

**10/09/2024**

**ANGLESEY SEA ZOO’S FULL OFFICIAL STATEMENT REGARDING THE ARTICLE PUBLISHED BY THE DAILY POST ON THE 9TH OF SEPTEMBER, AND OUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS INVOLVING HALEN MON’S SMOKERY NEXT DOOR**

We feel it is important to clarify several issues which have come up as a result of this article published by the Daily Post and the posts on social media.

Firstly, we want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has been in touch both publicly and privately with their support over this. We represent a small but very close-knit rural community here and we are humbled and grateful for the support we have had over what is an extremely desperate situation for us.

Unfortunately, the smoke from the smokery affecting our community and the visitors and staff here at the Sea Zoo has got progressively worse over the last months and weeks. It will continue to do so as apparently the smokery products which Halen Môn are producing and selling have increased so much in demand globally that they need to maximise their production and have the smokery running as much as possible.

However, we feel it is not reasonable to expect our staff, visitors and local community to tolerate this every day and we believe it is only fair to keep people informed of the situation.

Our current situation clearly demonstrates that our emissions, air quality and environmental health regulations in Wales and UK wide are completely inadequate and need an immediate overhaul! Our current legal emissions guidelines are not sufficient to ensure good public and environmental health, and we are calling on the Welsh Government and the UK government to urgently improve our air quality regulations.

Despite what Halen Môn have claimed, the owners have never discussed this directly with us and have always referred us to the council environmental department. The only recent contact we have had on this issue is a Halen Môn staff member who held his fingers up to V our Director and her kids in the car on the lane a couple of days ago, and a site manager who came over to introduce himself on Thursday within minutes of the first social media posts going out. He specifically asked Frankie our Director to remove the posts, which she vehemently refused to do.

The videos and photos we are sharing are a stark contrast to the image that Halen Môn portray in their marketing material, and we believe that everyone should see what we are experiencing every day here so that they are fully aware of what is involved in making these “best-selling smokery products”.  Particularly as Halen Môn are so vocal about caring for their environment and the local community, and they seem to rely on that sustainable and ethical branding to sell more of their products.

We believe that real corporate and social responsibility goes way beyond meeting the minimum legal requirements, especially over issues such as emissions which are known to contribute detrimentally to long-term health of humans and the environment.

In regard to the ‘year-long study that found no issues’. Fitting an electrostatic precipitator as Halen Môn have done is a necessary legal requirement to remove the largest and most harmful airborne particulates in wood smoke, technically known as polycyclic organic matter (POMs). These airborne particulates are known cause detrimental health effects through long term exposure - and clearly fitting the electrostatic precipitator will ensure that legal guidelines are met as this equipment is designed to do that. However, these large particulates are the only thing removed by an electrostatic precipitator. They are also the only thing that the measuring equipment provided by environmental health could monitor.

So, it is not surprising that the year-long tests results showed nothing of concern as the electrostatic precipitator, as expected, is doing a good job which means that Halen Môn are meeting their basic legal emissions requirements.

But an electrostatic precipitator **does not remove any** of the other constituents of oak wood smoke. And neither did the equipment used for the year-long study take any measurements for other constituents.

As well as POMs, wood smoke is known to contain over 100 different chemicals and compounds including noxious gases such as nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, methane, dioxins, lead, cadmium and even arsenic. It can also contain harmful toxins and other substances known to cause cancer.

And just to be clear, “sustainably sourced” oak wood which Halen Môn are using produces exactly the same emissions as any other burning oak wood.

Dry electrostatic precipitators, such as the one Halen Môn have stated that they are using, cannot remove noxious gases and vapours that are in a vapour state at 200oC during burning. These contain ultra-fine irritating particles which are known to have detrimental long term on human health with regular exposure.

Nitrogen oxides are the most common noxious gases produced in wood smoke and on contact with water or moisture (such as eyes, throat and the nose) they react to form nitric acid. Low levels of nitrogen oxides in the air can irritate the eyes, nose, throat and lung, causing coughing and shortness of breath, tiredness and nausea.  These are the symptoms that our staff and visitors regularly experience from the smoke produced from the Halen Môn smokery. Exposure to low levels of nitrogen oxide can result in inflamed airways and increasing susceptibility to respiratory infections and to allergens,  exacerbating the symptoms of those already suffering from lung or heart conditions. Longer term or more extreme exposure can cause blueish lips or skin, slow heartbeat, light-headedness, dizziness or fainting or decreased cardiac output.

In addition, Nitrogen oxides are known to have negative environmental impacts, settling on the ground and on surfaces where they can easily be absorbed and forming long-term deposits which get into the food chain and have long term negative effects on humans and animals through regular exposure. Upon contact with water, oxygen and other chemicals in the atmosphere they form acid rain.

Wood smoke is also known to contain a large number of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) the majority of which will not be removed by an electrostatic precipitator.  There are 17 different VOCs which are commonly found in wood smoke, including acetic acid, methylbutenone, benzenediol, benzene, chlorobenzene, methanol and formaldehyde. Exposure to VOC vapours can cause a variety of health effects, including eye, nose, and throat irritation; headaches and loss of coordination; nausea; and damage to the liver, kidneys, or central nervous system. Some VOCs are suspected or proven carcinogens.

We would like to see Halen Môn going beyond the minimal legal measures, fitting further mitigation to remove as many of the harmful components as possible from the smoke they produce from their smokery, before it is released.

Through fitting further mitigation measures including a condenser/wet scrubber and other specialised equipment, Halen Môn could ensure that all the potentially noxious products are removed from the smoke they produce, and that the escaping fumes are as clean as possible. This is going beyond the minimum legal requirements, but it would be demonstrating high level corporate responsibility.

This further mitigation would potentially create extra jobs and training through the employment of specialised equipment and skills, although it would also incur higher costs for Halen Môn to buy, fit, maintain and run.

We understand that Halen Môn may not see the need to cover the large extra costs involved in this kind of mitigation because they are happy that they are currently meeting the legal requirements. Currently their emissions are entirely legal, but we believe that they are not morally and ethically acceptable due to the negative impacts their smoke is having on the local community and our visitors.

Under these circumstances we are questioning the morality behind them advertising the beauty and cleanliness of the area of outstanding beauty and the Menai Strait and portraying themselves as a sustainable and environmentally friendly business.

We at the Anglesey Sea Zoo have always believed in leading by example and going the extra mile, putting the planet and people before profits. We strongly believe that maintaining utmost corporate responsibility and transparency is an important part of this. Halen Môn is producing luxury products and as such we believe that they should go the extra mile to show that they are fully mitigating against all the possible negative environmental impacts of their production.

This issue has been affecting our staff and visitors and the business considerably for several years now on an almost daily basis. We are standing up to represent this small rural community as many people are concerned about the possible repercussions of speaking out about this, as the Halen Môn owners are known to be extremely well connected.

Objections from over 20 people within the local community and our staff were sent to the chief of planning on Anglesey in 2020 against the smokery planning application and none of these have ever been addressed or responded to, none of us were even officially informed of the final planning decision. So understandably the local community are both upset and extremely worried about this ongoing situation.

We are the ones who have to tolerate this every day, so that people who live further away and even on the other side of the world, can use smoked water and smoked salt in their cooking.

We feel an obligation to warn our customers about this smoke even though we are aware that many of them may stay away as a result – we feel that our ethical and corporate responsibility is such that everyone should be informed of what the smoke is coming from so they can make their own informed decision as to whether they visit us. A considerable number of our customers also visit Halen Môn, and we want it to be clear to everyone that we are not responsible for this awful smoke, and it is beyond our control.

The nature of this smoke, as the majority of its components are denser than air, is that it sinks and falls in large clouds after it leaves the chimney, so little of it affects the Halen Môn site itself, instead it drifts downwards and sinks over nearby areas, sometimes being carried a significant distance by the wind. It then sits in low-level dense clouds which gradually disperse.

We are calling for full disclosure on the Halen Môn website and social media pages showing that they recognise the emissions that wood smoke produces and the full mitigations that they have in place against this in order to meet the highest standards of corporate responsibility rather than the minimal legal requirements.

We would like a public explanation from Halen Môn as to why they haven’t gone the extra mile to fit maximum possible mitigation measures, beyond the minimum legal requirements to reduce their smokery emissions.

We are also calling for full public disclosure of their mitigation measures through their website and social media for transparency, including details of the calculations undertaken to determine the flue lengths. There are 3 flues clearly visible from the footage we have and to meet legal requirements the flue length calculation is very specific according to the discharge height and velocity of the emissions. So this information will have been provided to the local authority when planning was passed and we believe it should be made available in the public realm.

