

What specifically changed two years ago that created the problem?

Two years ago Anglian Water stopped anaerobic digestion of sludge on-site at Letchworth. Raw sludge is now de-watered and taken from Letchworth to be digested at one of the company 'hub' sites.

Why was anaerobic digestion stopped?

The primary driver for stopping digestion at Letchworth was the infrastructure on-site. The equipment being used was no longer fit-for-purpose and so the business took the decision to change the process as opposed to installing a new anaerobic digestion plant.

Regulatory drivers also mean that, by 2018, all sludge from the water industry needs to be treated to a higher standard, and this cannot be achieved by conventional anaerobic digestion alone.

As such, our company's sludge strategy was changed to create nine hub sites across the region where advanced digestion is carried out. By taking this approach, the company is able to concentrate the advanced digestion activity across the region and use the process to generate renewable energy. The strategy means that most of these hub sites are now self-sufficient and actually export renewable energy to the grid.

This approach allows us to ensure we are compliant with regulations and, by enhancing our use of renewable energy; we are able to reduce energy costs across the business, which helps us to keep customer bills down.

Why can't anaerobic digestion recommence?

The company will not be re-introducing anaerobic digestion at the Letchworth WRC.

We believe the scheme that we are delivering is the right option for the site as it will remove the issue of odour in a timelier and more cost effective way.

The installation and running of an anaerobic digestion plant would take considerably longer to plan, would cost significantly more to install, and would generate an additional 14 HGV movements to and from site every day.

Please supply a full details of what AW are doing to solve these problems and a detailed works program.

The scheme we are delivering will see all sludge on-site stored in two completely sealed and contained tanks. These tanks will be fitted with an odour control unit that will remove odorous compounds from the air before it is vented into the atmosphere.

The air from the tanks will be vented through a 5m stack, fitted with an accelerator cone, to drive it up high where it will disperse.

We are doing all that we can to speed up the delivery of this scheme. The timeline below sets out the current delivery plan, although we would like to complete work sooner:

July

- Preparatory works on-site to get ready for equipment and pipelines to be installed.
- Sludge transfer pumps installed.
- Centrifuge feed pumps installed.
- Pipework construction for new tank connections.

August

- Tank covers to be fitted.
- Centrifuge pumps connected.

September

- Odour control unit installation completed.
- Sludge transfer pumps to be tested and commissioned.

October

- Full system to be tested and commissioned.

Has the system been ordered? What is the delivery and installation date?

Yes, all of the equipment needed to complete the scheme has been ordered. The odour control unit will be delivered in the next three weeks and the covers for the tanks will be delivered in the next four weeks.

We will install and commission the system as soon as possible and the system will be fully operational by the end of October at the very latest.

Is any permission (e.g. planning) required for any of the works from any authority?

There is no planning permission needed for any of the work being completed on site.

Does AW have the competence to solve these problems?

Yes, our engineering teams successfully design and deliver schemes like this across our operational region regularly.

How confident is AW that these works will work?

We have absolute confidence that the scheme being delivered will rectify the issue.

Have these changes been made at other sites? Please specify.

Yes, this very same equipment is in use at a number of out sites across the region. These sites include Chelmsford, Colchester, Ipswich and Northampton.

How will the smell be monitored? What tests have been done before the works commenced to provide the benchmark?

Before the work was completed, odour monitoring was completed across the site. This information was used to build an odour model.

On completion of this work, odour monitoring will be carried out again. We will also be carrying out weekly monitoring on-site as a weekly site management routine. The new odour control system will also allow us to assess effectiveness of the odour management on site and become more proactive in our response.

Does AW rely upon the public to inform them there is a problem or does AW have specific equipment and procedure? Please specify.

The site at Letchworth is manned and routine operational checks are carried out to ensure it is running as it should.

With regards to odour, any noticeable change experienced by the site team is investigated. Customer feedback and reports of odour are, however, incredibly useful for us and all reports of odour are investigated.

Is there any equipment that could be installed in Fairfield that identifies when there is a smell problem?

No. There are no fixed sensors on the market that would be able to accurately detect odours in Fairfield at this level. However, we have recently purchased some incredibly sensitive mobile odour sensors and we are using these to complete surveys across the site and Fairfield.

Will the bloodhound system still be needed once the new system is in place?

Once the scheme is completed there will be no exposed sludge on the site and odours will be managed by the newly installed odour control unit. The bloodhound units, currently in-use at the sludge tanks, will be removed. We will continue to use targeted odour suppression sprays at the centrate building.

What budget is this work coming from? Who is bearing the cost?

This work is all being funded through our normal capital investment programme. There is no impact on customer bills as a result of this work.

Who is responsible for creating this problem?

The issues being experienced cannot be attributed to any individual at Anglian Water. The company accepts full responsibility for the issue and a suitable goodwill gesture will be made to the community upon completion of the scheme by way of an apology.

When will the problem be solved?

The system will be installed and operational by October at the very latest.

Will the site be adequate for the new development?

Yes, the site has capacity to deal with planned growth in the area.

Please supply details of how residents should communicate with AW with complaints and please ensure AW staff knows where Fairfield is.

Residents can contact us to log odours by contacting the 24/7 customer contact centre on 03457 145 145. Alternatively, customers can log odour reports or send us any questions using Letchworth@anglainwater.co.uk.

Regarding difficulties with residents' addresses, this is due to the fact that most residents in the Fairfield area are billed for their water and sewerage services by Affinity Water. As such, not all properties show on our billing records, which is the primary source of customer data we use.

We have now received this full dataset and are in the process of uploading it to our systems. Once complete, all customer details will show on our systems. In the meantime, we will add a note to our internal system so that our call operators understand this situation.