repeat that for clarity,.....you claim that,..... *more work is needed to understand the causes*. After nearly two decades of persistent nuisance, to still plead ignorance is not just inadequate, it is bewildering to the extreme, after two decades of suffering this damn stench. It's insulting to the intelligence of residents and campaigners who have tirelessly documented the failures of Enovert'. The cause is not elusive. **It is systemic mismanagement, enabled by weak regulation,**

inadequate enforcement, and a regulatory culture more inclined to shield the operator than to protect the community.

I urge you, and NRW more broadly to abandon this defensive rhetoric and instead stand up and do your job, and acknowledge the real, long-term harm inflicted on local people. This starts by:

- **Adopting WHO's 5 ppb ambient guideline for H₂S** as a benchmark in your assessments;
- **Rejecting the misapplication of HSE workplace limits** in residential exposure settings;
- **Publishing independent, disaggregated, real-time air quality data** that reflects actual community exposure;
- And finally, **being transparent about the historic and ongoing regulatory failures** that have allowed Hafod to remain a blight on our environment and wellbeing for far too long.

This is no time for comfortable narratives or platitudes. The people of Johnstown, Rhostyllen, and surrounding communities deserve facts, accountability, and urgent corrective action, not more spin. This is a National disgrace.

I am currently in the process of writing formally to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in Wales to highlight this fundamentally flawed rationale. I will be urging them to re-evaluate the application of these outdated occupational exposure limits in non-industrial, residential settings. It is unacceptable that a permit issued decades ago—under regulatory assumptions and technological standards long surpassed—remains unchallenged, especially in the face of mounting public health concerns and a drastically altered climate context. **I will also be registering that incorrect threshold limits are being employed to promote a narrative of compliance**, when in reality they mask the true scale of community exposure and its consequences.

I eagerly await your reply, by e-mail.

Sincerely,

Steve Gittins

Lead Petitioner – Petition P-06-1510

████████████████████



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref TO/HIDCC/00746/25

Steve Gittins
[REDACTED]

30 April 2025

Dear Mr Gittins,

Thank you for your emails of 7 April and 14 April to Huw Irranca-Davies, Deputy First Minister regarding your concerns about the Hafod landfill site in Johnstown near Wrexham. I understand you have also written to the Deputy First Minister referencing the Hafod Landfill Petition (P-06-1510).

As you know, activities at the Hafod landfill are controlled by an Environmental Permit that contains conditions the operator must comply with to prevent harm to the environment or human health. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as the waste regulator in Wales is responsible for regulating the site and ensuring compliance with the conditions of the permit. NRW will ensure the site will continue to be managed by the operator within the conditions of the permit and will not be allowed to deteriorate as you infer.

The Environmental Permit states that the operator shall maintain a closure and aftercare management plan. This plan shows how the operator intends to close and manage the site in the aftercare phase, which would be enacted upon formal site closure. There are two ways that a landfill can be formally closed under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 and the Landfill Directive:

- Operator-initiated closure - When the operator of an operational landfill permanently stops accepting waste, it can start the closure procedure. It must be compliant with the permit and have appropriate infrastructure, operating techniques, and management plans in place to manage the site through the aftercare phase.
- Regulator-initiated closure - When NRW decides that a site must close and issues a Closure Notice. A Closure Notice is used as a last resort once other enforcement

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Cangen Rheoliadau Polisi Gwastraff / Waste Regulation Policy Branch
Is-adran Effeithlonrwydd Adnoddau ac Economi Gylchol / Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Division
Adran Newid Hinsawdd / Climate Change Department

Canolfan
Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre 0300
0604400

options have been exhausted. Under a Closure Notice, the operator must still comply with its permit conditions and remains responsible for maintaining active pollution control measures.

In relation to the Hafod site, the operator is undertaking several actions that NRW have requested to address the issues at the site. Further information regarding landfill aftercare and permit surrender can be found [here](#).

Regarding your request for Welsh Government to commission an independent investigation into the environmental and health impacts of emissions from the Hafod Landfill Site on surrounding communities, I understand Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) passed a motion at their Full Council meeting on 26 March 2025 where they will be conducting a Community Concerns Assessment. The aim of this assessment is to 'capture health, ecological and environment' concerns from members of the community, which will include resident participation in a stakeholder workshop. More details of the motion can be found [here](#).

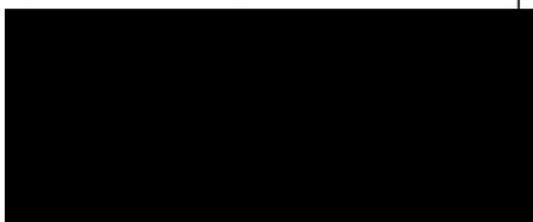
Further to your request for real-time air quality monitoring at multiple locations around the site, focusing on key pollutants including PM_{2.5}, VOCs, heavy metals, H₂S, and bioaerosols, WCBC and the site operator have installed air quality monitors around the site boundary and at Johnstown Community Centre. It is understood that WCBC will be publishing regular air quality data reports.

With regards to your request for the Permit to be revoked, NRW report that the site operator is working through the actions which are addressing the issues at the site. Revoking the permit and closing the site would not immediately resolve the current odour issues. As outlined above, this course of action is taken as a last resort by NRW where other options have been exhausted and revoking the permit and closing the site would not immediately resolve the issues.

The outcome of the Petitions Committee discussion on Hafod Landfill is a matter for the Senedd Committee to take forward and the Deputy First Minister will consider their recommendations.

I understand a Hafod Landfill Stakeholder Group meeting was held on Friday 21 March 2025 and that going forward it is planned that the stakeholder group will meet at least quarterly. A residents group meeting has also been set up and this will provide residents with the opportunity to engage with stakeholders. I believe this group is the ideal forum for you to obtain the answers to any concerns and I would encourage you to engage with these meetings.

I hope you find this information useful. In the meantime, NRW will continue to regulate the operators closely.

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

Waste Regulation Policy Manager

Steve Gittins

01/06/25

To:

The Senedd Petitions Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

**Re: Rebuttal to Welsh Government's 30 April 2025 Response on Hafod Landfill —
Petition P-06-1510**

Dear Petitions Committee Members,

I write further to the Welsh Government's letter dated 30 April 2025 from [REDACTED] (Ref: TO/HIDCC/00746/25) in response to correspondence regarding the Hafod Landfill site. As lead petitioner, I feel compelled to address several factual inaccuracies and policy misrepresentations made within that response, particularly the suggestion that **closure of the site would not solve the odour issue** and could even **worsen environmental degradation**—an argument that is not only misleading, but contrary to environmental law and regulatory practice.

1. Site Closure Does Not Equal Abandonment

The claim that closure would not solve odour issues appears to rely on the flawed premise that formal closure leads to site neglect. In fact, **closure under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 and the Landfill Directive** is a **highly regulated process**. Whether closure is initiated by the operator or enforced through a Closure Notice by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the operator remains legally obligated to:

- Maintain and operate landfill gas and leachate control systems.
- Prevent pollution through site capping and restoration.
- Conduct long-term environmental monitoring and site management.

Closure would legally compel the operator to implement the **Aftercare and Closure Plan**, which the current permit already requires. It is therefore incorrect—and irresponsible—to suggest that closure invites environmental harm.

2. Ongoing Operation Is the Source of Continuing Harm

The site's **continuing acceptance and processing of waste** remains the active source of persistent odour and pollution, causing documented **statutory nuisance** and adversely impacting local air quality. Closure would **eliminate the root cause** of emissions: ongoing waste input, active cell exposure, and operational failures.

The idea that "closure would not immediately solve the issue" is a **distraction from accountability**. No intervention offers an "immediate" fix, but closure offers a **definitive and enforceable path to control and recovery**, unlike the current strategy which tolerates repeated breaches of permit conditions with little consequence.

3. The Site Has Already Breached Permit Conditions

Extensive public complaints, environmental incidents (notably the **major landfill fire in 2020**), and persistent odour events are evidence that the operator is not meeting permit standards. Under Regulation 22 and 23 of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016, **NRW has full legal grounds to revoke the permit** where permit conditions are breached and environmental harm continues. The Welsh Government's framing of permit revocation as a "last resort" overlooks this lawful pathway.

4. Land Restoration Is a Legal Obligation, Not an Option

UK and EU law mandates that closed landfill sites must be **restored, capped, monitored, and managed** for decades after closure. The **Landfill Directive, Environmental Protection Act 1990**, and the **Land Restoration Regulations** guarantee that post-closure management is not optional. NRW remains responsible for ensuring compliance through inspections and enforcement.

Far from leading to neglect, closure would **activate enforceable obligations** for containment, monitoring, and pollution mitigation—measures that should have been fully in place already.

5. Air Monitoring Is Not a Substitute for Intervention

While we welcome the installation of monitors, this is a **reactive and incomplete** measure. Monitoring does not prevent harm, nor does it constitute a regulatory solution. Public health protection requires **prevention of pollution at source**, not data collection after exposure.

6. Failure to Acknowledge Health Impacts and Community Harm

The Welsh Government's response omits any meaningful acknowledgment of the **cumulative and long-term public health implications** of exposure to PM2.5, H₂S, VOCs, and bioaerosols. The absence of reference to the **2020 Hafod landfill fire**, which caused mass evacuations and widespread pollution, is particularly egregious and appears to downplay the severity of the situation.

7. Welsh Government Has a Statutory Duty to Act

Under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**, the Welsh Government is legally bound to protect the environment and promote good health and well-being. Allowing a known polluting site to continue operations in the face of strong community opposition and substantial evidence of harm is incompatible with this obligation.

Request for Committee Consideration

We respectfully ask that the Senedd Petitions Committee consider these rebuttals in their deliberations and **recommend the revocation of the environmental permit for Hafod Landfill** as a proportionate and lawful remedy to long-standing, unresolved environmental and public health harms.

We remain committed to constructive engagement but firmly believe that only **formal closure** will bring about the level of control and accountability necessary to protect our community.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Gittins

Lead Petitioner – Petition P-06-1510

[REDACTED]

Campaign to revoke Hafod Landfill Site permit

To : Natural Resources Wales

From : Steve Gittins – Resident of Johnstown.

As part of our above campaign and ongoing petition with the Welsh Government (P-06-1510), I written to Wrexham Council Public Protection Office, and I copy NRW and the regulator in these matters and seek answers to the following question, which have also addressed to Wrexham Council. I also await a reply from [REDACTED], regarding previous correspondence, that to date appears to have been ignored.

Questions Regarding Hafod Lanfill Regulation.

Public Health Assessment Standards

- 1. Why were HSE Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs), which apply to occupational settings, used to assess public health impacts in a residential area near Hafod Landfill?**
- 2. Will the Council now acknowledge this misuse of occupational standards, and correct the public record by adopting WHO guidelines (e.g. the 5 ppb odour threshold) instead?**
- 3. Who advised or authorised the use of WELs in the Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee’s April 2025 report? Was this based on NRW guidance, internal consultants, or Enovert’s submissions?**

Data Transparency and Verification

- 4. The Council has stated that a single “all-encompassing” report—containing data from all installed monitors, alongside weather data—will be presented to the Stakeholder Group and then passed to NRW for publication via the Public Register. However, from the experience of many residents, the Public Register is often difficult to navigate, inconsistently updated, and not readily accessible to the general public.**

Given these limitations:

- Will the Council commit to making this report—and any future monitoring data—available through a more direct and user-friendly communication channel, such as a dedicated web page, a community bulletin, or local publication?**
- Will the full dataset, including raw time-stamped H₂S readings, exceedance durations, wind direction overlays, and analysis methodologies, be published in an accessible and timely manner?**

This would ensure that affected residents are not excluded from critical health-related information due to technical or bureaucratic barriers.

Campaign to revoke Hafod Landfill Site permit

5. **Can you provide month-by-month odour complaint data from 2024 to present, broken down by location and incident type?**
6. **Are there H₂S monitoring datasets available for public review, including raw values and trends over time?**
7. **Have there been any independent audits or validations of NRW or Enovert's reported gas management improvements (e.g. well installations, liner repairs)? If so, will these be published?**

Enforcement and Compliance

8. **What specific enforcement actions has WCBC Public Protection taken over the past 18 months in response to permit breaches or persistent odour complaints from residents—particularly actions falling within the Council's own statutory responsibilities, regardless of NRW's primary regulatory role?**
9. **Does the Council agree that "appropriate measures" should be judged by their actual impact on the public, not just whether they were attempted?**
10. **What are the current criteria used by the Council (not NRW) to determine whether a breach of the environmental permit has occurred?**

Technical Measures and Best Practice

11. **Can you confirm whether the temporary capping and use of sandbags to secure liners has been subject to engineering evaluation of effectiveness.**
12. **Have any independent experts reviewed the gas control systems and landfill management practices? If so, who, and what were their findings?**

Would you not agree that climate change is driving an increase in both the frequency and intensity of rainfall events, which significantly challenges the effective management of leachate volumes at landfill sites. The current permit framework and operational processes, often based on historical weather patterns, are increasingly outdated and inadequate to address these intensified hydrological conditions. Without updated regulatory standards and adaptive management practices that reflect these climate realities, landfill operators risk greater leachate overflow, increased odour emissions, and environmental harm.

Community Involvement and Governance

13. **Why are Hafod Liaison Group minutes not made automatically available to residents? Will the Council now commit to publishing these routinely?**
14. **Can affected residents be given observer status in stakeholder groups, and timely access to monitoring and compliance data?**
15. **Is the Council willing to hold a public forum to allow direct engagement with affected residents?**

Timelines, Accountability, and Next Steps

16. **When will the Council publish:**
 - a) **All complaint and monitoring data?**

Campaign to revoke Hafod Landfill Site permit

- **b) Current enforcement status and actions taken?**
 - **c) A formal position on whether to consider revoking the environmental permit?**
17. **Is it possible to implement an independent review, or regulatory reassessment of the permit conditions?**

Public Health Support

18. **Will the Council commit to initiating a formal Health Risk Assessment for residents exposed to odour and gas emissions near Hafod?**
19. **Have any local public health services or environmental health specialists been consulted on the chronic effects of low-level H₂S exposure on vulnerable populations?**

Summary

Will you not agree that despite repeated claims of "taking this seriously," the report (How to regulate Hafod Landfill) lacks demonstrable, lasting outcomes. It relies on generic language, unsubstantiated claims of best practice, and deflects accountability through vague collaboration efforts and pending data reviews. The community continues to suffer from persistent odours, which undermines the credibility of both Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Wrexham Council's Public Protection efforts.

Key Issues Identified:

1. **Vague Assurances & Regulatory Ambiguity**
 - "We are taking each report seriously" and "operator is taking appropriate measures" lack measurable performance indicators.
 - The phrase "if some odour is still detectable... no breach occurs" appears to license prolonged nuisance without accountability.
2. **Unsubstantiated Claims of Best Practice**
 - Example: "Sandbags on temporary capping" is cited as a best practice—without any scientific justification or performance data.
 - Repetitive updates on gas wells and temporary liners mask the lack of long-term containment solutions.
3. **Lack of Tangible Improvement**
 - Despite years of actions, "odours are still being experienced"—a direct admission that current regulation and operator action are insufficient.
4. **Absence of Transparency & Community Engagement**
 - Stakeholder groups and Scrutiny Committee meetings are cited, but outcomes are missing or delayed.
 - There is no mention of how residents are actively involved in shaping enforcement or validating operator claims.
5. **Inadequate Monitoring Data**
 - Air quality monitoring data is described as "preliminary" and "needs further assessment"—despite 18 years of complaints.
 - Hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) thresholds are reportedly exceeded, but without acceptance of WHO exposure limits or health impact analysis.
6. **Selective Liaison Committee Participation**

Campaign to revoke Hafod Landfill Site permit

- The Hafod Stakeholder Group is referenced, but its composition, decision-making power, or independence is not transparent.

Additional Key Questions for Council Oversight

20. Effectiveness of Regulation

- Over 18 years, why have odour complaints persisted despite NRW and Council oversight? What specific regulatory failures are acknowledged?
- What measurable enforcement outcomes (e.g. fines, permit modifications, temporary suspensions) have been imposed on the operator since 2010?

21. Odour Assessment and Permit Interpretation

- How can "appropriate measures" be considered sufficient when community exposure to odours continues?
- Do you accept that ignoring Public WHO exposure thresholds, has allowed Hafod landfill site and probably other UK sites to carry on regardless and with impunity.
- Why does NRW continue to accept the presence of odours under permit conditions? Does this not contradict the legal duty to protect public wellbeing?

22. Monitoring Transparency and Data Sharing

- Will WCBC commit to publicly releasing real-time, **monthly H₂S monitoring data**, including wind vectors and analysis methodology? Not every 3 or 6 months....but monthly!

23. Technical Validity of Mitigation Measures

- What evidence exists to support the use of sandbags and temporary LLDPE liner as effective odour controls under storm or high rainfall conditions?
- Would you agree that Sandbags and temporary LLDPE liners **cannot be considered effective or resilient odour control methods** in storm or high rainfall conditions, and that Best available techniques (BAT) in landfill odour management call for **engineered capping systems, active gas extraction, and integrated stormwater controls**. Continued reliance on temporary surface coverings during adverse weather raises significant questions about the adequacy of site management and regulatory compliance.
- Has an independent third party ever validated the effectiveness of gas wells, pin wells, or temporary caps installed at Hafod?

24. Stakeholder Group Accountability

- Who selected the members of the Hafod Stakeholder Group? What criteria were used? Were local residents or campaigners allowed to nominate representatives?
- Can WCBC provide minutes, actions, and measurable outcomes from the March 2025 Stakeholder Group meeting?

25. Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

Campaign to revoke Hafod Landfill Site permit

- What was achieved at the Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 29 April 2025?
- Will WCBC publicly commit to timelines and enforcement updates and actions arising from these recommendations?

26. Health and Impact Assessment

- Has WCBC conducted any public health impact assessments in Johnstown or the surrounding area related to chronic exposure to landfill gases?
- Will the Council now commission an independent health risk study given the consistent H₂S exceedances?

27. Cumulative Regulatory Response

- What lessons have been learned from past operator non-compliance, including the 2020 landfill fire, and how have they informed current regulatory strategies?
- Why has NRW or Wrexham Council never considered revoking or suspending the permit despite repeated non-performance, non-conformities, considerable public objection, and more recently, the discovery of inappropriate Occupational / workplace data criteria to assess compliance in Public locations.

Steve Gittins



Lifelong Resident of Johnstown.

Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales to the Petitioner, 11 June 2025

Dear Mr Gittins,

RE: Hafod Landfill, Wrexham

Thank you for your detailed correspondence dated 4 June regarding Hafod Landfill site and your concerns relating to both environmental data interpretation and regulatory oversight. We take all representations from members of the public and stakeholders seriously, and I welcome the opportunity to respond directly.

At the outset, I would like to reaffirm that protecting public health and the environment remains our overriding priority in the regulation of Hafod Landfill site. Oversight of this site has included routine inspections (both announced and unannounced), detailed data reviews, operational improvement programs, and ongoing dialogue with the operator, local authorities, and residents.

You have raised a concern regarding the applicability of Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs) in the assessment of hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) emissions in a residential context.

H₂S monitoring off-site is not a requirement of the Environmental Permit. Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) and the site operator have elected to install air quality monitors around the site boundary and at Johnstown Community Centre. We understand that the selection of threshold levels to assess the monitoring data have been determined by WCBC and Enovert in discussion with Public Health Wales.

We share your view that public confidence is underpinned by transparency. We understand that the monitoring data collected by WCBC and Enovert is to be made available in the form of monitoring reports, which will be shared publicly.

We have used a range of regulatory powers to drive operational improvements at Hafod Landfill, including formal enforcement notices, mandatory action plans, and compliance audits. Our work includes continued investigation into odour incidents, ongoing evaluation of site gas management, and ensuring that the operator remains fully accountable for performance against permit conditions. Further information regarding our regulatory work can be found on our '[How we are regulating Hafod Landfill Site](#)' website.

Please be assured that we take our regulatory responsibilities seriously and we continue to inspect and audit Hafod Landfill site against the requirements of the Environmental Permit and associated best practice. All information on the actions we take to regulate the site are public register documents.

It should be noted that we do not provide individual feedback on our response to, or the outcome of, reports of potential incidents, regulatory breaches, or criminal activity.

This is so that we can focus our resources on delivering an effective and cost-efficient incident and regulatory service, to protect the environment and people of Wales. We very much appreciate the reports we receive and would like to thank you for taking the time to report your observations to us. These reports are critical in enabling us to identify and address the impacts of incidents and regulatory breaches and provide valuable intelligence to support our incident prevention and regulatory compliance and enforcement work.