ESTABLISHED 1907

Muswellbrook Coal Company Limited

Spontaneous Combustion Report

For: Environmental Protection Licence 656

Reporting Period: August 2021

Authority Holder: Muswellbrook Coal Company Limited

Report Date: 22 September 2021

Approved by: Brooke York
Environmental Superintendent

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The coal seams mined by the Muswellbrook Coal Company (MCC) operations are the Greta Coal Measures. These measures have a history of spontaneous combustion. Spontaneous combustion has been a long-term issue at MCC since the first operation commenced in 1907.

A Spontaneous Combustion Management Plan (SCMP) has been prepared according to the specific requirements of the Development Consent. The main objective of the SCMP is to minimise the occurrence of spontaneous combustion and manage the effect by identification, control, removal, mitigation and prevention in the following areas:

- Existing open cut and underground workings;
- Drilling and blasting;
- Mining of overburden;
- Mining of coal;
- Emplacement of overburden;
- Emplacement of washery reject; and
- Coal stockpiles.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) require MCC to provide reports on spontaneous combustion management and monitoring on a monthly basis. This report identifies:

- Spontaneous combustion management during the reporting period;
- Gas monitoring results;
- Number of complaints relating to spontaneous combustion;
- Response to hydrogen sulphide levels above the odour threshold; and
- Correlation between spontaneous combustion on site with gas results and complaints received.

2.0 SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The daily spontaneous combustion management measures for the reporting period are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Spontaneous Combustion Management Measures

Date	Water Sprays	Water Carts Assisting	Capping	Hot Material Removal	Comments
01/08/21	S23	ROM			Wet weather
02/08/21	S23	OC1	RL190		Wet weather
03/08/21	S23	OC1			Wet weather
04/08/21		OC1		S23	
05/08/21		OC1		S23	
06/08/21	S23	ROM	RL165	S23	
07/08/21	S23	OC1	RL165	ROM	
08/08/21	S23	ROM	RL165	S23	Wet weather
09/08/21	S23	S23		S23	Wet weather

Date	Water Sprays	Water Carts Assisting	Capping	Hot Material Removal	Comments
10/08/21		S23			
11/08/21		S23			
12/08/21		OC1			
13/08/21		S23	RL165		
14/08/21		OC1		S23	
15/08/21		OC1		S23	Wet weather
16/08/21		S23			
17/08/21		S23		S23	
18/08/21	S23	S23			
19/08/21		S23			
20/08/21		S23	RL180		
21/08/21		S23		S23	
22/08/21		OC1			
23/08/21		S23			Wet weather
24/08/21		OC1			Wet weather
25/08/21		S23		S23	Wet weather
26/08/21		S23		S23	
27/08/21		S23			
28/08/21		ROM	RL180	RL180	
29/08/21		ROM		S23	
30/08/21		S23	RL160	S23	
31/08/21		S23		S23	

The classification system for spontaneous combustion outbreaks is provided in **Table 2**. A summary of the areas affected by spontaneous combustion and the areas controlled and treated during the reporting period is provided in **Table 3**. The locations of these areas can be seen in **Figure 1** to **Figure 2**.

Table 2: Classification of Spontaneous Combustion Outbreaks

Classification	Description
A	Open flame
B	Visible steam or smoke
C	Other physical evidence of spontaneous combustion (e.g. cracks, coal tars, sulphur crusting, etc)

* - classification revised in November 2019

Table 3: Summary of Spontaneous Combustion

Site Map Location	Classification (A-C)	Affected Area Without Active Control *(m^2)*	Active Controls Completed	Area Controlled *(m^2)*
Open Cut 1	A B C	4* 56* 36*	Mining Capping Infusion	5,600** 3,500** 8,700**
Open Cut 2	N/A	0*	None Required	0**
SUMMARY				
Total Area Affected		96*		
Total Area Controlled		17,800**		

* - at end of reporting period

** - during reporting period

No spontaneous combustion outbreaks were observed in Open Cut 2 throughout August 2021. Therefore, no active controls were implemented in Open Cut 2.

3.0 GAS MONITORING RESULTS

The gas monitoring results are displayed graphically in **Figure 3** to **Figure 7.** As noted in these graphs, there were no results above the health impact assessment criteria for the reporting period.

The data capture rates for the reporting period and the last 12 months are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Data Capture Rates

Monitoring Location	Pollutant	Averaging Period	Data Capture – August (%)	Data Capture – 12 Month Rolling (%)
Point 9, Nisbet	Hydrogen Sulphide	30 minutes	97.0	94.9
		1 hour	94.8	93.7
		24 hours	100.0	98.4
Point 10, Muscle Creek	Hydrogen Sulphide	30 minutes	95.9	96.7
		1 hour	93.0	95.0
		24 hours	100.0	100.0
Point 15, Nisbet	Sulphur Dioxide	1 hour	95.2	94.4
		24 hours	100.0	98.6
Point 16, Muscle Creek	Sulphur Dioxide	1 hour	93.4	95.1
		24 hours	100.0	100.0

Data capture for all monitoring sites was 90% or higher during August 2021.

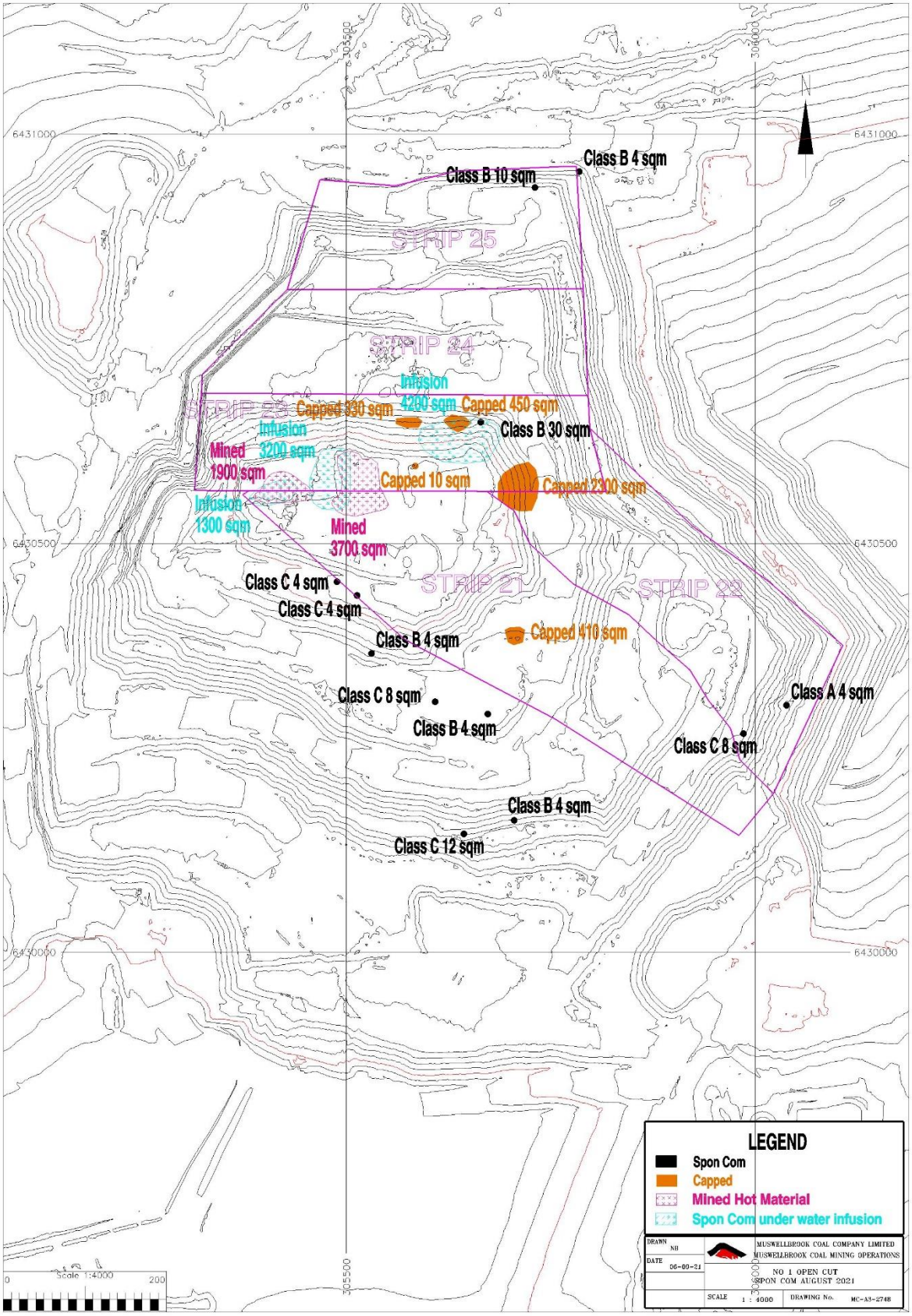

Figure 1: Location of Spontaneous Combustion Outbreaks in Open Cut 1

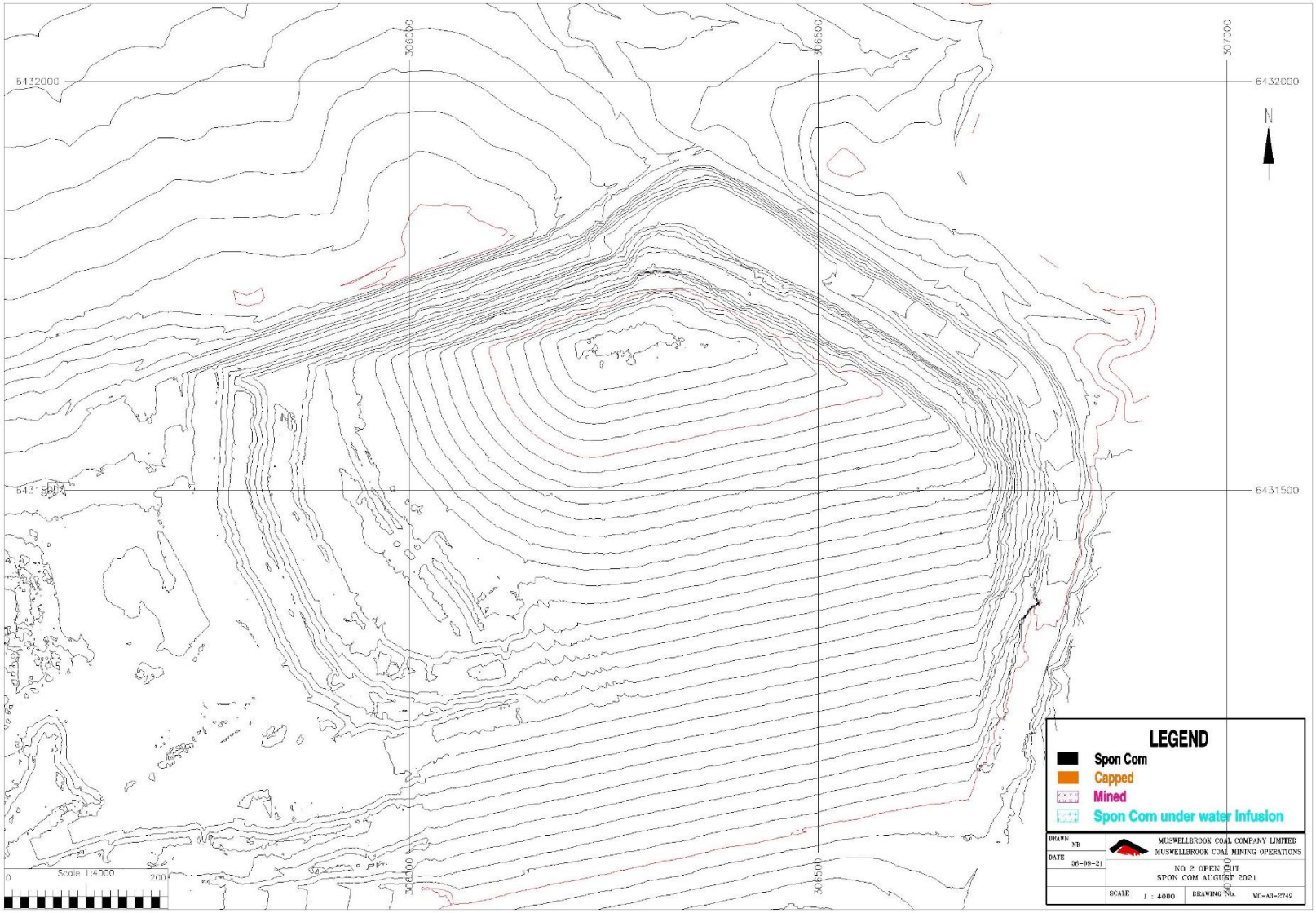

Figure 2: Location of Spontaneous Combustion Outbreaks in Open Cut 2

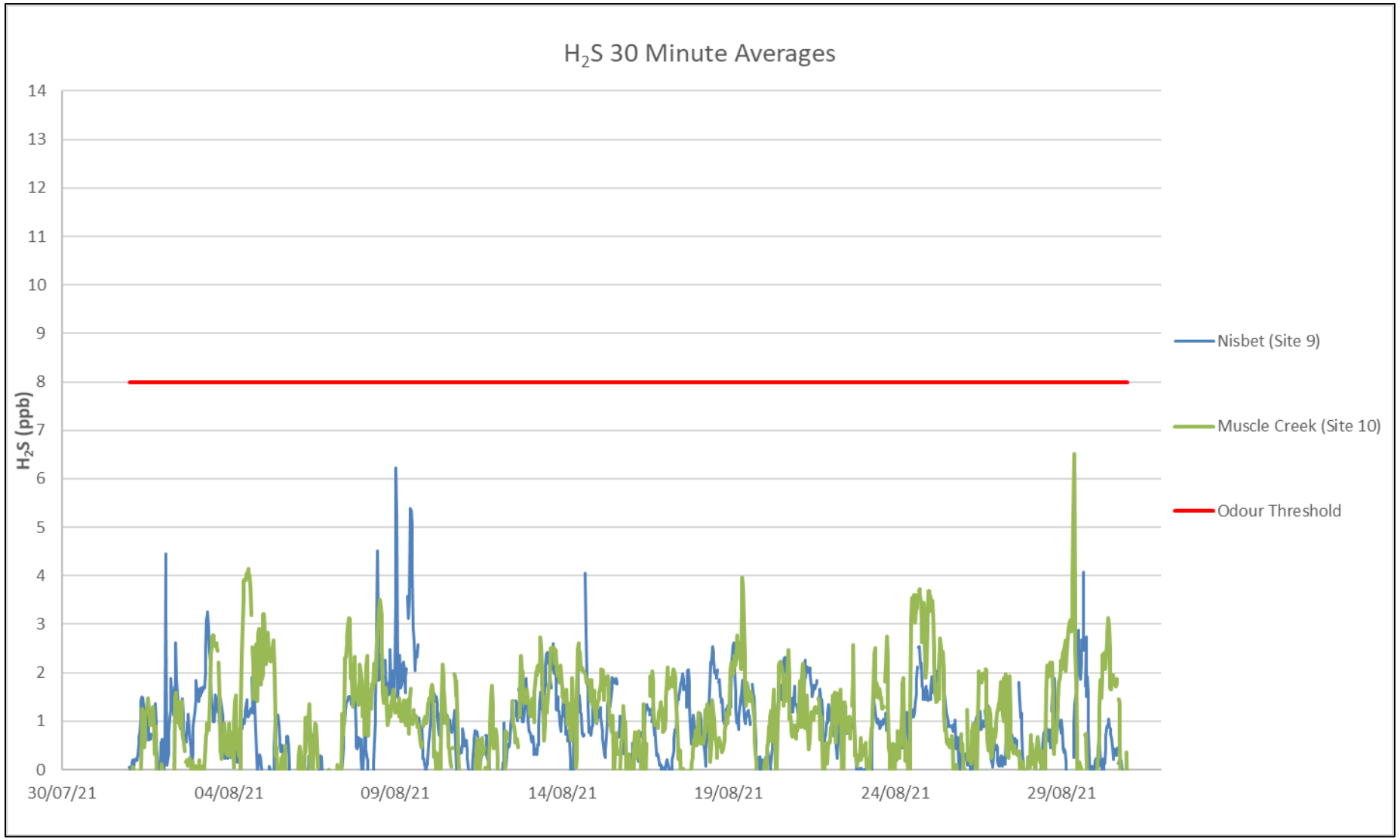

Figure 3: Hydrogen Sulphide 30 Minute Results

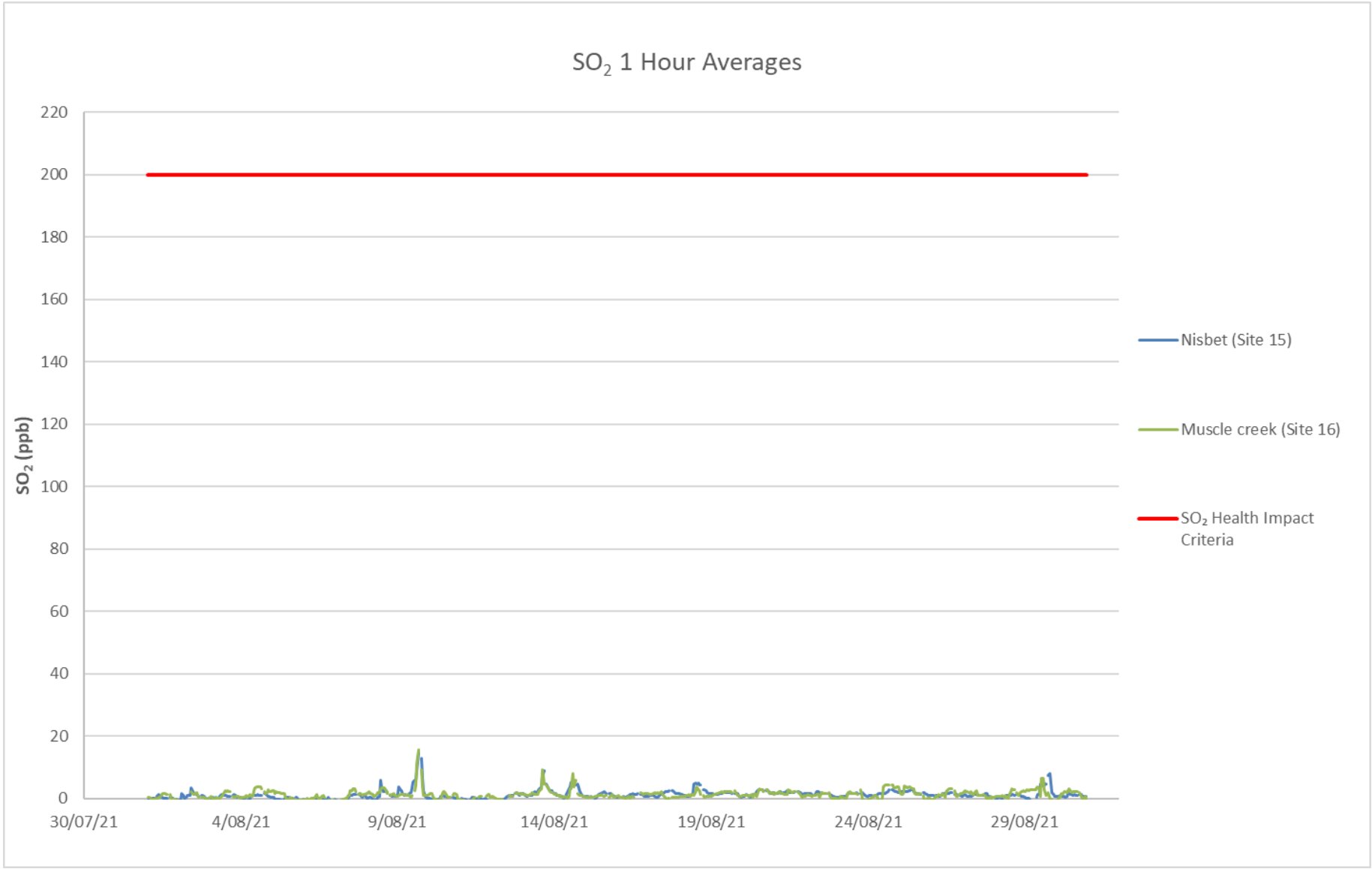

Figure 4: Sulphur Dioxide 1 Hour Results

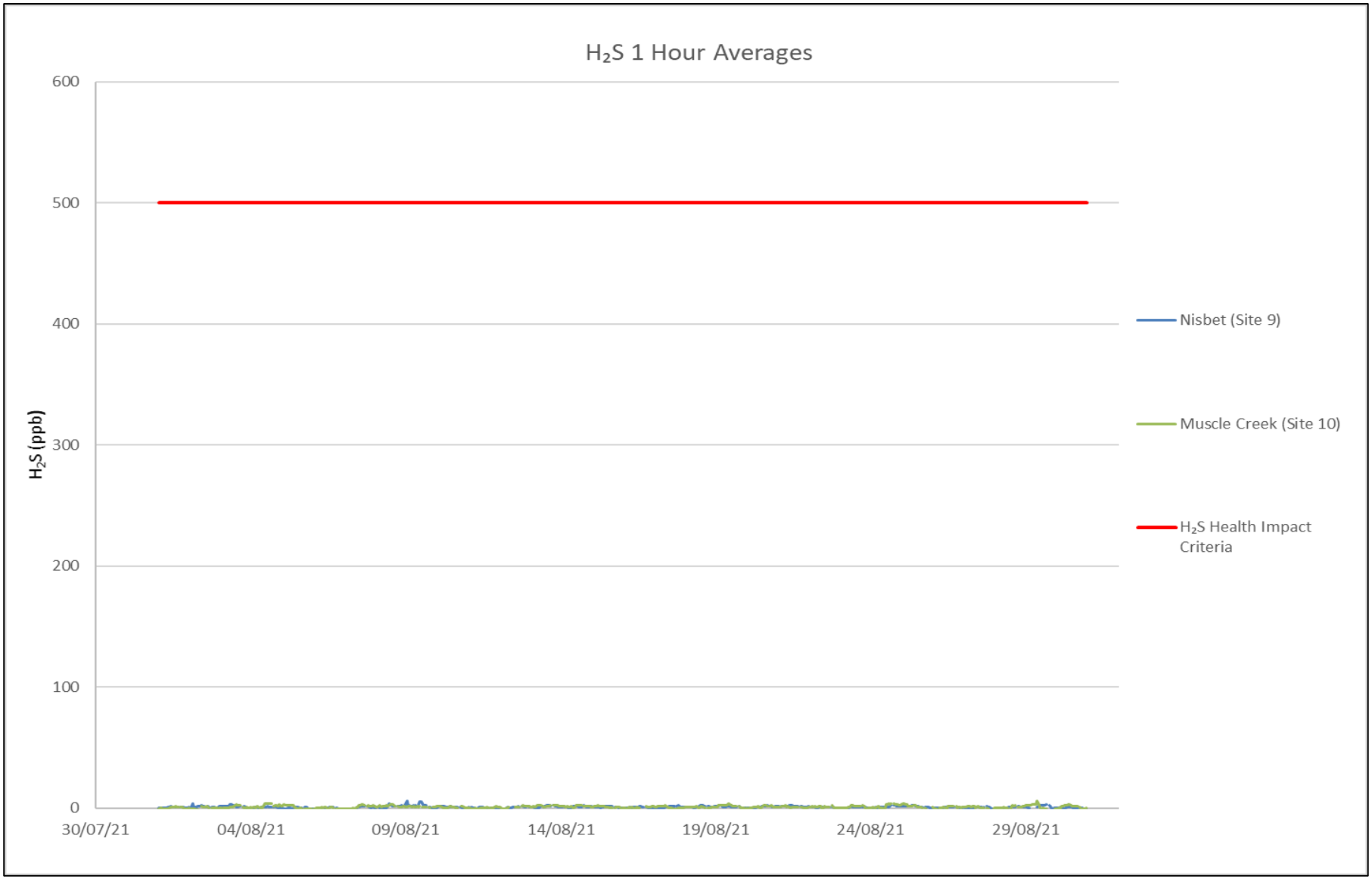

Figure 5: Hydrogen Sulphide 1 Hour Results

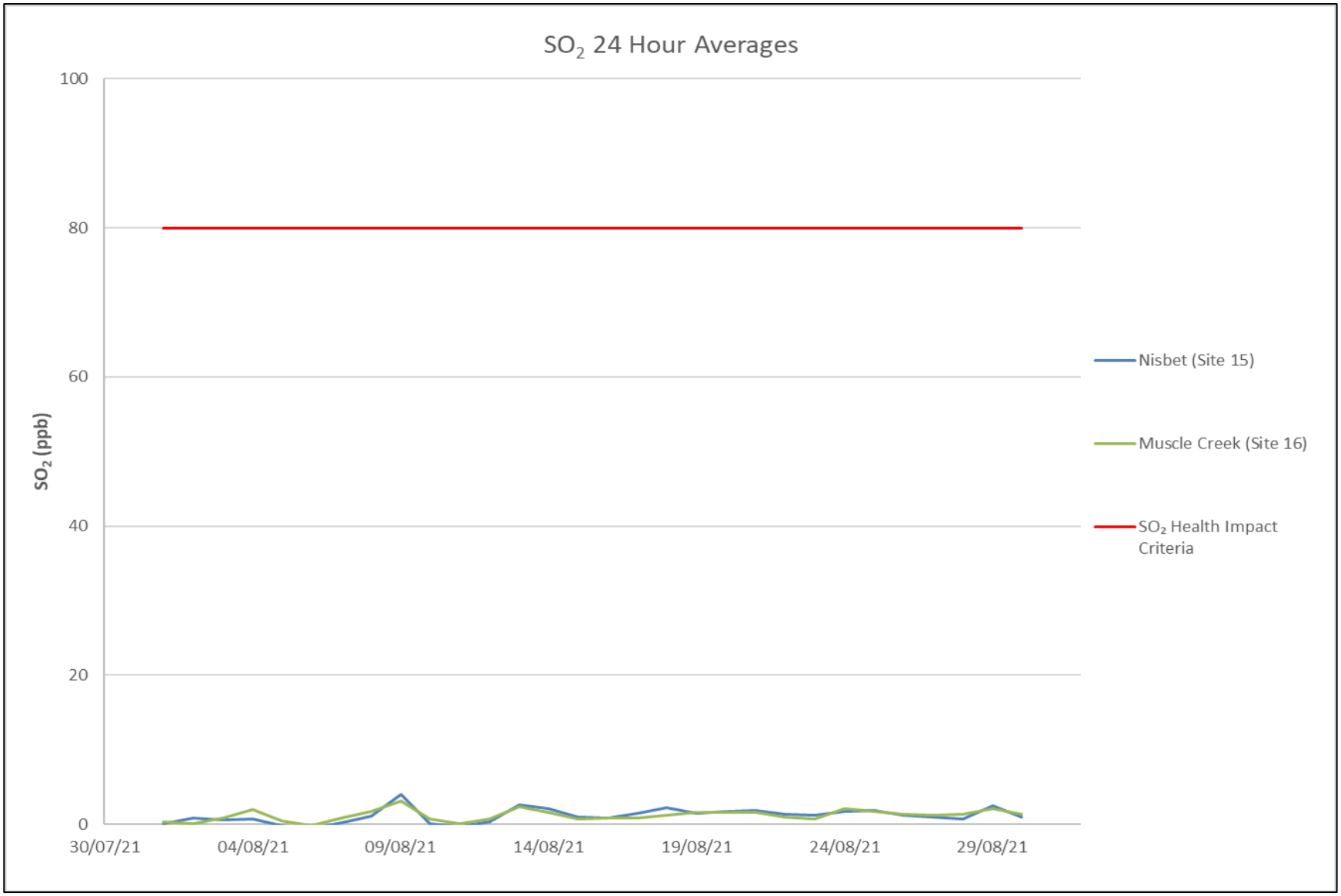

Figure 6: Sulphur Dioxide 24 Hour Results

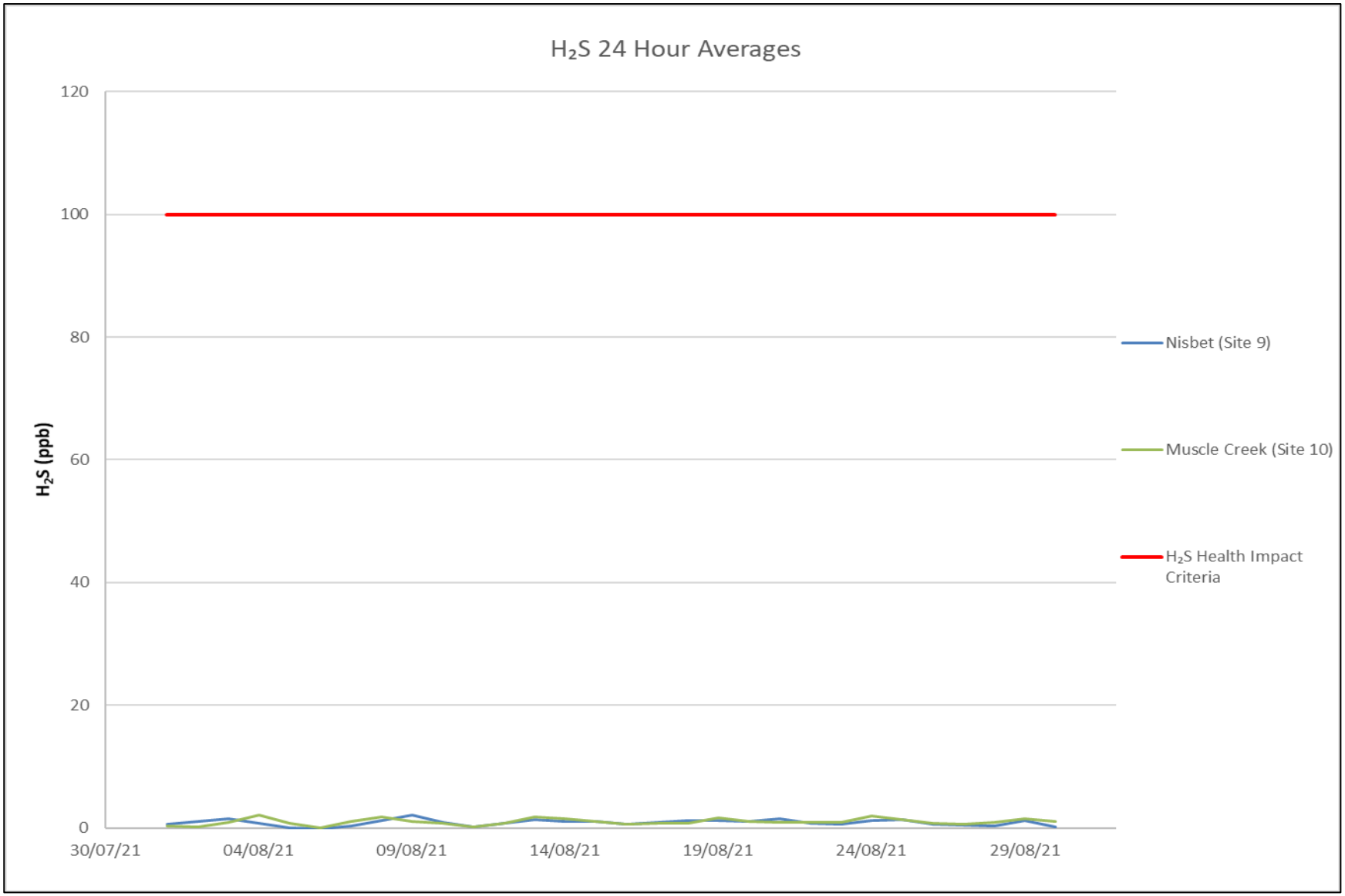

Figure 7: Hydrogen Sulphide 24 Hour Results

4.0 RESPONSE TO ELEVATED GAS LEVELS

When MCC receive an alarm that the hydrogen sulphide levels at the gas monitors are above the odour threshold of 8ppb and a review of operations and gas sources in the local area is undertaken. There were no alarms recorded for the reporting period in August 2021.

5.0 CORRELATION BETWEEN MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND GAS LEVELS

A review of the correlation between spontaneous combustion management activities and gas levels has been undertaken. This review found that spontaneous combustion management activities were occurring and gas levels during the reporting period were generally low. All possible management controls for spontaneous combustion were being undertaken at the time of the elevated gas levels and operations were modified where possible to reduce the spontaneous combustion emissions.

6.0 CORRELATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS AND GAS LEVELS

There were three complaints received during the reporting period which related to odour impacts from spontaneous combustion. A review of the location, gas monitoring and weather data at the time of the complaints are shown in
Table 5.

Table 5: Gas data at the time of complaints

Date	Time	Location	30 minute hydrogen sulphide* (ppb)	1 hour sulphur dioxide* (ppb)	Wind direction	Wind speed (m/s)
20/08/2021	07:13am	Beggary Creek Rd	<0.6	<1.1	NW	1.3
22/08/2021	07:05am	Beggary Creek Rd	<0.9	<1.5	NW	2.4
29/08/2021	06:55am	Beggary Creek Rd	<3.0	<2.9	NE	1.7

*This value represents the maximum result from the Nisbet or Muscle Creek monitoring location at the time of complaint.