

Environment Agency/ Airport application to permit trade effluent into Prittle and Eastwood Brooks

It would appear that the Environment Agency are finding this application hard going as to date the airport seem not to be able to supply requested information or are reluctant to provide the requested information. It turns out that the TQ grid reference points of where the discharges are to be expelled are incorrect. SAEN's research has been passed on to the Environment Agency, who have verified that one of the TQ points does not exist (the airport claim it will do) and another TQ point is in the middle or close by to the railway line. There are currently 2 discharge points into the Prittle Brook but only one into the Eastwood Brook. Anglian Water has recently allowed the airport to discharge effluent from the aircraft de-icing area into the foul water sewer but have placed severe conditions on it.

There is a chance that a connection has not been made or has been made incorrectly when the runway was extended. Because there is currently only 1 discharge point into the Eastwood Brook, it is likely that this is the cause of flooding at the Rochford Golf Course (the Environment agency are aware if this).

The Airport has commissioned via its consultants Penny Anderson Associates from Buxton in Derbyshire to examine the brooks (the company has already carried out one survey; we await the results of the second).

Potassium Acetate is one of the less toxic de-icers on its own but the issue arises from the de-icer being expelled into water courses untreated. This chemical product would normally be channelled into lagoons and reed beds where its toxicity is reduced before being expelled into water courses. When Potassium Acetate mixes with salt water it becomes much more toxic. You may be surprised that flatfish have been observed in the Prittle Brook (Penny Anderson 1st report) the end section of which is tidal. You may also be surprised to learn that the River Roach meanders into Rayleigh and the Eastwood Brook connects into the River Roach at the Rochford reservoir after passing through Rochford Golf Course.

Another stumbling block is the Airport has been requested to provide detailed information on the chemical makeup of the de-icing product they propose to use. However, this is apparently a new product that is deemed a confidential trade secret (commercial confidentiality) so it is not possible for the airport to supply the requested information. Without this information the Environment Agency cannot progress the application. Although the Environment Agency can get around this by entering into a confidentiality agreement themselves, this only leads to further complications as the Environment Agency are a public body and all their information must be made public either by a simple ask or via a Freedom of Information request. They would be required by charter to disclose the confidential information which would contravene any agreements they may enter into. This is at present with the Environment Agency Legal Team.