

Big drop in stink complaints about sewage plant

Scotland's biggest sewage plant has seen a huge drop in complaints about the smell.

Odours from Seafield Wastewater Treatment Works has been a significant source of frustration for locals for many years, with unpleasant smells at their worst on hot days.

But new figures from the city council suggest efforts by Scottish Water to minimise the impact on residents have proved effective.

In 2019 the council received over 400 complaints relating to the plant's stench, since falling to 130 in 2022 and fewer than 40 so far this year.

A report attributed the "significant decrease" to several factors including 'improved management of storm tanks and primary settlement tank levels onsite and more emphasis on odour control during planned maintenance'.

And it said that in 2022, 30 per cent of all complaints were from just one individual.

"The Environmental Protection team within Environmental Health undertakes proactive assessments in the community at times when there is a higher odour risk," the report added.

"In 2020, Scottish Water announced a £10 million investment in Seafield WWTW. It aims to remove pinch points within the processes at the site and minimise build-up of odorous materials in uncovered areas.

“Construction is expected to begin at the end of 2024 with completion in 2027, although incremental improvements should be noted by 2025. Planning permission has been granted for the project.”

However earlier this year Leith Links Community Council, which encourages residents to make complaints when the odours bother them, said while this “may well improve things longer term,” it’s possible there “will be more, rather than fewer, stink incidents next year, as the work disrupts the normal running of the plant”.

Work on a new £100m replacement sewage plant in Seafield is expected to commence in 2029, which it’s expected will further reduce smell disturbances.

Scotland’s largest wastewater treatment works, Seafield processes 300 million litres of wastewater every day, serving almost one million people in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter