



Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

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17 March 2025

Dear Mat,

Thank you for your emails of 19 and 28 November, and 16 December to Minister Creagh about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and apologise for the considerable delay in doing so.

Thank you for raising such an important issue on behalf of your local community and other communities across the country. I acknowledge your concerns about the level of PFAS contamination in High and Low Bentham. The Environment Agency (EA) is currently investigating potential sources of pollution resulting from the operation of the Angus Fire permitted site in Bentham. The EA tested the groundwater on the site for PFAS, as part of its wider surveillance of PFAS in the environment. The groundwater below the site was identified as having high levels of PFAS.

I would like to reassure you that this government recognises the need for further action on PFAS as we are committed to protecting human health and delivering a better environment now, and in the future. PFAS are a global challenge, and their persistence unfortunately means there are no 'quick fixes'. We have been working for over two decades, both nationally and with our international counterparts to monitor, ban or highly restrict certain chemicals and address issues caused by their historic use. In the UK, work on PFAS is conducted by several bodies and we continue to work collaboratively across government and with external stakeholders to bring together work on PFAS. This includes work across government to help us assess levels of PFAS occurring in the environment, their sources, and possible risks to inform policy and regulatory approaches.

As part of our work to address possible risks from PFAS, we have asked the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to prepare a UK REACH dossier to investigate the risks posed by PFAS in firefighting foams. If the dossier demonstrates that action is needed, beyond any measures in place, the HSE will suggest restrictions.

We are also exploring further measures relating to PFAS, including to improve the management of PFAS in Environmental Permitting within the framework of the Environmental Permitting Regulations (England and Wales) 2016. The Environmental Permitting Regime regulates the production, use and disposal of all substances, including PFAS, at regulated sites to prevent or minimise environmental and health impacts. The Defra Industrial Emissions Policy Team are carrying out a programme that aims to prevent PFAS pollution at the source. This includes providing funding for the EA and commissioning a programme of work to develop limits for PFAS releases to be incorporated into permits moving forward.

Further measures underway include the development of cross-sector guidance on PFAS use and disposal, and work to develop improved evidence and monitoring requirements for sites emitting PFAS.

The UK Health Security Agency is aware of the potential risks to human health from PFAS. The UK Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment, which provides independent scientific advice to the government, is currently undertaking a review of the available evidence on the health effects of PFAS to support the risk assessment of these substances. This review will help to provide guidance to UK government departments and agencies to support human health risk assessments of PFAS where exposures to existing and legacy PFAS is occurring through food, drinking water and other environmental media.

Thank you for raising these important issues; whilst I am unable to offer a meeting personally, rest assured that I recognise your concerns about the level of PFAS contamination in High and Low Bentham, and the need for further action on PFAS.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Hardy', with a stylized, flowing script.

EMMA HARDY MP