

Environment Agency regulation of Saputo Dairy UK (owners of Dairy Crest Ltd.) at Davidstow Creamery, Cornwall.

EXTERNAL BRIEFING 7

February 2023

This briefing note will provide information to those who have expressed an interest in, or otherwise need to know about our regulation of the Davidstow Creamery site, in North Cornwall, a site run by Saputo Dairy UK¹ (the operator).

Background

The Environment Agency regulate a number of operations undertaken by Saputo Dairy UK at Davidstow Creamery under environmental permits.

Updates on key work areas

Permit Compliance

Environment Agency officers regularly visit the site and surrounding area to undertake site inspections and investigate reports of environmental impacts. These include responding to reports of odour and noise as well as closely monitoring the condition of the River Inny. We are in regular contact with the operator at the site.

We have substantiated a number of odour and noise pollution events during 2022 and so far in 2023. We recognise this as a serious ongoing issue for those affected.

We are very clear with the operator when they have not been compliant with their environmental permit. We require them to ensure that reasons for any non-compliances are fully understood and that appropriate steps are put in place to prevent or minimise any future such issues.

Multiple potential odour sources from the site have already been identified and there is a plan in place to make the necessary improvements. There is a separate improvement plan to address noise impacts. The operator has consulted acoustics experts who have identified additional noise control measures, which are to be implemented to ensure impacts from noise are prevented or minimised as soon as possible.

We are investing a large amount of resource and expertise to ensure the operator implements the level of improvements that we consider are appropriate. There are some complex technical and legal aspects to securing such action and we accept that action may not always be seen to be quick as some might want or expect.

Our Environment Agency Area Director (Mark Rice) and I (Jay Rowntree) attended a recent meeting held by members of the local community. We listened to the concerns of those local residents and outlined our own regulatory position and our expectations of the operator. We recognise the frustration regarding these ongoing issues. We heard the commitments from the operator to expedite improvement plans and to keep the community fully updated through established communication channels and Parish Council representatives.

Notes: 1 – Saputo Dairy UK took over Dairy Crest Limited in 2019. Dairy Crest are still currently listed as permit holder for this site'

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The Operator continues to tackle water quality performance issues and has remained largely compliant with their water quality permit limits between June 2022 and January 2023. Several improvement projects at the waste-water processing facility (WPF) remain in progress due to difficulties with sourcing specialist parts.

Our monitoring equipment has remained in place in the River Inny and continues to provide live water quality data at several locations upstream and downstream of the WPF's discharge to the river. We remain concerned about the ecology of the river and the effect the discharge is having, particularly during periods of very low flow.

Enforcement

We investigate all incidents and permit breaches and will continue to explore enforcement options where necessary to enact appropriate improvements. This will take into account the nature and amount of previous offending. We are carefully considering all the enforcement options available to us, both to address more recent permit non-compliances/ incidents and also to help secure further improvements where they may be required.

We are nearing the conclusion of our investigation into permit breaches and other potential offending from 2021. A decision will then be taken on the appropriate enforcement response. Issues from 2022 are also under investigation.

Permit Review

We continue our work to review the site's current environmental permit. This is to ensure the permit provides sufficient protection to the River Inny and to ensure the operator is managing operations on site to appropriate standards. We are investing considerable time and effort in this work. It is not a quick process but is predicted to be completed later in 2023. If any changes to the permit are deemed necessary, these will be subject to a public consultation.

The Operator's own application for a permit variation includes changes that would enable an increase in cheese production from 9.6 t/hr to 11.4 t/hr. We have just begun assessing that application and it will also be subject to a public consultation.

What Next?

We will continue to monitor the impact of the operations on the environment and local community and assess all reports of issues on and off site associated with the activities we regulate. We will attend site where necessary and will require urgent action from the operator to address breaches of permit conditions and other potential incidents. We will consider enforcement options where necessary. We will provide further updates and continue to share as much information as possible, whenever there are any significant developments.

Contacting us

If you have any questions regarding our action in response to this or any other site we regulate across Devon Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, please contact us at:
DCISEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

If you wish to report an environmental incident, please use the Environment Agency's dedicated 24-hour environment incident hotline on **0800 80 70 60**.

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