

Councillor demands air quality monitoring around whisky bonds

The development of large new whisky maturation bonds in northern Livingston has prompted a local councillor to call for air quality monitoring to be set up.

Conservative Alison Adamson highlighted existing worries of locals at the black mould that covers buildings and trees in and around Eliburn from the existing distillery buildings at the Glen Turner Distillery.

The Scottish Government last year overturned the council's refusal of planning permission for a large extension to the site between Bathgate and Livingston.

Cllr Adamson told a meeting of the Public and Community Safety Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) of West Lothian Council on Monday: "Instead of having two maturation warehouses we're now going to have 20, so if the air quality, as described by locals, was bad then obviously with this new building it's going to get worse. So can this become an area which can be monitored in this way?"

"Given the amount of mould all around the area. I can't understand why that could be safe and I believe that it's seen that could be monitored. The reason the council turned it down was because of the black mould and a lot of people were extremely concerned about it.

“There’s been a lot of building in the last five years and I really do feel that, as well as the Glen Turner development, that this area needs to be looked at.”

However, the black mould, (*Baudoinia complacensis*), or more colloquially known as the the Angel’s Share, is a widely known and contested side effect of the whisky maturation process. It covers buildings, cars, road signs- even foliage. However it is regarded as an aesthetic issue and not one that would be monitored under existing air quality legislation.

Craig Smith, the council’s Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager, who had delivered an update on the Air Quality Management programme across the county, said he would be happy to consult with experts, adding that as populations change circumstances which require monitoring could change. He conceded that the black mould was visibly damaging to the outside of properties.

Mr Smith told the PDSP: “It is encouraging to be able to report that air quality within West Lothian has improved and is at a stage where consideration can be given to removing air quality management areas.”

Monitoring sites were initially set up in Linlithgow Newton and Broxburn. There are 24 sites around the county which are monitored.

Chairing the meeting, councillor Craig Meek said: “It’s good news. That air quality is improving is positive to note.”

A West Lothian Council spokesperson confirmed to the Local Democracy Reporting Service: “We carry out air quality monitoring at various locations throughout West Lothian. The council has a legal duty to monitor certain specified pollutants in air that may have an impact on human health.

“We would only install further dedicated air quality monitors in an area where there is potential for specific pollutants to

be present, and whether there are sensitive receptors, such as domestic properties, would be significantly impacted

“The black mould often seen around whisky distilleries and bonded warehouses is not covered by the obligations on the council to monitor and manage air quality. This is mainly an aesthetic issue on buildings and surrounding surfaces, with no clear evidence of any public health risk from the mould.

“For more information on how we monitor air quality, please visit <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/34729/Air-Pollution>.”

by Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter