

From: We're Tired of Being
Guinea Pigs

Cork Environmental Alliance
April 1994

SECTION 9

DIOXIN INVESTIGATION IN RINGASKIDDY

For inspection purposes only.
Consent of copyright owner required for any other use.

9. Investigations carried out by Cork County Council into the discovery of dioxins in soil samples in Ringaskiddy

Professor Rappes Report.

It took thirteen months to finally secure this report from Cork County Council under the Freedom of Access to Information on the Environment Directive. Even then the data received was incomplete with some pages and a letter missing.

Background

Relatively high levels of dioxins were found at 3 sites near Ringaskiddy during the baseline sampling conducted by Sandoz in 1991.

Cork County Council decided to engage the services of Professor Christopher Rappe, a recognised expert on dioxins from Sweden to determine the cause of the problem. Data from the two sources of dioxins in the area i.e. Irish Steel and Penn Chemicals were forwarded to Professor Rappe for examination.

In a letter from Prof Rappe to Cork County Council dated 9/4/92, the Professor accepted that both companies emitted dioxins. He stated that the data available to him was incomplete. In the case of Penn Chemicals (now Smithkline Beecham) he said "I have no information of the gas flow, consequently it is not possible to compare the source strengths" and in the case of Irish Steel "there appears to be some confusion over numbering".

Yet, inexplicably he concluded that:

"it would appear that the levels found in the soil samples are associated with long range transport of PCDD's and PCDF's (dioxin) from non-local sources".

This desk-top report of some 5 pages, costing just £500 was used by the Council to dismiss local fears. A letter to the Carrigaline Environmental Group from the Council dated 13th April 1992 restated Prof Rappes conclusion above and insisted that:

"there are absolutely no indications of any localised point source"

Yet just one month later, on 13th May 1992, an internal memo from acting Chief Environmental Officer Kieran O'Brien to Mr D Murphy the County Manager stated that Prof Rappes report:

"in no way addressed the high level of dioxins at the locations in Ringaskiddy and concluded that "any statement on dioxins in the harbour area would be unwise"

However this did not prevent the Council from publicly accusing environmentalists of scaremongering etc on the dioxins problem, and supporting Prof Rappes view, while at the same time they were aware that his report did not explain the high levels of dioxins at Ringaskiddy.

Eventually in August/September 1993 the Council formulated proposals to conduct baseline dioxins monitoring for milk and soil samples in Cork City (in conjunction with Cork Corporation) to be conducted by Eolas. This baseline survey should of course have been carried out prior to the Sandoz planning application.

While the Council proposals are welcome, the delays in conducting a serious and urgent inquiry into the high dioxin levels found in the soil samples at Ringaskiddy is a matter of some concern. Nearly 3 years later no investigation has commenced.

Utilizing the inconclusive results of a £500 desk-top investigation to publicly dismiss the genuine fears of local people and Cork Environmental Alliance is not satisfactory.

CEA wishes to also draw attention to the position whereby Smithkline Beecham are licensed to operate three incinerators in the lower Harbour, yet their air pollution licence does not as yet contain a limit for dioxin emissions. It was due for review by January 1994. This review has not yet been conducted. Irish Steel do not even appear to have an air pollution licence and consequently do not have legally enforceable emissions limits for dioxins.

This situation is indefensible.

Note: The soil samples from the Sandoz studies which contained elevated levels of International Toxic Equivalents (ITEQ's) of dioxin were

(a) North of Sandoz 23.7

(b) Ringaskiddy 21.6

(c) East of Shanbally 10.0

To put these figures into context, the levels at the other four sites tested ranged from 0.2 to 0.7.
See attached map.



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHORCAI

Ms. Joan Lucey,
Friends of Cork Harbour,
Carrig Lodge,
Point Road,
CROSSHAVEN.

CORK COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY HALL CORK

TELEPHONE 021-276891
FAX 021-276321

Please reply to Room No.

or Phone 021-285

27th February, 1992.

Dear Ms. Lucey,

The Council do not believe that there is a problem with dioxins
in Cork Harbour.

For inspection purposes only.
Consent of copyright owner required for any other use.

Yours sincerely,

IAIN MACLEAN,
CHIEF ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER.

Mr. D. Murphy,
County Manager,
Floor 15.

13th May, 1992.

Re: Dioxins in Ringaskiddy.

The following is an outline of the Dioxin position to-date. Baseline soil monitoring in Ringaskiddy as part of the Sandoz E.I.S. reported the following results.

	Location	I T E Q dioxin
Sandoz Site	(1	0.7
	(2	0.4
	(3	0.5
	(4	0.2
North of Sandoz	5	23.7)
West Ringaskiddy	6	21.6) Much above
East of Shanbally	7	10.0) background?.
Currabinny	8	0.4

Analysis of dioxin emissions were carried out on the two local point sources - Penn Chemicals and Irish Steel.

Results and chromatograms of analysis of soil samples on the Sandoz site and emissions from Penn and Irish Steel were examined by Prof. Christopher Rappe of University of UMEA, a world expert on Dioxins. Prof. Rappe has concluded from the dioxin and furan profile, which can be used like a finger print to indicate the source, that levels found in the soil samples on the Sandoz site are associated with long range transport from non local sources.

Subsequently a letter was issued 13th April, '92 to Carrigaloe Environmental Group (see attached).

" dioxins in the Harbour area ... have arisen as a result of long range transportant and deposition".

This however in no way addressed the high levels at locations 5, 6 and 7.

I have contacted Prof. Rappe and he will examine the chromatograms for samples 5, 6 and 7 and comment of possible sources. These chromatograms are at present in England with the laboratory that carried out the analysis. I have arranged to have these sent to Professor Rappe as soon as possible.

I feel that until these chromatograms are evaluated, any statement on dioxins in the harbour area would be unwise.

KIERAN O'BRIEN,
A/CHIEF ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER.

For inspection purposes only.
Consent of copyright owner required for any other use.

Dioxin Sampling Sites

ADM Pfizers

A

5x

Sandoz

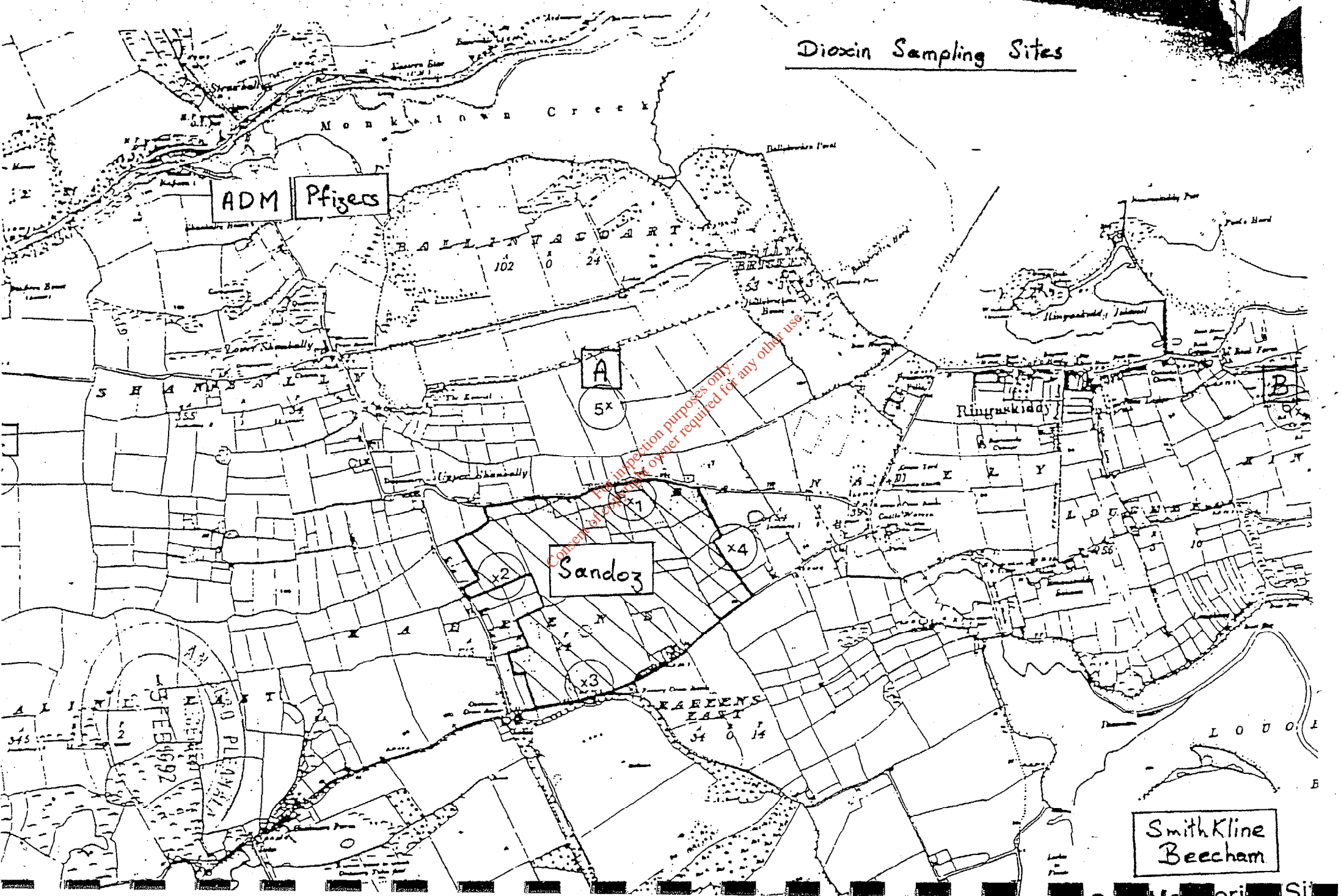
x1

x4

x3

SmithKline
Beecham

For inspection purposes only.
Comments by owner required for any other use.



Chun an Aire Comhshaoil :
To the Minister for the Environment :

To ask the Minister for the Environment if he will give details of the action, if any, he is prepared to take regarding results of a recent survey showing dioxin levels at Ringaskiddy, County Cork, to be five times the level permitted in Germany.

- Roger Garland

For WRITTEN answer on Tuesday 3 March, 1992.

R E P L Y

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment
(Ms. M. Harney):

Cork County Council have been assessing the information contained in a recent baseline study on dioxin levels at Ringaskiddy which was carried out on behalf of the Sandoz company under the terms of its air pollution licence. The County Council have already taken expert advice on the findings from a foreign consultant and are continuing their investigations having regard to their functions under the Air Pollution Act, 1987.

I am following the position closely. I am not aware of a permitted soil level for dioxin applying in Germany at present.

Consent of copyright owner required for any other use.

