ESTABLISHED 1907

Muswellbrook Coal Company Limited

Spontaneous Combustion Report

For: Environmental Protection Licence 656

Reporting Period:	**March 2022**
Authority Holder:	**Muswellbrook Coal Company Limited**
Report Date:	**29 April 2022**
Approved by:	**Brooke York** **Environmental Advisor**

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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
01/03/22		OC1			
02/03/22		OC1			
03/03/22	S24	OC1			Wet Weather
04/03/22	S24				Wet Weather
05/03/22	S24	OC1			
06/03/22	S24				Wet Weather
07/03/22					Wet Weather
08/03/22					Wet Weather
09/03/22					Wet Weather
10/03/22					

Date	Water Sprays	Water Carts Assisting	Capping	Hot Material Removal	Comments
11/03/22					
12/03/22					
13/03/22					
14/03/22					
15/03/22		OC1			
16/03/22				RL150 Dump	
17/03/22		OC1			
18/03/22		OC1			
19/03/22					Wet Weather
20/03/22					
21/03/22		OC1		S25	
22/03/22		S24			
23/03/22		OC1			
24/03/22		OC1			Wet Weather
25/03/22		OC1		ROM	
26/03/22		OC1		ROM	Wet Weather
27/03/22					Wet Weather
28/03/22					
29/03/22					Wet Weather
30/03/22					Wet Weather
31/03/22					Wet Weather

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* 89* 20*	Mining Capping Infusion	0** 0** 1710**
Open Cut 2	N/A	40*	None Required	0**
SUMMARY				
Total Area Affected		153*		
Total Area Controlled		1823**		

* - at end of reporting period

** - during reporting period

Plans are being implemented to control the outbreak 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 – March (%)	Data Capture – 12 Month Rolling (%)
Point 9, Nisbet	Hydrogen Sulphide	30 minutes	97.7	96.1
		1 hour	95.6	94.4
		24 hours	100.0	98.4
Point 10, Muscle Creek	Hydrogen Sulphide	30 minutes	97.7	96.8
		1 hour	95.6	94.4
		24 hours	100.0	99.2
Point 15, Nisbet	Sulphur Dioxide	1 hour	95.6	94.5
		24 hours	100.0	98.4
Point 16, Muscle Creek	Sulphur Dioxide	1 hour	95.6	94.6
		24 hours	100.0	99.5

Data capture for all monitoring sites was 95% or higher during Mach 2022.

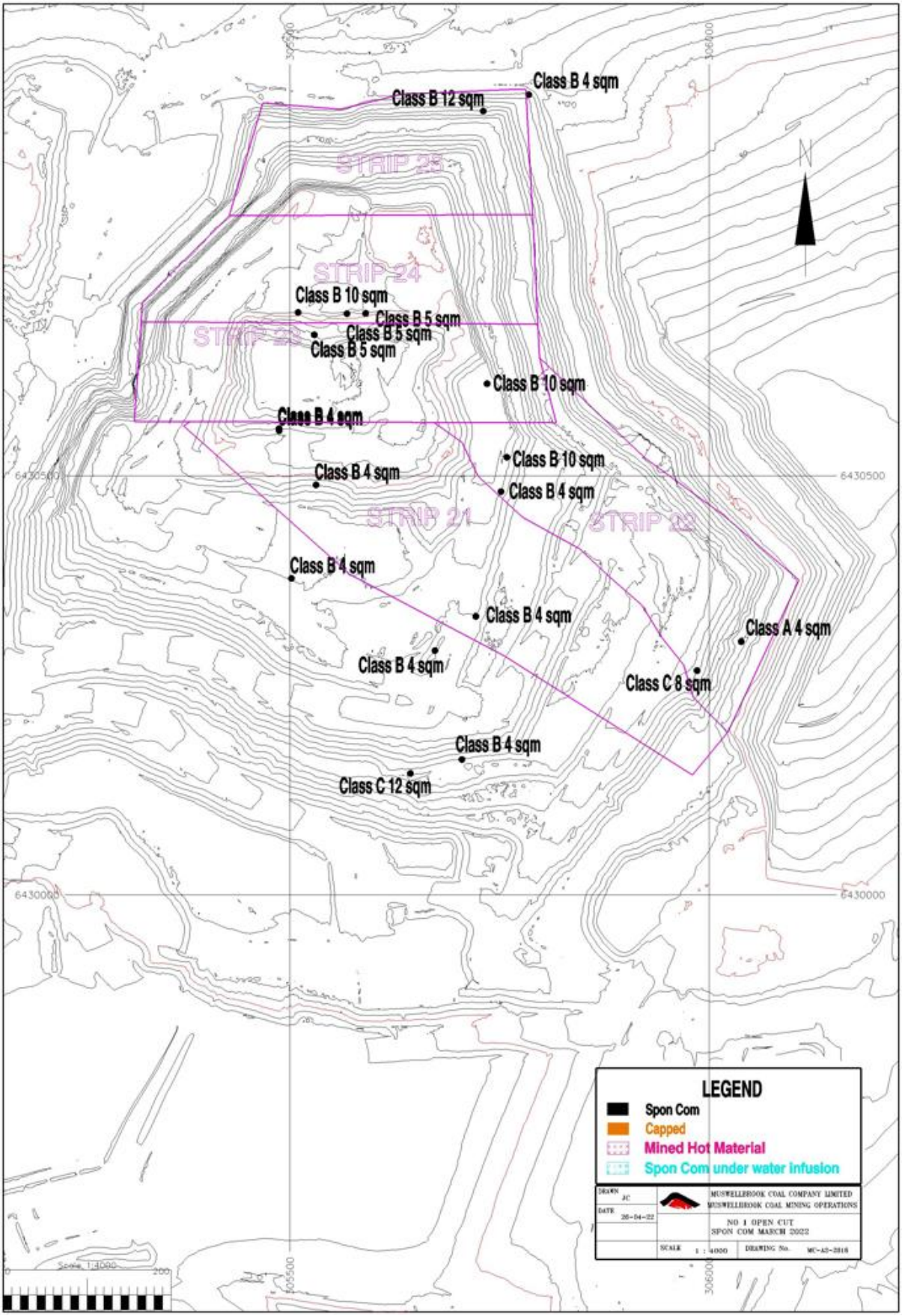

Figure 1: Location of Spontaneous Combustion Outbreaks in Open Cut 1

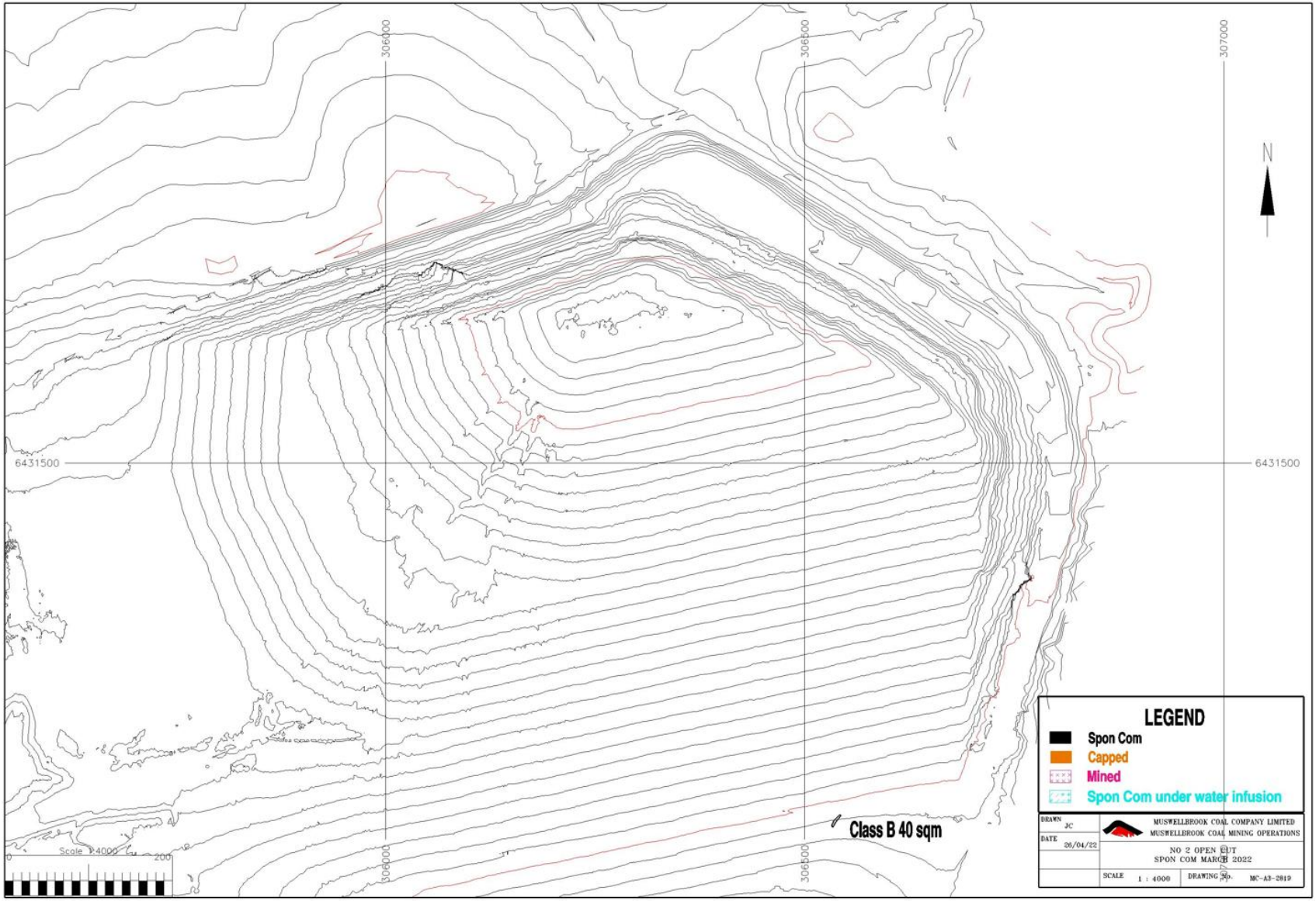

Figure 2: Location of Spontaneous Combustion Outbreaks in Open Cut 2

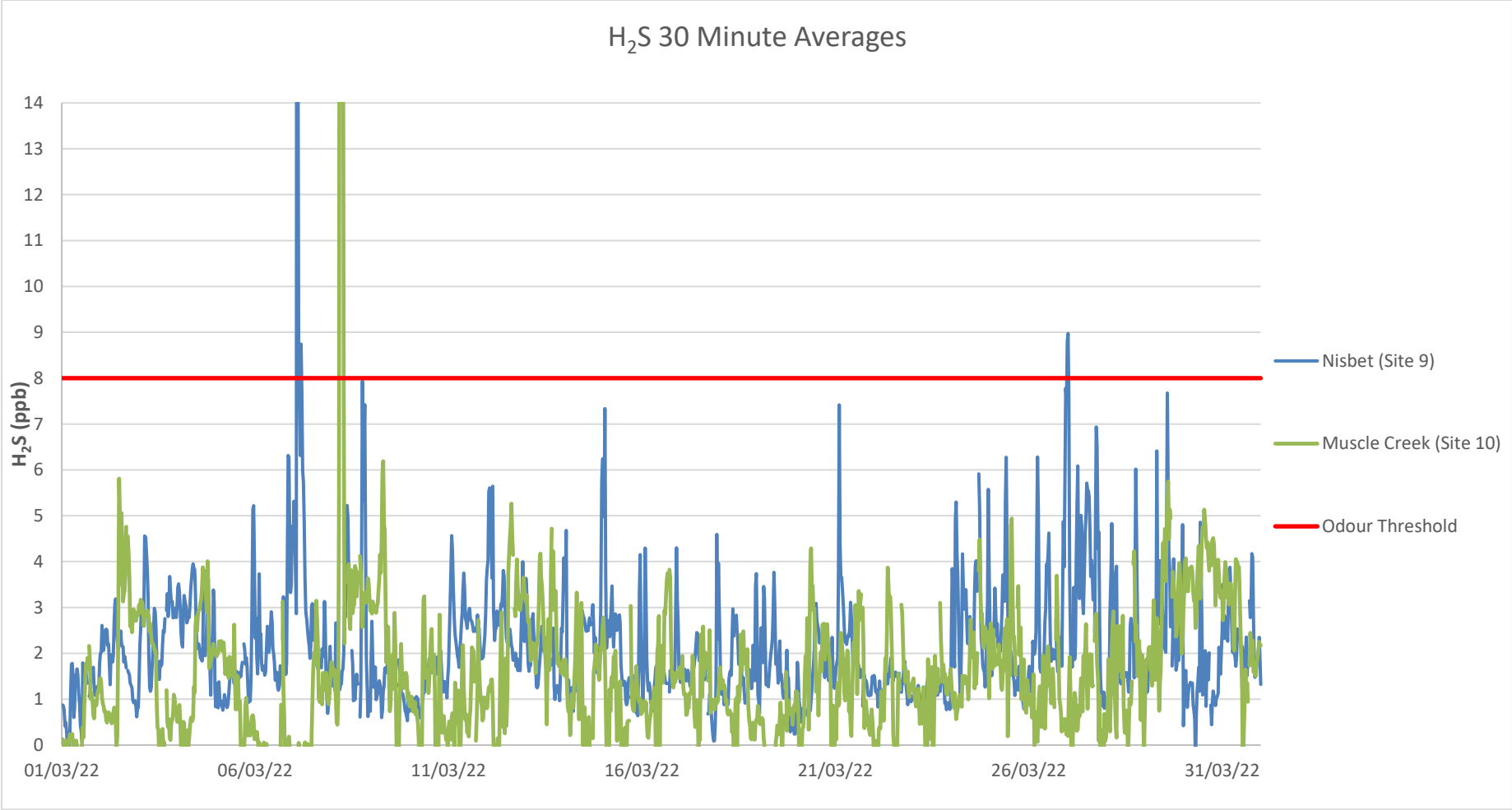

Figure 3: Hydrogen Sulphide 30 Minute Results

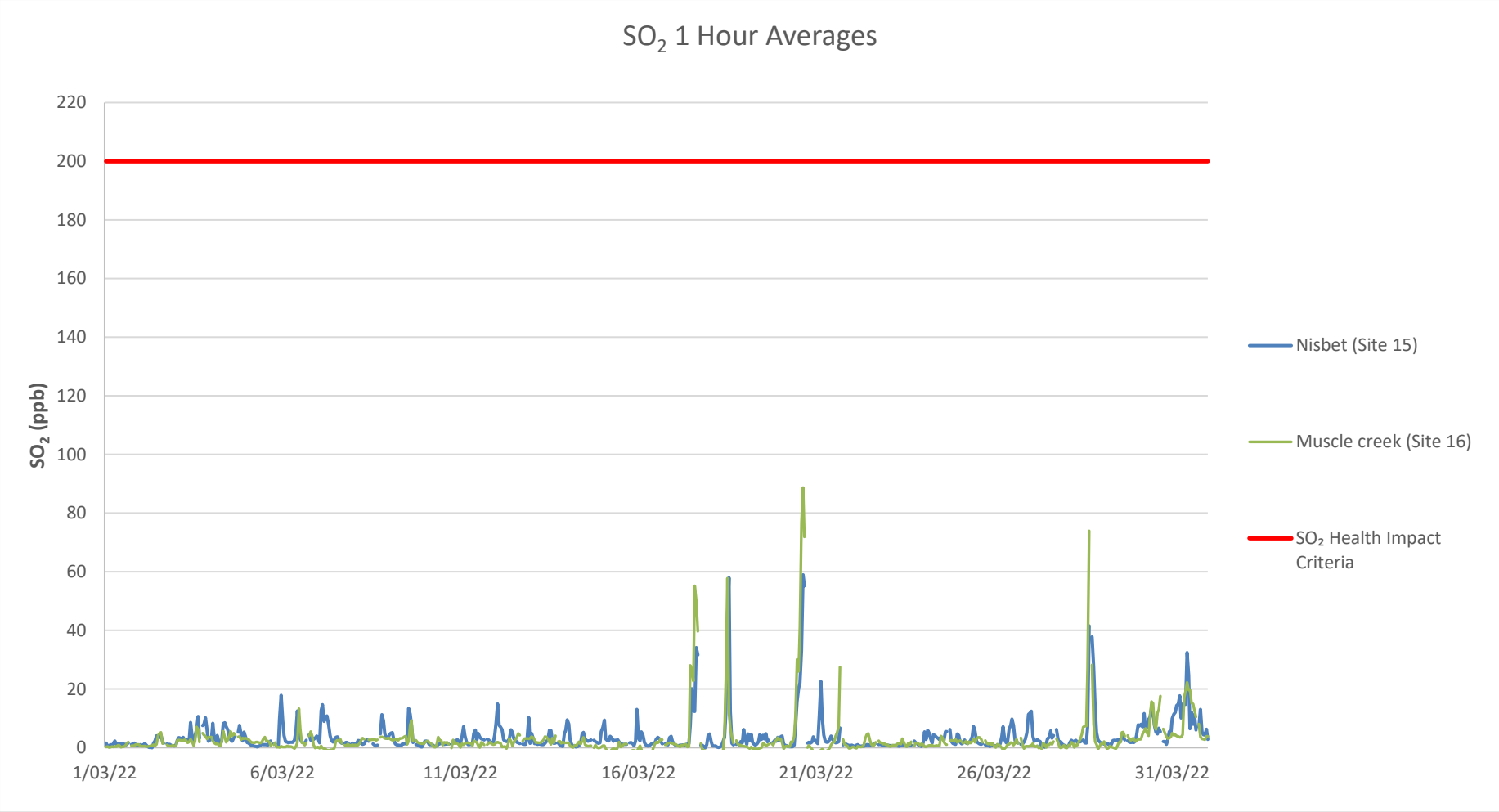

Figure 4: Sulphur Dioxide 1 Hour Results

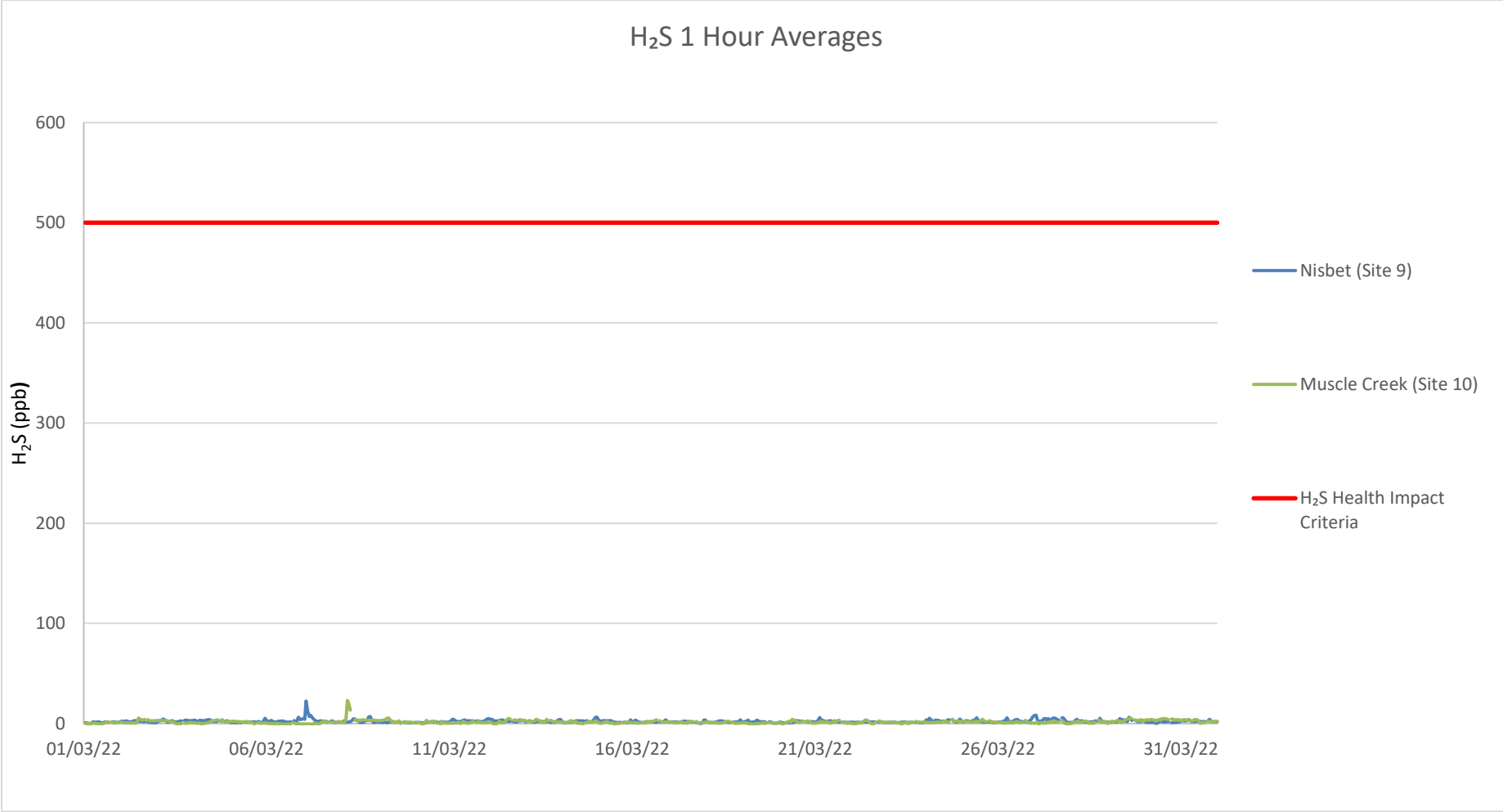

Figure 5: Hydrogen Sulphide 1 Hour Results

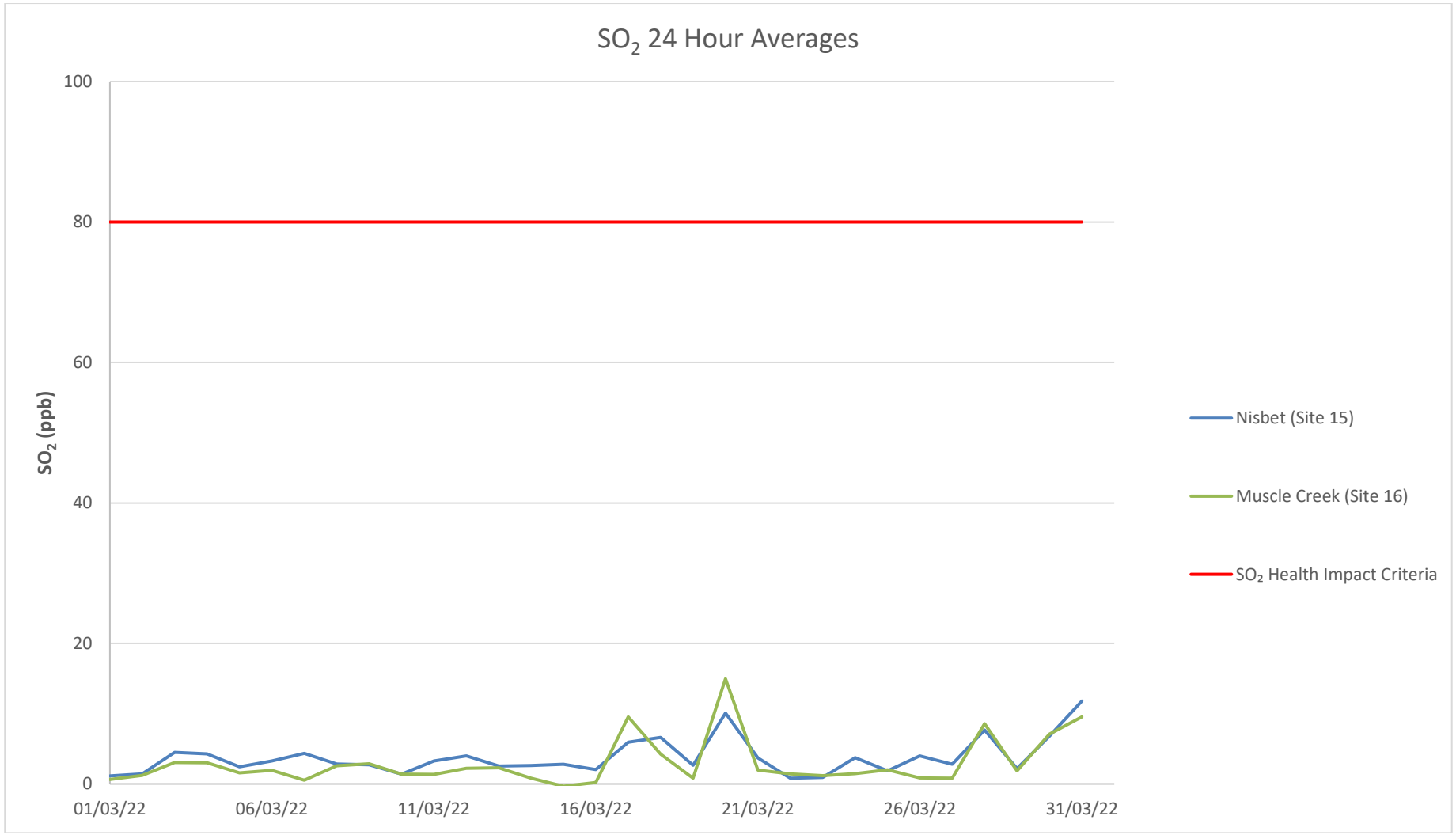

Figure 6: Sulphur Dioxide 24 Hour Results

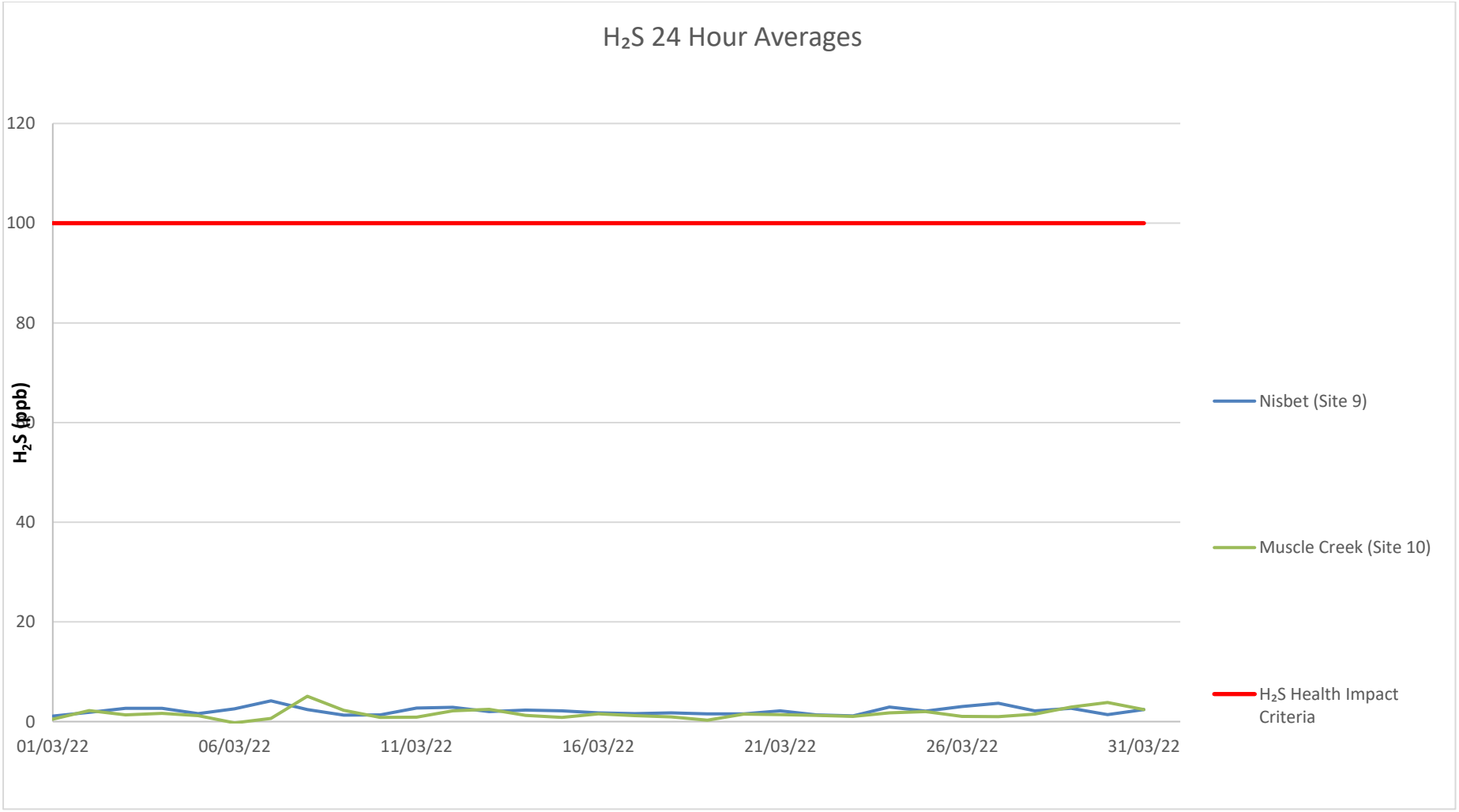

Figure 7: Hydrogen Sulphide 24 Hour Results

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 three alarms during March, occurring on Monday 7th at 3:58am, Saturday 23rd at 5:01pm and Wednesday 30th at 3:38am. For all three alarms investigations were carried out. For the alarm on Monday 7th it was raining at the time of the alarm and access to open cut 1 was closed due to the wet weather. On Saturday 23rd an inspection of the pit was carried out and there was no visible smoke or dust coming from the pit. During the inspection for the alarm on Wednesday 30th it was noted there was no odour detected and fog was starting to form across the mine site. For each of the alarms the elevated result was a quick spike and then returned to low levels.

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.

6.0 CORRELATION BETWEEN COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS AND GAS LEVELS

There were no odour complaints received during the reporting period.