

P-06-1510 Direct NRW to revoke the environmental permit and ensure the closure of Enover's, Hafod Landfill Site in Wrexham

January 2026



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P-06-1510 Direct NRW to revoke the environmental permit and ensure the closure of Enover's, Hafod Landfill Site in Wrexham

January 2026



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddPetitions

Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:
Carolyn Thomas MS**
Welsh Labour



Rhys ab Owen MS
Independent Member



Vaughan Gething MS
Welsh Labour



Joel James MS
Welsh Conservatives



Lindsay Whittle MS
Plaid Cymru

The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry.



Luke Fletcher MS
Plaid Cymru

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Chair's foreword

Petitions are an important way to raise issues that matter to people in their local communities. It gives those who feel they are battling against big, powerful organisations a chance to have their voices heard, even if the outcome is not always as they would wish.

Residents have complained about how the smell from their local landfill affects them for almost two decades. Odour is causing distress and having a negative impact on their lives. The words 'ignored' and 'evasive' crop up in evidence, and residents say responses have been reactive rather than proactive. Even where actions have been taken, and are starting to bear fruit, campaigners feel it is 'too little, too late'. 'Complaint fatigue' is real, and Members admire the commitment of campaigners to keep raising their concerns and calling for action.

The Committee's scrutiny has put the voice of residents on the record; put company and regulators on the spot; improved community liaison; and highlighted the importance of robust enhanced data collection. It has underscored the importance of trust and effective community relations – people need to not only feel their voices have been heard, but that they have been listened to, and their concerns taken seriously.

The role of the Senedd's Petitions Committee is not to be a regulator. However, if a regulatory regime is weak, or communities feel they are being 'fobbed off', then Senedd Members can call that out and seek improvements. Odour from landfill is not just an issue for the residents of Johnstown, and as the petitioners point out, action has been taken in other parts of the UK to close sites.

Although the Committee cannot go as far as supporting the petitioners' call for the Welsh Government to direct NRW to close the site at this time, we hope that Welsh Ministers, and all parties responsible for landfill management and regulation, will consider our findings and ensure that the additional steps we have seen in recent months are maintained, and that relationships between the operator, regulator and local community are improved.

We recognise a lot was expected of this inquiry, and that the Committee might resolve the problems at Hafod landfill where others have failed over nearly two decades. We expect a response to our report in the New Year. However, as we are fast approaching the end of a Senedd term, it will primarily be for Members of the Seventh Senedd to take up the mantle and ensure any agreed actions are followed up by those responsible for fixing the problems exposed.



Carolyn Thomas MS

Chair, Petitions Committee

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Enover and Wrexham County Borough Council should ensure that full calibration of AQMesh Pod monitoring data for accuracy happens as soon as possible, and all monitoring data is published immediately that calibration is completed. Both regulators and residents must be able to assess the outcome of monitoring activity. Ideally information should be provided in real-time if the technical capability exists to do so.....Page 34

Recommendation 2. NRW should ensure that staff undertaking community 'sniff tests' to help assess odour nuisance have undergone appropriate training, and that training and competence to conduct these tests is kept under regular review.....Page 34

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should introduce mandatory automated odour monitoring at landfill sites. This is not something currently required by Natural Resources Wales, and the Welsh Government should ensure that regulators are sufficiently funded to facilitate this. Page 35

Recommendation 4. The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government should engage with the Welsh Local Government Association and all local authorities to clarify how local authorities can practically use the powers they have to protect their communities from statutory nuisance, and what criteria Welsh Ministers would use in order to endorse an intervention, in cases such as Hafod landfill. Page 35

Recommendation 5. Natural Resources Wales should consider whether criteria for measuring hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) levels, causing "rotten egg" odour, should be included in environmental permit conditions, and report back to Welsh Ministers on whether more work should be commissioned on the appropriate measurement of H₂S thresholds. Page 36

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government should seek assurances from Natural Resources Wales that the measures in place at landfill sites in Wales are adequate to ensure they are climate resilient during and beyond their operational lifetimes..... Page 36

Recommendation 7. Natural Resources Wales should investigate whether a connection exists between rainfall and hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) production at Hafod landfill site - using the monitoring data, and available weather data, not

just complaint numbers. If a connection is found, it must account for this in the regulatory approach. Page 36

Recommendation 8. Wrexham County Borough Council and the Hafod Stakeholder Group should continue to prioritise interpretation of the monitoring data; assess what improvements may be necessary to the method of collection and independent interpretation, and communicate its work on this issue by publishing updates at least quarterly.....Page 41

Recommendation 9. Wrexham County Borough Council should clarify in simple terms, for residents’ benefit, the circumstances under which it has intervened in the operation of the site, and the conditions under which it would intervene in future. It should continue to provide regular online updates and consult resident members of the Hafod Liaison Group on the most appropriate means to communicate information.....Page 41

Recommendation 10. Wrexham County Borough Council should clarify the criteria for resident participation on the Hafod Liaison Group and ensure that the meeting minutes are cleared with attendees and published punctually by means that are fully accessible for residents.Page 41

Recommendation 11. Wrexham County Borough Council should ensure that residents are directly represented on the Hafod Stakeholder Group. This should be limited to up to three representatives, with substitutions permitted.....Page 41

1. The petition

This petition was submitted by Steven Gittins, and collected 1,125 signatures. It closed on 24 February 2025.

P-06-1510 Direct NRW to revoke the environmental permit and ensure the closure of Enover's, Hafod Landfill Site in Wrexham

The Hafod Landfill Site has caused community distress for 18 years, making it Wales' longest running environmental campaign. Despite efforts by residents and elected representatives, the site continues to emit noxious odours, creating an unacceptable statutory nuisance. NRW are responsible for environmental protection and has failed to take meaningful enforcement action, relying instead on technical justifications and vague assurances. This is not just regulatory inertia, but governance failure.

Additional information:

In 2024, the odour and air pollution reached distressing and crisis levels. Families were unable to open their windows, children are forced to play indoors. If NRW regulatory framework allows a site to emit persistent and overpowering odours whilst remaining compliant, then the regulations are clearly not fit for purpose. Their own last Inspection reported key failings such as a non-operational gas engine, increasing the release of landfill gases. Temporary capping of landfill cells that fail to contain odours. Persistent leaks from multiple area of the site. Delays in infrastructure upgrades, leaving the site vulnerable to excessive emissions. In May 2020, a substantial fire broke out, burning for several days and producing thick black smoke. NRW recorded air pollution levels 14 times above the permitted level. If NRW cannot hold Enover accountable, and they have failed to do so in 18 years, then an independent inquiry into their effectiveness as a regulatory body is urgently needed.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1LFuumVdjs/>

2. Background

The Committee undertook a short inquiry on this petition between September and November 2025 before reporting key findings to the Senedd.

Who manages Hafod landfill site?

1. Mersey Waste Holdings was granted permission¹ to operate the former Hafod quarry site as a landfill in 2004 following a public inquiry. Wrexham County Borough Council (Wrexham CBC) had previously rejected the company's application. Since November 2008, it has been operated by Enovert North Ltd. (formerly Cory Environmental Limited) ("Enovert"). The landfill operates under an environmental permit (PP3139GB) issued by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). NRW regulates waste sites in line with its regulatory principles.²

Purpose of the inquiry

2. This short inquiry was intended to shine a light on the issues raised by the petition, and give a voice to residents affected by odour from this landfill site. Members were keen to hear from the regulatory authorities, the operator and residents, to understand the issues better. The Committee considered evidence from directly affected residents both before and after taking evidence from key decision makers.

The inquiry timeline

3. The petition was first considered on 28 April 2025, with substantial evidence provided by the petitioner. Members noted NRW were taking measures to deal with non-compliance issues at the site, and the Cabinet Secretary was clear that he would not direct the site's closure.

4. The Committee explored whether the relevant policy scrutiny committees in the Senedd could investigate the matter further, however legislative scrutiny commitments prevented that. On 16 June 2025 this Committee agreed to take oral evidence from the regulators and the operator about how they were

¹ [BBC NEWS | Wales | South West Wales | Quarry landfill given go-ahead](#)

² [Natural Resources Wales / Our regulatory principles](#)

addressing petitioners' concerns. This was scheduled for the autumn term to allow time for further work by the Hafod Stakeholder Group and residents group, and for Enovert's remediation measures to be fully implemented. The Committee also invited written evidence from Public Health Wales, and local residents on the Hafod Liaison Group.

5. Three local councillors wrote to the committee in August 2025 noting 'residents have long reported unacceptable odour levels, which have a direct impact on quality of life and public confidence in how the site is regulated.' They pointed to the motion agreed by the council in February 2025, calling for stronger action including:

- Improved and more transparent links to the established Liaison Committee;
- The creation of a new stakeholder group to strengthen accountability and ensure residents' voices are heard;
- Installing monitoring equipment and to carry out a health assessment.

6. The councillors urged the Committee to note the progress made, but also to continue pressing for further action "to ensure residents feel properly protected and engaged in the progress about Hafod Quarry."³

7. Following oral evidence from Wrexham CBC, NRW and Enovert on 22 September, rebuttals of that evidence were received from a significant number of local residents. Members then took oral evidence from the lead petitioner on 10 November.

What kind of waste is processed and where does it come from?

8. The degradation of waste in landfill produces landfill gas and leachate. At Hafod the landfill gas is collected for use as fuel, whilst the leachate is stored in tankers for later processing at wastewater treatment facilities. Enovert provided detailed information on the types of waste it accepts and the source of waste inputs.⁴

9. Enovert's chief executive told the Committee: *"We take solid waste only. We take non-hazardous biodegradable material. So, they could typically be*

³ [Wrexham Councillors to Committee 20 August 2025.pdf](#)

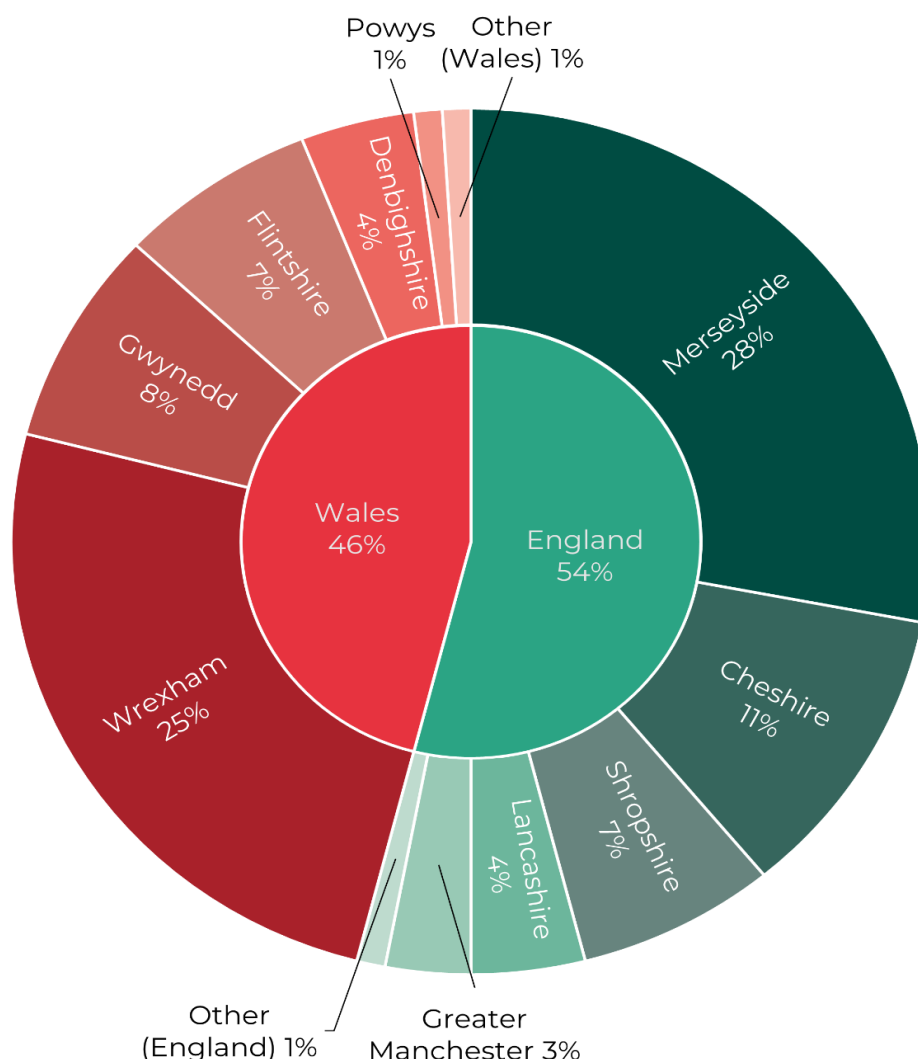
⁴ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Enovert.pdf](#)

anything from waste plastics, transfer station material that's been pre-sorted, or material coming to site from those facilities, and all pre-sorted. We do accept some material that are classed as 'LOI fine'—so, again, material that's been segregated from various waste streams. But it's largely a mix of industrial, commercial waste that we accept"⁵. He also clarified that "we don't take any municipal waste directly. But, as you're perhaps aware, we do take material when their incinerators shut down. So, the site effectively acts as a contingency for when energy-from-waste plants may go offline. Or, if there's a problem in that supply chain into the EFW plants, then waste may be diverted to us, not directly from the local authority, but maybe through one of their contractors, for example"⁶.

10. One of the complaints of residents is that "it's not even our waste". Enovert says around 10% of all waste is residual 'black bag' waste diverted from Energy from Waste plants. Just over half of the 2024 input (54%) came from neighbouring counties in England, with most of the remainder coming from north Wales:

⁵ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 154

⁶ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 156



Source: Enovert

Breaches of the Environmental Permit

11. NRW summarises the findings of its site inspections, audits, and monitoring activities in Compliance Assessment Reports which are all available on its public register.⁷ A February 2025 compliance report details five 'non-compliances' of environmental permit conditions at Hafod landfill, relating to:

- leachate management;
- landfill gas;
- chloride monitoring; and

⁷ [Public register.- Customer Portal](#)

- surface water monitoring.

12. There were 26 instances of landfill methane emissions exceeding the permitted amount during the final quarter of 2024.

13. NRW say⁸ there was a spike in odour incident reports in 2023, and it told Enovert to take action to reduce long-term fugitive (unintentional) emissions in late 2024. It also issued a 'Regulation 36' Enforcement Notice on 21 December 2023, which included "several actions that needed to be taken to address the odour complaints reported between October and December 2023". NRW says Enovert complied with the notice, completed related works, and updated its action plan related to its management procedures. NRW also reported an escalation in odour reports in December 2024-January 2025, adding:

*"Odour incident reports peak in January 2025, at 240, and we have seen a decreasing trend in complaints since then, as improvement works have been undertaken at the site. Some of these improvements were already planned but our regulatory work has given focus and strict timescales for completion."*⁹

14. NRW said "We continue to undertake unannounced inspections and site audits. Some leachate levels are in breach of the Permit requirements and we are considering further enforcement action. At present the site operator is still working through several actions which we believe are addressing the issues at the site. In the meantime, we will continue to regulate them closely"¹⁰.

15. In September 2025 NRW was asked when the site was last visited. James McClymont said:

"So, we actually went earlier this week to check the site, and we found that we were satisfied with the mitigation that's in place at the moment. We detected there is one area of odour, which we detect quite often, on an adjacent road to Hafod landfill site. There are no residents living in that area; it's a road directly adjacent to the site. So, there are still some offsite odours that we detect at that location, but we haven't detected any in the

⁸ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales.pdf](#)

⁹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales.pdf](#)

¹⁰ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales.pdf](#)

communities of Johnstown and Ruabon on our recent inspections of the area.”¹¹

16. The petition also refers to a fire at the landfill site in 2020. The inquiry did not seek additional evidence on this specific event, given the amount of time that has elapsed and the petitioners' focus on recent issues with odour from landfill gases and/or leachate. The Committee notes that on 10 June 2020, Llyr Gruffydd MS asked the then-First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS, for an independent inquiry into the cause of the fire and for the landfill's closure in the meantime. The First Minister said multiple authorities have responsibilities to provide reports about the fire, and “the Welsh Government will consider those reports and then decide what further action may be needed”¹². Compliance information relating to the fire is available in NRW's public register.

What problems have petitioners been experiencing?

17. Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S) is a gas released during the decomposition of organic matter and is associated with landfill odour – a “rotten egg” smell. A report¹³ to Wrexham CBC's Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee in April 2025 showed a significant number of odour complaints during 2024.

18. NRW's written evidence explained more about odour from landfill sites:

“Odours are the result of complex interactions within the site. Whether they can be smelt offsite, and where they will be smelt, is often a result of local weather conditions. If you notice the smell one day but not the next this could be because of a change in temperature, wind speed or direction or a change in atmospheric pressure. For example, gasses will always move toward an area of lower pressure, as a result we are more likely to experience odours when the atmospheric pressure is low or falling. Similarly, on colder or still days the odours are not dispersed as quickly which means we are more likely to experience odours.”¹⁴

¹¹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 58

¹² [Plenary 10/06/2020 - Welsh Parliament](#)

¹³ [\(Public Pack\) Item 5 Agenda Supplement for Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee, 29/04/2025.10:30](#)

¹⁴ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales.pdf](#)

19. Local residents complain about the odour and the effect it has on their daily lives, raise worries about possible health risks, and fear for the future of their local community, given the length of time problems have persisted, and the fact that the current planning permission for the site runs until 2043¹⁵:

"On a bad day during the summer months, we can't always enjoy our gardens, I've had to keep my children indoors numerous times because the stench has been so bad. We can't have doors or windows open! The smell is also bad during the winter months when it's wet."

Local resident

"Residents of Johnstown and the surrounding communities, including Ruabon, Rhosllanurchrugog, Ponciau, Penycae, have had to endure noxious odours from this site for more than 20 years; often during the night, when the smells enter our homes. This happened recently when I had to close the bedroom window at 5.00 am, although the smell remained in the house long after the windows were closed. This issue has been raised in previous meetings, but we have not been given an explanation as to why this occurs so frequently outside the site's hours of operation."

Local resident and member of Hafod Liaison Group

"After a very dry year we have had several days with rain recently and we have had both odour present and leachate running off the site.."

Local resident and member of Hafod Liaison Group

"With the ongoing toxic living conditions of the Johnstown and wider area surrounding the Hafod landfill remaining unchanged, the residents here are terrified of what the next 3 decades holds."

Local resident

"The distinctive "rotten egg" smell of Hydrogen Sulphide is unmistakable. Residents know exactly what they're breathing. Suggesting otherwise is not only insulting, it erodes public trust"

¹⁵ [Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 29 April 2025, 10:30am - Wrexham Council Webcasts](#)

"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 missing is not information, but the political will to act upon it."

Lead petitioner and local resident

20. Residents note that legislation has moved on since the permit was given 20 years ago, and a landfill so close to residential properties would not be permitted today. At Hafod the nearest houses are only separated from the boundary of the site by a railway line.¹⁶

Rainfall and leachate levels

21. Residents say that the smell becomes worse when it rains, pointing to photographic evidence of what they say is leachate escaping from the site following wet weather conditions.

22. James McClymont of NRW told the committee:

*"We have got complaints data running back to 2007, and there isn't evidence in that data to suggest that odours are particularly worse in the winter months. So, it doesn't appear that that has an impact, although there is a link potentially between leachate levels and fugitive emissions of odour. And that's why we are progressing those leachate action plans and we're asking the operator to focus on leachate management, so that we can eliminate that as a source of those odours."*¹⁷

¹⁶ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Correspondence from Ann Griffiths, Hafod Landfill Liaison Group, Item 2

¹⁷ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 62

23. When asked about the impact of rainfall, Enover's chief executive said *"I don't think we've particularly noticed that on the operational site"*¹⁸. He noted that alongside its collection of H₂S emissions data at the site boundary and in the community, the operator had "for many years" also had an operational weather station on the landfill site, *"so it certainly wouldn't be hard to actually do a comparison of the two data sets against the weather conditions, to see if there are any patterns. I'm quite happy to do that"*¹⁹.

24. A number of residents strongly challenged the evidence from both NRW and the operator on this point, with the lead petitioner pointing to scientific evidence of a link between rainfall, leachate levels and odour for landfill sites.²⁰ One resident noted that *"...Ironically, the timing of the Petitions Committee [scrutiny session] is somewhat advantageous to Enover. The recent increased scrutiny has coincided with weather conditions that have traditionally produced lower odour levels, but as we move into autumn and the focus on the site has concluded, the gas smell will become unbearable again"*²¹.

25. The Committee Chair made a private visit on 18 August 2025 to familiarise herself with the site. The visit was not planned far in advance, and the Chair was given a tour of operations. At the time there was no noticeable odour, however this was on a particularly hot, dry day, with temperatures around 70°F.

26. Residents also complain that they have been told in the past that odour is not necessarily coming from the landfill site but potentially from other local sources. Again they strongly challenged this suggestion:

"We have often been told, for example, that the odours are agricultural in nature or they have been caused not by the landfill, but by any one of a number of factories on the nearby Vauxhall Industrial Estate. (Liaison Group minutes 11 March 2025). When you have lived most of your life in an area where there are farms you tend to be able to recognise agricultural smells quite easily. Also living relatively close to a small industrial estate, where many residents actually work, you come to know those smells too. No other activities produce the horrendous gas smells that emanate from the landfill site."

¹⁸ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 195

¹⁹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 195

²⁰ Petitions Committee, 10 November 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner.pdf](#) (Pages 10-13)

²¹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Correspondence from Ann Griffiths, Hafod Landfill Liaison Group, Item 2.

Ann Griffiths, Hafod Landfill Liaison Group

27. The Committee was pointed to media reports of similar problems at two other Enover sites in England – in Walsall and Stanway, near Colchester – with similar responses from both operator and regulator: Enover saying it was operating in accordance with its permit, and the Environment Agency pointing to other possible sources of odour.²²

What have NRW and Wrexham CBC done about it?

28. NRW says it “understands the significant concern in the local community regarding the odour issues in Johnstown”²³. It has set up a ‘How We Regulate Hafod Landfill’ Citizen Space on its website, with an opportunity to sign up to a newsletter, and published regular updates on how it regulates the site. The February 2025 update explained in more detail what it was doing to improve the situation: the action plan and odour monitoring programme. Further updates were published in March and May 2025. NRW officers also provided an update on actions taken to Wrexham CBC’s Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 29 April 2025.²⁴

29. A specialist team undertook a landfill gas audit in November 2024, followed by a compliance assessment report with further actions to be taken. At the April council meeting the regulator recognised more action was needed, but said that the permit was “quite clear of our expectations and we’ve been quite quick to act if we find permit non-compliance” of the operator, and “felt that Enover have been responsive to those actions required of them”. NRW said it has undertaken numerous unannounced visits of the area.

30. An update²⁵ from the Hafod Landfill Stakeholder Group in March 2025 stated:

“All partners agreed to help maintain information on NRW’s website, and the community councils underlined their commitment to help keep local residents who can’t access the internet informed.”

²² Correspondence from Anne Griffiths, Hafod Landfill Liaison Group.pdf

²³ How we are regulating Hafod Landfill, Wrexham - Natural Resources Wales Citizen Space - Citizen Space

²⁴ Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 29 April 2025, 10:30am - Wrexham Council Webcasts

²⁵ Hafod landfill site update - March 2025 - Wrexham Council News

Wrexham Council, Enovert and NRW also committed to work together to provide information to the community from the recently installed real-time air quality monitors, and to engage with public health partners accordingly."

31. Residents have been highly critical of the response from the operator and regulator however, describing 'cut and paste' responses to residents' concerns, that show *"an inherent indifference to the realities of living in such close proximity to the landfill."*²⁶

Responsibility for enforcement

32. Wrexham CBC has responsibility for operational decisions on waste management in the affected area. It has undertaken a number of measures to address residents' concerns, and it is important to note that Senedd petitions are not admissible if they relate solely to operational matters for local authorities. The Committee respects the appropriate devolution of powers to local level, and this petition was admissible because, although it relates to a local authority matter, the petitioners were calling on the *Welsh Government* to direct NRW to revoke the environmental permit.

33. The petitioners are clear that they want this site to be closed down. They say Enovert "has had enough time to get it right"²⁷. It is also important to be clear on what the Petitions Committee can and cannot do in relation to this petition. Neither the Senedd nor the Petitions Committee have direct powers to close the site down, or to force the operator – a private company – to take particular actions. This is a matter for the regulator – NRW – as the Welsh Government sponsored body with statutory powers, or for that body to be directed by Welsh Ministers. The operator must manage the site in line with the conditions of its environmental permit.

34. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs told the Committee²⁸ he had met with NRW officials and Enovert senior management on 19 March 2025, but said it was a regulatory/operational

²⁶ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Correspondence from Ann Griffiths, Hafod Landfill Liaison Group, Item 2.

²⁷ Petitions Committee, 10 November 2025, [Correspondence from local residents.pdf](#)

²⁸ Petitions Committee, 28 April 2025, Correspondence from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change, 2 April 2025, Item 2

decision for NRW, and he did not think it necessary to direct it to revoke the permit:

*"Whilst Welsh Ministers have the power to direct the regulator in the exercise of their functions, the purpose of this direction-making power is to direct specific action to be taken where it is appropriate in the circumstances for the decision to be taken by Welsh Ministers rather than by NRW. As the issues at Hafod landfill site are regulatory/operational decisions, I am confident that NRW as the regulator are best placed to determine the appropriate regulatory action and I therefore do not feel it is necessary to direct NRW to revoke the permit. NRW has a duty to regulate sites in accordance with the law. If they believe a site is not able to come back into compliance and poses a significant risk to the environment and people's health, the appropriate enforcement action will be taken."*²⁹

35. The lead petitioners' evidence strongly criticises NRW's approach, including questioning whether the correct standards (European Norms) have been applied, and how NRW's approach differs from that in other parts of the UK. He says

*"By declining to adopt the most up-to-date QA [Quality Assurance] standards, NRW may risk breaching the precautionary principle and the duty to pursue continuous improvement in environmental monitoring; The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 objective to protect health and environmental quality; and the regulator's positive obligations under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to safeguard individuals from serious environmental nuisance."*³⁰

How could an environmental permit be revoked?

36. NRW explained³¹ that there are two ways that a landfill can be formally closed under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 and the Landfill Directive:

²⁹ Petitions Committee, 28 April 2025, Correspondence from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change, 2 April 2025, Item 2

³⁰ Petitions Committee, 10 November 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner.pdf](#)

³¹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales

1. 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.
2. Regulator-initiated closure - When Natural Resources Wales decides that a site must close and issues a Closure Notice. This will normally be when the management of an operational site is poor and further operation of the site may result in significant, long-term pollution.

37. They add that a Closure Notice is normally used as a last resort once other enforcement 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. Both NRW and the Cabinet Secretary have therefore stressed that closing the site would not solve the problem, as it would still require active management. The Deputy First Minister told the Committee:

“All the facts and implications need to be considered before revoking a permit, including the consequences of any action on a company’s ability to operate and whether revoking the permit could result in a worse outcome such as the site and waste being abandoned. In deciding what action to take the regulator assesses the risk posed and they work with the operator to bring the site back into compliance. Revoking the permit and closing the site would not immediately resolve the current odour issues, as ongoing management of leachate and landfill gas is required to minimise potential offsite impacts.”³²

38. The lead petitioner strongly disputes this argument against closure. He described the Deputy First Minister’s response as ‘evasive’ and ‘misleading’ and concerns about closure as ‘misplaced’, pointing to the permit conditions that mean the operator remains legally bound to fulfil closure and aftercare duties even after revocation. He described the situation as a ‘public health, environmental and accountability crisis’, and said :

³² Petitions Committee, 28 April 2025, [Correspondence from Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change, 2 April, Item 2](#)

*"To suggest that closing the site might cause greater harm implies that residents must accept ongoing exposure to foul odours and associated health risks simply to avoid enforcing the law. This is staggering position which sets a dangerous precedent, one where a permitted operator may breach environmental standards with impunity because enforcement might be "too risky". If NRW cannot enforce closure obligations, that is an indictment of the regulator, not a justification for continued harm."*³³

39. In a February 2025 newsletter update³⁴ on the landfill site, NRW explained publicly the circumstances under which it is able to revoke an environmental permit:

Hafod Landfill operates under an Environmental Permit, which sets out the types and amounts of waste that can be accepted at the site. The permitting regulations do not allow us to include restrictions on where waste comes from.

We only revoke permits if we believe the operation poses a serious risk to the environment or human health, and if all other measures to reduce the odour have been exhausted. At present, the operators are still working through a number of actions to address the issues, and we are regulating them closely.

Closing the site would not immediately get rid of the odours, as leachate and landfill gas would still need to be managed to reduce the potential for offsite odours.

Our regulatory actions are guided by our published regulatory principles, ensuring a balanced and proactive approach.

40. NRW pointed to regular site visits. James McClymont told the Committee *"Since October 2023, we've almost been on a weekly basis to Johnstown and Ruabon to do our odour rounds and assessments. We also respond directly to odour incident reports from the public, so they can be quite ad hoc. But at the*

³³ Petitions Committee, 28 April 2025, [Petitions - Steve Gittins Merged Submissions.pdf - All Documents](#)

³⁴ [Hafod Landfill Update](#)

moment we've been attending on a fairly regular basis—so, at least, normally, once a week”³⁵.

41. Wrexham CBC could issue an abatement notice under Section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) if the site is deemed a ‘statutory nuisance’. However, where the same event might also be prosecuted by the regulator under the Environmental Permitting Regulation, a Local Authority must obtain the Secretary of State’s or Welsh Ministers’ consent before prosecuting under Part III of the EPA. The Council told the Committee: “...*At the point of serving a notice, we have to specify what works are required to abate the nuisance. Now, if that work is already under way, then there wouldn’t be anything further that we have to add to that. In addition, we wouldn’t be able to take any further legal action, i.e. prosecution for non-compliance, without the express permission of the Secretary of State...*”³⁶

42. The council later provided further helpful clarification on the legal framework for assessing ‘statutory nuisance’³⁷ – which is specifically referred to in the petition:

“It is important to provide distinction between detectable odour and legally actionable nuisance. Under Section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, a statutory nuisance requires:

- *Serious and unreasonable interference with property use and enjoyment*
- *Assessment of frequency, duration, timing, and impact*
- *Direct witness testimony by qualified enforcement officers*
- *Evidence meeting the legal threshold of ‘balance of probability’*

There are no automatic numerical thresholds that define statutory nuisance - it requires professional judgment in specific circumstances. Officers must personally experience the nuisance at a complainant’s address to take enforcement action.

³⁵ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 64

³⁶ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 138

³⁷ [Summary of the Hafod Landfill Odour Petitioners Submission WCBC summary report - 10 November 2025.pdf](#)

Policy Implication: The council cannot lawfully serve an abatement notice without meeting these evidential requirements. Acting without proper grounds would be ultra vires and subject to judicial review."

Enforcement

43. James McClymont of NRW confirmed that the environmental permit includes a condition that requires the operator to prevent odour offsite, or where that isn't possible, to keep it to a minimum. The operator describes how it will achieve this in an 'odour management plan', which must be kept up to date, and each revision is assessed by NRW officers to ensure that it covers key areas of operations in relation to odour management.³⁸

44. Charlie Pope of the North Wales Minerals and Waste Planning Service explained that it carries out programmed monitoring visits for Hafod on behalf of Wrexham CBC. The role is within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, with responsibility for going out and monitoring the site in terms of the planning permission and the conditions attached to that planning permission. It was explained *"...for the avoidance of doubt: there aren't any conditions on that planning permission that specifically relate to odour. However, mud on the road and other aspects like that, it's my role to enforce conditions related to that planning permission on that. Also, within that role, I attend the liaison group meeting that occurs, I think three to four times a year, to the community as well as Enover"*³⁹.

Mitigation measures and additional monitoring

45. In addition to all the actions required by NRW and carried out by the operator – as detailed in Enover's evidence⁴⁰ - Wrexham and Enover have jointly funded increased air quality monitoring since the petition was started. The scheme includes monitoring HS2 gas on site and in the community.

46. Enover installed four monitoring stations around the site, and appointed "leading independent environmental consultants" to assess the data collected from these 'AQMesh pod' devices, which monitor in real time. Enover confirmed that it had consulted with the council's public protection service on which devices to use. The Committee asked about the appointment of the consultant

³⁸ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 29

³⁹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 27

⁴⁰ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Enover.pdf](#)

Geotechnology to advise on the monitoring. Enovert said it had consulted the council and NRW, and was aware that Geotechnology were undertaking similar monitoring on another landfill site in Wales, “and so with that experience, we felt they were well placed to undertake the work.”⁴¹

47. Enovert also followed the consultancy's recommendation to install additional diffusion tube monitoring devices “to provide accurate detail in respect of actual exposure risk”. Enovert explained: *“Those measure, to a health-based criterion, exposure over a period of time. That data has come back to show that all of the readings, when compared to the ATSDR/USEPA criteria⁴², are below the relevant limits.”*⁴³

48. Enovert explained that Wrexham paid for and were responsible for data from the AQMesh device located in the community, and Enovert paid for and was responsible for the on-site devices, with data being shared in order to get a full picture. Regarding publishing the data, Enovert said:

*“The monitoring exercise needs to gather a sufficient body of data to allow proper assessment of the air quality environment. We are awaiting the data from the instruments for the third monitoring period at the time of writing. We have agreed to provide the latest monitoring data summary, with the benefit of the third round of monitoring detail, to the Senedd Petitions Committee by 15th September for inclusion in our evidence.”*⁴⁴

49. In April, Wrexham CBC's Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee had discussed the length of time needed to gather sufficient data for an assessment and the operator had suggested ideally a year, but that data would be available sooner. The council agreed to look at the data initially after 6 months, i.e. in October, but decided in October to postpone further consideration in its work programme until after this Committee had completed its inquiry.

50. The Geotechnology report provided to the committee in September showed un-calibrated air quality monitoring data. Enovert explained that the AQMesh units required some calibration against other devices deployed elsewhere in the

⁴¹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 219

⁴² “The quantitative results from the diffusion tubes are compared against health-based criteria developed by health agencies in the USA (see references 1 and 2)” – Hafod Air Quality Summary July-August 2025, Executive Summary, Page iii

⁴³ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 210

⁴⁴ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Correspondence from Enovert, Item 2

UK, and “we’ve been required to collect a bank of data in order to allow the consultants to assess the performance”⁴⁵. Enovert’s chief executive told the Committee that:

“There’s been some pressure, if I’m honest, to provide data externally before we’d actually had a chance to collect enough data to undertake the calibration. I think that that’s why we found ourselves in the position where that data is being questioned.”⁴⁶

51. Enovert explained that because this monitoring is outside the requirements of the permit, NRW was unable to directly link to it, but had offered its Citizen Space⁴⁷ to host a link to the summary reporting.⁴⁸ Enovert said: *“the initial request to undertake that monitoring from the Wrexham environment and homes scrutiny committee was very much based around health impact assessment, and so we will be ensuring that the data that is reported can provide confidence in answering that question and provide data sufficient to give transparency on the conclusions that that draws”*.

A threat to public health, or an irritating nuisance?

52. The lead petitioner challenged the standards being used to assess the monitoring data, saying occupational standards were inappropriate to measure risk to the community and pointing to World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines instead.⁴⁹ A council report in April had explained “There is a World Health Organisation standard for this gas in the open environment of 5 ppb (odour threshold). The only UK limits are to be found in work place controls where there are both 8 hour limits, which represent the exposure over the working day, and 15 minute limits which represents the peak exposure in this time period”⁵⁰. Public Health Wales (PHW) subsequently advised that occupational exposure standards were inappropriate for assessing public exposure, and confirmed the guidelines that should be used, including those set by the WHO.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraphs 208-216

⁴⁶ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 212

⁴⁷ [How we are regulating Hafod Landfill, Wrexham - Natural Resources Wales Citizen Space - Citizen Space](#)

⁴⁸ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 214

⁴⁹ Petitions Committee, 10 November 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner, 21 October 2025](#)

⁵⁰ [\(Public Pack\)Item 5 Agenda Supplement for Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee, 29/04/2025.10:30](#)

⁵¹ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Public Health Wales.pdf](#)

53. The executive summary of the air quality report from the July-August 2025 round of monitoring at Hafod notes odours are 'infrequently detected during olfactory monitoring at many monitoring positions', and states for H₂S readings:

"The lowest health criteria value is 1ppb and the highest concentration detected at the tubes 0.26ppb. Geotechnology understands that Public Health Wales (PHW) has evaluated some of the previous data and concluded that the data suggests the long-term (lifetime) health risk is low and that they do not need to be informed of the results unless the data shows concentrations routinely above exposure standards, which is not the current case."

54. The report also notes that H₂S has been detected when the wind was blowing both towards and from the site, which "could be indicating multiple sources in the area", and so additional pods will be used to gain more background H₂S readings upwind and downwind. The report concludes "Such different lines of evidence indicate that the risks to human health are low and that there are potentially multiple sources of odour in the locality. Based on the available odour monitoring, these odours do not appear persistent"⁵².

55. The lead petitioner has submitted detailed evidence challenging the reliability of both the initial un-calibrated AQMesh pod data and the diffusion tube data.⁵³ He says PHW have "incorrectly used diffusion tube monitoring data to arrive at a Low Risk assessment", which he says is a 'misdirection' as "the report draws focus away from the more relevant acute exposures captured by the real-time data (AQMesh pods) and the community's lived experience of odour". His evidence says they only provide a long-term average, and average out high peaks or 'spikes'. He is also disappointed with how the data is presented in the report, saying compressing the time-series in the graphs is 'highly misleading' and contributes to a 'smoke and mirrors' approach.

56. Since giving evidence to the committee on 10 November the lead petitioner has also raised concerns about "the operational status and reliability" of Geotechnology, having attempted to independently seek clarifications about data in the report commissioned by their client, Enovert. The company has been registered with Companies House since 2008 as a specialist geotechnical and environmental consultancy, and according to its website, has been retained by

⁵² [Hafod Air Quality Summary July-August 2025](#)

⁵³ Petitions Committee, 10 November 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner.pdf](#)

the Environment Agency, now NRW, for over a decade as specialist technical advisers on landfill waste management. It recently conducted monitoring relating to NRW enforcement action at Withyhedge landfill in Pembrokeshire.

57. Public Health Wales (PHW) submitted written evidence detailing its involvement with Wrexham CBC in relation to odour at Hafod. PHW provides advice on guideline values for assessing public exposure to hydrogen sulphide over different time periods. As noted in the air quality summary report, It says it does not need to be informed of routine findings “unless the data shows significant concerns e.g. concentrations are routinely above the exposure standards”.⁵⁴

58. PHW also provided information on assessing the concentration of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) in air, which does not include hydrogen sulphide. It suggests benzene could be used as a conservative proxy for assessing the health risks of VOC unless Wrexham CBC can establish “an informed estimation of what VOCs are likely to be present”. The petitioner has also asked in his evidence⁵⁵ whether, given how long the site has been in operation, the council, regulator and operator can confirm if there has been monitoring for the possible presence of polychlorinated biphenals (PCBs).

59. In September the lead petitioner asked⁵⁶ for a response from the council and NRW to the ‘default advice’ (not unique to Hafod) noted by Kristian James of Public Health Wales in a Wrexham CBC scrutiny meeting in April: that residents could close doors and windows or maybe “take some respite from the area if that’s possible for you” when H₂S levels exceeded WHO guidelines for nuisance. PHW supported all the measures being taken to reduce odour. It also stressed that if people were experiencing symptoms they couldn’t explain or were concerned about their health, the default advice would be to seek medical advice in the usual way.

60. Residents have had concerns about possible under-reporting of H₂S levels at Hafod, and also looked at experience elsewhere in the UK, particularly in light of the fact that other landfill sites have been closed. One local resident explained:

⁵⁴ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Public Health Wales.pdf](#)

⁵⁵ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee 21 August 2025.pdf](#)

⁵⁶ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee 21 August 2025.pdf](#)

*"In August 2024 it was stated that levels of hydrogen sulphide at the Walley's Quarry landfill site in Staffordshire had been consistently under reported by the Environment Agency, from the initial installation of the equipment in 2016 right up until August 2023, due to the air quality monitors being incorrectly calibrated."*⁵⁷

61. The lead petitioner also noted this case, that "in R (Matthew Richards) v Environment Agency and Walleys Quarry Ltd, the High Court found that excessive Hydrogen Sulphide posed a risk to life and family life under Articles 2 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights"⁵⁸.

62. The fact that monitoring work has been co-funded by Enover, and analysed by consultants it had appointed, is likely to be a factor in residents' lack of trust in the data. A resident on the Hafod Liaison Group told the Committee in August that:

*"The monitors have been fitted for several months now but the residents are still waiting for the results. They are all being monitored by Enover, including the council one. They say they are making sure it is accessible to all to read and understand. Another 7 months that we don't know what we are breathing in. I think that the council owned Monitors should be read regularly by an independent company not the one used by Enover."*⁵⁹

63. Data was provided to the Committee two days before oral evidence was taken from the operator and regulators. The lead petitioner has interrogated the data provided to the Committee in September 2025 at length, however the operator said further calibration and careful interpretation was needed.

64. Wrexham CBC provided the results of re-calibrated data to the Committee by email less than two hours before Members took evidence from the lead petitioner on 10 November (due to unforeseen circumstances this evidence session had been postponed from 20 October). The data was accompanied by a strong rebuttal of the lead petitioners' independent analysis of earlier data, and

⁵⁷ Petitions Committee meeting, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Anne Griffiths Hafod Landfill Liaison Group.pdf](#).

⁵⁸ Petitions Committee meeting, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee 21 August 2025.pdf](#)

⁵⁹ [Correspondence from Dorothy Tunnah Resident.pdf](#)

also contended that the council and partners have taken action far in excess of what would normally be required in such circumstances.

65. There was insufficient time for the Committee to properly review this additional information from the council before taking evidence from the lead petitioner, and it was not clear at that point what plans the council had for making it publicly available. It was subsequently referred to in a public statement⁶⁰ from the council's Lead Member for Strategic Planning and Public Protection, who said:

"The review of the information and data which Mr Gittins is using contains numerous inaccuracies, misinterpretations and misunderstandings which he is using in order to create the impression that Wrexham County Borough Council and other agencies are failing in their statutory duties and that the site is causing damage to residents' health.

"The situation is the opposite - the council and other agencies have taken action far in excess of what is normally required and have responded to local concerns. A recent Motion to the Council signed by local members resulted in the establishment of a stakeholder group which co-ordinates the activities of all partner agencies and ensures that accurate information is communicated to the local communities."

66. Wrexham CBC published a Joint Statement from the Hafod Stakeholder Group on its council news website on 12 November, updating residents on completed and planned works on the site, and confirming that the recalibrated data showed H₂S levels "well below" the level that would constitute a risk to public health:

*"Data related to the most recent monitoring continues to show the recorded concentrations of hydrogen sulphide, the chemical compound recognised as the 'rotten egg' odour within landfill gas, are well below 1 parts per billion (ppb) at all locations including the community centre. 1ppb is recognised as the lowest health criteria value by Public Health Wales."*⁶¹

⁶⁰ [Wrexham Council hits back at Hafod landfill site campaigner | The Leader](#)

⁶¹ [Hafod landfill site update - November 2025 - Wrexham Council News](#)

67. The statement referred residents to NRW's Citizen Space for further information, however as of 3 December that page had not been updated with new information or the updated data. Updating the Citizen Space is a matter for the regulator, but particularly in light of local concerns, it is important that information for the public is published in a consistent and timely way.

68. The evidence Wrexham CBC provided the Committee on 10 November, stating that the re-calibrated data showed lower impacts, said:

"Following a comprehensive calibration exercise by the equipment manufacturer (AQMesh), the actual data from March-October 2025 shows:

- *Average levels: 1-3 ppb across the monitoring period*
- *Peak recording: 25 ppb (30-minute average at Johnstown Community Centre)*
- *WHO health standard (107 ppb): Never breached, even at shortest measurement intervals*
- *Exceedances of odour perception level (4.7 ppb): 23% of readings, not the 39% claimed by the petitioner"*

69. The council stated that the implication of this was that "While odours are periodically detectable, they remain well below levels associated with health effects according to international guidelines"⁶².

Sniff Tests

70. One of the surprising things to come out of the inquiry is the reliance by NRW and local authorities on 'subjective' sniff tests. If it were not for consistent community complaints, and the cooperation of Enover, there would be no technical monitoring regime at Hafod.

71. NRW told the Committee it works with other UK Environment Agencies "to share an odour training pathway" for staff who permit and regulate industrial sites, which includes an allocated number of places for face-to-face training. It says it targets resources "based on the need in specific operational areas of Wales and

⁶² [Summary of the Hafod Landfill Odour Petitioners Submission WCBC summary report - 10 November 2025.pdf](#)

the availability of staff". To supplement this training pathway it also undertakes face to face sniff testing, which allows regulatory officers to assess where their own odour sensitivity falls in the range of that of the general population.

72. The lead petitioner has asked for the training records and unredacted weekly sniff test logs going back to 2003. Regardless of how far back data is available and how useful this would have been for the purposes of this inquiry, the Committee would like reassurance from NRW that officers undertaking these community sniff tests – which are additional to automated monitoring – have undergone suitable training, and that this is kept under regular review.

Our View

73. In light of ongoing breaches of the permit there must be tight regulation and regularly published updates on actions to assure residents. The Committee recognises that there is active monitoring of the site, and that the measures taken go beyond the conditions of the Environmental Permit. Members very much welcome this monitoring programme; the regulator making regular unannounced visits; and that the council plans further consideration of the situation following this report. We note that at its meeting on 15 October 2025, Wrexham CBC's Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee⁶³ agreed in its work programme "that a meeting updating on developments regarding the Hafod waste site be held as soon as possible, after this matter is considered by the Senedd Petitions committee". Attention focused on this committee's short inquiry should not be a proxy for continued efforts by the Stakeholder Group, Wrexham CBC and NRW to monitor compliance of the operator and report clearly on next steps.

74. The evidence provided to date by the council, the regulator and Public Health Wales (PHW) states that while the odours clearly constitute a nuisance to people living nearby, and PHW say the site must operate effectively to reduce them, they are not at levels that present a threat to public health. The lead petitioner has continued to strongly reject this. We hope that by continuing to publish properly calibrated data and engaging with residents it will be possible to reassure them that any odour nuisance is not an immediate danger to their physical health.

⁶³ [Browse meetings - Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee | Wrexham County Borough Council](#)

75. Councillor Hugh Jones, Wrexham's Lead Member for Strategic Planning and Public Protection, has said: *"The fact is that the recorded data is well below any threshold requiring such action. As a result of the work of local members and Wrexham Council, significant improvements have been made in the monitoring and control of any emissions from the site, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of complaints being received"*⁶⁴.

76. There is clearly a breakdown of trust between the local authority and some local residents on how the breaches at Hafod have been investigated and addressed. In particular there is a conflict between the lead petitioner and the local authority which has been playing out in the public domain. The lead petitioner has referred his concerns to the Public Services Ombudsman for investigation, which is the appropriate channel. In its response to the lead petitioners' evidence to the Committee in September 2025, Wrexham CBC noted that "Residents who are unhappy with our approach have been directed to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman."⁶⁵ Our rules are clear that a Senedd petition is not the appropriate channel for matters that have been referred to the Ombudsman.

Recommendation 1. Enovert and Wrexham County Borough Council should ensure that full calibration of AQMesh Pod monitoring data for accuracy happens as soon as possible, and all monitoring data is published immediately that calibration is completed. Both regulators and residents must be able to assess the outcome of monitoring activity. Ideally information should be provided in real-time if the technical capability exists to do so.

Recommendation 2. NRW should ensure that staff undertaking community 'sniff tests' to help assess odour nuisance have undergone appropriate training, and that training and competence to conduct these tests is kept under regular review.

Is there a gap in regulatory oversight?

77. The petitioners claim there is a 'regulatory blind spot' in the regime for managing the landfill site. The lead petitioner told the Committee in April that "If real-time monitoring suggests compliance yet odours persist at such great distances, it demonstrates that the permit framework is fundamentally unfit for purpose in protecting public well-being"⁶⁶. He stated: "NRW's permitting

⁶⁴ [Campaigners accuse Wrexham Council of downplaying quarry odour issues - Wrexham.com](#)

⁶⁵ [Summary of the Assessment by Wrexham County Borough Council to the recent submission to the Senedd Petitions Committee - 10 November 2025.pdf](#)

⁶⁶ Petitions Committee Meeting, 28 April 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner April 2025.pdf](#)

framework must be revised to include the persistent and unmanageable breach of air quality and odour nuisance standards - compounded by confirmed leachate system failures - as an automatic trigger for permit revocation, independent of the operator's proposed action plan. The burden of proof for environmental safety must rest solely with the operator"⁶⁷.

78. A member of the Hafod Liaison Group stated:

*"One of Enover's most frequent responses to any complaints about the site is 'we are working in accordance with the permit'....With the permit covering such a long period of time, permissions should be revisited in order to confirm that landfill still remains the most suitable outlet for waste."*⁶⁸

Our View

79. The Committee notes the petitioners' view that the current landfill permit regulatory framework is 'flawed', and that there is 'regulatory failure'.

80. The permit for this site does not require the air quality monitoring that is now being carried out to reassure the community. Because this monitoring has no statutory basis, it leaves the methodology and interpretation of the data open to question and criticism. There are also questions about the basis on which 'statutory nuisance' is determined and what action may, or may not, arise as a result. The committee believes there are some 'big picture' regulatory issues here for Welsh Government to consider. It should take a careful look at the existing permitting regulations, and how they are enforced, and provide assurances that they remain fit for purpose in light of the evidence provided to this short inquiry.

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should introduce mandatory automated odour monitoring at landfill sites. This is not something currently required by Natural Resources Wales, and the Welsh Government should ensure that regulators are sufficiently funded to facilitate this.

Recommendation 4. The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government should engage with the Welsh Local Government Association and all local authorities to clarify how local authorities can practically use the powers they have to protect their communities from statutory nuisance, and what criteria Welsh

⁶⁷ Petitions Committee Meeting, 10 November 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner.pdf](#)

⁶⁸ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Anne Griffiths Hafod Landfill Liaison Group.pdf](#)

Ministers would use in order to endorse an intervention, in cases such as Hafod landfill.

Recommendation 5. Natural Resources Wales should consider whether criteria for measuring hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) levels, causing “rotten egg” odour, should be included in environmental permit conditions, and report back to Welsh Ministers on whether more work should be commissioned on the appropriate measurement of H₂S thresholds.

Climate change impacts

81. More extreme rainfall variation due to climate change has the potential to exacerbate odour production at landfills. As noted earlier, this was not something Enovert or the regulators would confirm, but the lead petitioner says the scientific evidence is clear.⁶⁹

82. Local councillors have also asked questions of Enovert about the capping of sections of the site and how robust they would be in poor weather, and the petitioners' evidence raises concerns about this capping.⁷⁰ He calls for ‘climate vulnerability assessments’ to be undertaken for permitted landfill sites, and those which fail such an assessment to be subject to ‘closure protocols’. He also wants to see stricter enforcement of leachate levels and it to be treated as an “imminent health risk” not just a non-compliance issue. NRW wrote to Enovert North Limited in June 2025⁷¹ concerning a climate change risk assessment at Hafod landfill to be submitted by 30 September 2025.

Recommendation 6. The Welsh Government should seek assurances from Natural Resources Wales that the measures in place at landfill sites in Wales are adequate to ensure they are climate resilient during and beyond their operational lifetimes.

Recommendation 7. Natural Resources Wales should investigate whether a connection exists between rainfall and hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) production at Hafod landfill site - using the monitoring data, and available weather data, not just complaint numbers. If a connection is found, it must account for this in the regulatory approach.

⁶⁹ Petitions Committee, 10 November 2025 [Petitions - FINAL Evidence to the Senedd Petitions Committee Inquiry.pdf - All Documents](#)

⁷⁰ Petitions Committee, 16 June 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner.pdf](#)

⁷¹ [Public register - Customer Portal](#)

Complaint fatigue

83. Both NRW and Wrexham told the Committee there had been a decline in the number of complaints, and the figures published by the Hafod Stakeholder Group show a decline from 262 in January 2025 to 15 in November.⁷² NRW was asked whether the decline was because of the mitigating factors that have been put in place after the enforcement notice. James McClymont of NRW said:

*"It's definitely encouraging to see that decreasing trend following regulatory actions, but we recognise that there are still odours being experienced in the community. And there are certainly further management works and actions that can be completed by the operator, and there are action plans for enhanced landfill gas management and enhanced leachate management..."*⁷³

84. The petitioners stress that the lived experience of residents cannot be measured by the number of complaints received by either the council or NRW. The lead petitioner cites other case studies demonstrating how 'complaint fatigue' is a 'significant danger' because of its effect on decision-making:

*"a reduction in complaints due to fatigue is not an indicator of a successful reduction in statutory nuisance; it is a critical indicator of a failed or exhausted public engagement process."*⁷⁴

85. A local resident who sits on the Hafod Liaison Group explained that the actual reporting of incidents has been "a contentious issue" and the number of complaints does not give a true picture:

"...When there is higher number of complaints than usual, we are told by NRW and Enovert that many of these don't appear to be genuine because they are, for example, anonymous. On the other hand, if the number of complaints is low, they congratulate themselves saying that any improvements they have made have been successful. On one of these occasions, I and a number of others did genuinely report incidents of odours, but these were brushed aside because of the high

⁷² [Hafod landfill site update - November 2025 - Wrexham Council News](#)

⁷³ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 60

⁷⁴ Petitions Committee, 10 November 2025, [Correspondence from the Petitioner.pdf](#)

number of complaints. Unfortunately, many people who once reported odour issues no longer do so because they now feel that it is a waste of time. In fact, at one meeting it was pointed out that because the validity of the incident reports was being queried, it was beginning to make people feel that they were no longer being believed or taken seriously.”⁷⁵

86. Another explained that *“Most people, including myself, have stopped complaining to them as they know nothing ever gets done. If you complain they ask if you want feed back, but that very rarely happens. They say in our meetings that they have too many complaints to get back to everyone. NRW have only just started to do visits without prior arrangements”⁷⁶.*

87. In response, Wrexham CBC noted that the petitioner says people have stopped complaining due to perceived inaction, however it suggests that *“additional proactive monitoring via officer visits and monitoring equipment is providing a factual assessment without the need to rely on complaints.”⁷⁷* It also notes the council must act within legal constraints and that *“taking action without evidence would constitute an abuse of power”⁷⁸.*

88. The lead petitioner told Members:

“When there’s a big incident and we get a protest and we raise awareness, then the complaints go up. I contacted NRW over that period, and more than—. Well, I’ve lost count of the times I’ve contacted NRW, and the response was rather apathetic, but I was told—. I said to them, ‘This can happen eight, nine, 10 times a day’, and they said to me, ‘Well, what you must do, Mr Gittins, is report every one 10 times a day.’ Well, what a burden that is on the residents of Johnstown that we’ve got to do that. We’ve got better things to do. And, interestingly, all the

⁷⁵ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Ann Griffiths Hafod Landfill Liaison Group.pdf](#)

⁷⁶ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Correspondence from resident Dorothy Tunnah, 27 August 2025

⁷⁷ Summary of the assessment made by Wrexham Borough County Council to the recent submission to the Petitions Committee – 10th November 2025

⁷⁸ [Summary of the Assessment made by Wrexham County Borough Council to the recent submission to the Senedd Petitions Committee - 10 November 2025.pdf](#)

*witnesses at the first inquiry who have said, 'There's nothing to see here', none of them live in Johnstown—none of them.'*⁷⁹

Our View

89. 'Complaint fatigue' is a major concern for the petitioners, who make a good point in saying that regulators are using the number of complaints as a proxy for how bad the odour issue is. Taking action on the basis of local people having to continually record complaints also places an unfair burden on the person who is the subject of the nuisance. Before the monitoring programme started there was limited information on which to judge the nuisance level. The council and the regulator must use robust, objective evidence to understand the impacts of regulated sites on affected communities.

Community Engagement

90. Residents on a long-established community liaison group for Hafod landfill expressed concerns about how it operates. These include not being taken seriously enough or actions not being followed up, a lack of transparency about decision-taking, and minutes of meetings not being published or properly reflecting the issues raised. The lead petitioner said he was advised by a group member to submit a freedom of information request to NRW to trace previous meeting outcomes, as no minutes had been recorded in-house. In April, NRW told Wrexham CBC's Homes and Environment Scrutiny Committee that it had received positive feedback at a recent Hafod Liaison Group meeting about the Citizen Space website and newsletter.

91. Campaigners are also aware of the 'Hafod Stakeholder Group' - a separate, high-level group designed to act on behalf of residents to address their concerns. It includes senior representatives of Enover, Rhos Community Council, Ruabon Community Council, Wrexham Council and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and according to its March 2025 Joint Statement⁸⁰ locally elected Members of Parliament and the Senedd have committed to support its work. A member of the Liaison Group said they had been told information would be 'filtered down to us', but added *"I do feel that by virtue of the fact that we, the people who live*

⁷⁹ Petitions Committee meeting, 10 November 2025, Paragraph 14

⁸⁰ [Hafod landfill site update – March 2025 - Wrexham Council News](#)

and work here, and are the most affected by the site on an almost daily basis, should have been represented, even if only in a small way”⁸¹.

92. While the Committee accepts that the purpose and decision-making processes of the Stakeholder Group may not lend itself to direct participation by residents in all its work, there is clearly a gap to fill in residents being reassured that their lived experience is being fully brought to bear. In light of the breakdown in trust between residents affected by odour and those managing and regulating Hafod landfill, consideration must be given to addressing this as a priority.

93. Consideration must also be given to how the role of the Hafod Liaison Group, and groups like it, can be strengthened. This could help address some of the misunderstandings and questions that have arisen, including better understanding of possible health risks, what monitoring data may or may not demonstrate, the additional measures being taken, and what next steps to expect. All parties should be working hard to rebuild trust within the local community, and provide assurances that their lived experience is being fully considered alongside the commercial and operational interests of those responsible for necessary waste management.

94. Enovert's chief executive acknowledged that: *“given recent criticism of the site coming through—odour complaints—and also through various media coverage and contact directly with the public, I think it's clear that any further engagement with members of the public, communities around the site, could only be of benefit to us and the community”⁸².*

95. It is appropriate to conclude by highlighting the perspective of a long-time resident:

“We have already endured the effects of this site for more than 20 years and these will continue for at least another 30 years. Residents born around the turn of the millennium will not have known a time before the pervasive smell in the local area. With the permit allowing waste to be deposited until 2055, there is a good chance that some individuals in the village will have had their whole lives blighted by the gas and it is those without the means or opportunities to move away from their birthplace

⁸¹ [Correspondence from Anne Griffiths, Hafod Landfill Liaison Group.pdf](#)

⁸² Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, Paragraph 152

who will bear the greatest consequences in terms of health risks and poorer quality of life.”⁸³

Recommendation 8. Wrexham County Borough Council and the Hafod Stakeholder Group should continue to prioritise interpretation of the monitoring data; assess what improvements may be necessary to the method of collection and independent interpretation, and communicate its work on this issue by publishing updates at least quarterly.

Recommendation 9. Wrexham County Borough Council should clarify in simple terms, for residents’ benefit, the circumstances under which it has intervened in the operation of the site, and the conditions under which it would intervene in future. It should continue to provide regular online updates and consult resident members of the Hafod Liaison Group on the most appropriate means to communicate information.

Recommendation 10. Wrexham County Borough Council should clarify the criteria for resident participation on the Hafod Liaison Group and ensure that the meeting minutes are cleared with attendees and published punctually by means that are fully accessible for residents.

Recommendation 11. Wrexham County Borough Council should ensure that residents are directly represented on the Hafod Stakeholder Group. This should be limited to up to three representatives, with substitutions permitted.

Overall Conclusions

96. It is clear from the evidence received from local residents that odour from the landfill site is causing distress and having a negative impact on their lives. The words ‘ignored’ and ‘evasive’ crop up in evidence, and residents say responses have been reactive rather than proactive. This suggests that even if actions have been taken, and are starting to bear fruit, campaigners against the presence of the landfill site feel it is ‘too little, too late’, and their concerns are not being taken seriously enough.

97. As a result of complaints from local residents and with support from elected representatives, significant attention has been drawn to the problems at Hafod. Measures have been put in place which go beyond the requirements of the

⁸³ Petitions Committee, 22 September 2025, [Correspondence from Anne Griffiths Hafod Landfill Liaison Group.pdf](#)

environmental permit for this site. This raises important questions about the adequacy of the existing regulatory framework.

98. The monitoring data provided shows clear breaches of the threshold for odour that causes a nuisance, as defined by the World Health Organisation, but not to the extent that it is considered a risk to public health. Wrexham CBC also explained that defining a 'statutory nuisance' for the purposes of enforcement is not a straightforward matter. Members understand that if residents are still experiencing persistent odour, but have given up reporting it, then this must feel a highly unsatisfactory response from the council.

99. The operator has cooperated fully with the Committee since the decision was taken to proceed with an inquiry. However it should also be noted that we received a significant number of complaints from residents challenging some of the oral evidence provided by the operator, NRW and the council. Importantly the inquiry means evidence from all parties is on the public record.

100. The Committee has every sympathy with those affected by odour nuisance, and this inquiry has exposed the gap between the experience of living next door to a landfill site and the scientific measurement of what constitutes harm to people's health and wellbeing. The Committee would like the Welsh Government and NRW to carefully consider how to bridge this gap. There are important lessons to be learnt for dealing with problems that may arise in other places.

101. Ideally no community would live close enough to a landfill site to be affected in the way the people of Johnstown have been. Minimising the social and environmental impacts of disposing of the waste we all produce is a challenge for every government, and it has long been recognised that alternative sustainable solutions to landfill disposal are needed. Meanwhile those living near sites may continue to experience problems, and the cost to regulators in time and money will also continue. During this Senedd term, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee undertook a one day inquiry into Waste in Wales, and residents' concerns about odour from landfill have been a regular feature of questions in the Siambr. The evidence gathered in this short inquiry could form the basis of a more detailed examination of these issues with landfill sites by the specialist policy committee in the Seventh Senedd, something this Committee intends to recommend in its legacy report.

Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Date	Name and Organisation
22 September 2025	<p>Councillor Hugh Jones, Lead Member for Planning and Public Protection Wrexham County Borough Council</p> <p>Toby Zorn, Team Lead, Environmental Health and Housing Standards, Wrexham County Borough Council</p> <p>Matthew Phillips, Head of Development Management Service, Planning, Wrexham County Borough Council</p> <p>Charlie Pope, Senior Minerals and Waste Planning Officer, North Wales Shared Minerals and Waste Planning Service</p> <p>Sara Pearson, Operations Manager for North East Wales, Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>James McClymont, Senior Adviser and Team Leader for Industry and Waste Regulation, Natural Resources Wales</p> <p>Mark Silvester, Chief Executive Officer, Enover</p> <p>Ian Craven, Regional Manager, Enover</p>
10 November 2025	<p>Steven Gittins, Lead petitioner</p>

Annex 2: List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All additional written information can be viewed on the Committee's [website](#).

Meeting Date	Organisation
10 November 2025	Correspondence from the petitioner, Item 2
	Correspondence from residents, Item 2
22 September 2025	Research Brief
	Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee – 21 August 2025
	Correspondence from Wrexham County Borough Council, Item 2
	Correspondence from Natural Resources Wales, Item 2
	Correspondence from Enovert, Item 2
	Correspondence from Public Health Wales, Item 2
	Correspondence from Ann Griffiths, Hafod Landfill Liaison Group, Item 2
	Correspondence from Dorothy Tunnah, Resident, Item 2
16 June 2025	Correspondence from the petitioner, Item 3
	Correspondence from Enovert, 9 May 2025
28 April 2025	Research Brief, Item 2
	Correspondence from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change, 2 April 2025, Item 2
	Correspondence from the petitioner, April 2025

Additional Information

Title	Date
Wrexham Councillors to Committee (with annex)	20 August 2025
Hafod Air Quality Summary	July to August 2025
Correspondence from local resident	23 September 2025
Correspondence from local resident	23 September 2025
Correspondence from local resident	23 September 2025
Correspondence from local resident	24 September 2025
Additional comments from local residents	19 October 2025
Summary of the Assessment made by Wrexham County Borough Council of the recent submission to the Senedd Petitions Committee	10 November 2025