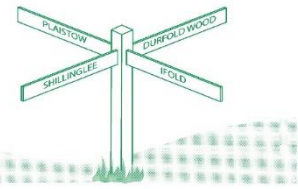


PLAISTOW AND IFOLD PARISH COUNCIL



8th December 2020

BY EMAIL ONLY

Mr. M. Turner
Area Environment Manager
Solent & South Downs, Environment Agency
[\[email redacted for publication\]](#)

Mr Andrew Frost
Head of Planning, Chichester District Council
[\[email redacted for publication\]](#)

Dear Mr Turner and Mr Frost,

Re: Lagoon 3

Further to the explosion at Wessex Water's premises in Avonmouth, Bristol on 3rd December, when four people tragically lost their lives, Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council is once again writing to express its deep unease at the apparent lack of concern and action being taken by the Environment Agency (EA) and Chichester District Council (CDC) in relation to Lagoon 3 to maintain the safety of the environment and the local community.

In his evidence to the Planning Inspector, the Anaerobic Digester (AD) expert, Dr Les Gornall, described Lagoon 3 as an AD system and explicitly stated that if any of the AD systems on site were to fail, "one breath would be death". The Parish Council believe this to be too much of a risk for the EA and CDC to ignore.

Despite Wessex Water being a large reputable company, this has not prevented such a devastating and tragic accident occurring in relation to their AD plant. In stark contrast, the owner of Lagoon 3 is conspicuously absent and is therefore not monitoring or undertaking due diligence to ensure the safety of Lagoon 3.

The Parish Council were led to believe that the EA would be conducting quarterly inspections of the lagoon to monitor its safety, following recommendations in the structural engineer's report prepared for them by WS Atkins. We now understand that no inspection has taken place since January 2020. This lack of oversight, considering the EA's structural engineer's report and recommendations, is extremely worrying, and bordering on negligence. We have included the Atkins report with this letter and draw your attention to paragraphs 8.1.1 and 9.2 in particular, which state respectively that "*the lagoon is a high risk installation*" and "*three surveillance visits a day be continued for every day of the week, including weekends.*"

Also enclosed is a copy of the EA's letter to the Parish Council dated 20th December 2019. We refer, in particular, to the section titled 'Anti-pollution works notice' on page 2. The EA "*judged that the risk to the environment posed by Lagoon 3's contents had now increased and [...] served an anti-pollution works notice on the landowner on 28 August 2019... The landowner [...] acknowledged receipt, but [has] not yet taken steps towards compliance.*" Despite the looming compliance date of 21st May 2021, the landowner has still not begun to take any kind of remedial action whatsoever to adhere to the anti-pollution works notice, decommission the lagoon and/or properly maintain the structure. It is therefore a logical assertion that the risk posed by lagoon 3 has increased; especially considering the paragraph titled 'Risk posed by Lagoon 3' where the EA states that, as of July 2019, "*the main risk from Lagoon 3 is by inundation of water (and digestate) and dispersal of noxious gases. This is not deemed imminent or likely but **may increase the longer the lagoon contains the current level of digestate waste and if the lagoon is not being properly maintained.***"

Plaistow and Ifold Parish Council is mindful that Artemis Land & Agriculture Ltd staff work near Lagoon 3 on a daily basis. The Parish Council remains flabbergasted at the blatant disregard of CDC and the EA to heed the warnings and directives of their own expert reports in terms of the Lagoon's instability and risk to human life and the environment.

The EA considered 2 summer seasons a sufficient period for any operator to reduce the level of the contents of Lagoon 3. Given that over the last eighteen months (since August 2019), the landowner has obviously not begun any kind of work to comply with either the anti-pollution works notice, or planning enforcement notice requirements, it is now reasonable to assert that lagoon 3 will not have been decommissioned/made safe by the deadline of 21st May 2021.

The Parish Council now requests the full details from CDC and the EA on how they plan to remove the risk lagoon 3 poses to our Community after 21st May. It is reasonable for the Community to expect that the authorities, with a duty to keep residents and the environment safe, will have undertaken 'backup planning' over the last eighteen months to ensure the lagoon can be efficiently and effectively dealt with, shortly after the expiration of the deadline, in the event that the landowner fails to comply.

The Parish Council seeks assurances from both the EA and CDC that the site will be regularly monitored by structural engineers and AD experts to ensure the safety of this Community and those that work close to the lagoon.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Nutting
Clerk & RFO

cc. Cllr. Evans; Cllr. Duncton; Gillian Keegan, MP for Chichester; Mr Anthony Fairbanks Weston, Chairman of Artemis Land & Agriculture; Kirdford Parish Council; Dr. L. Gornall; Health & Safety Executive; Becky Shaw, CEO at WSCC; Dr. Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer of West Sussex Fire & Rescue; Michael Brodie, Interim Chief Executive Public Health England; Mr N. Bennett, Head of Legal Services at CDC; Mrs D. Shepherd, CEO of CDC.