

Lawyers ask firm in UK's most PFAS-polluted town to fund local blood testing

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EXCLUSIVE: Lawyers have written to a firefighting foam manufacturer headquartered in the UK's most known PFAS-polluted town asking it to confirm whether it will 'commit to funding blood testing in the local community, and if not, why not'.



Angus Fire factory. Source - ENDS Report, Rob Whitrow



In May last year, an [ENDS Report investigation](#) revealed that the small rural town of Bentham, North Yorkshire, is the most PFAS-polluted place known to exist in the UK. The town is home to firefighting foam manufacturer Angus Fire.

PFAS, short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances and commonly known as 'forever chemicals' owing to their persistence in the environment, are a family of about 10,000 chemicals that have been linked to a wide range of serious illnesses, including certain cancers. They are used in a huge range of consumer products, from frying pans to waterproof coats, but one of their most prolific uses is in firefighting foams.

In November it emerged that [two separate legal firms](#) have been appointed by residents in Bentham to investigate potential legal claims relating to PFAS pollution.

Law firm Mishcon De Reya, which has been instructed to "bring legal action" on behalf of Cleaner Bentham - a grassroots organisation made up of concerned residents and business owners in Bentham - has today sent a letter to Paul Williams, the chief executive of Angus International Safety Group (AISG), the parent company of Angus Fire, setting out a list of questions. AISG has been asked to respond "promptly".

Commenting on the letter, a spokesperson from Cleaner Bentham told ENDS that its members instructed Mishcon de Reya "to formally introduce themselves" to AISG as "members feel that there has not been enough transparency about the current pollution situation from the firm or communication with the town's residents in general."

Angus Fire has previously said it has been "working urgently, and indeed [have] been doing so for a



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number of years, to establish the extent of any PFAS contamination”.

In light of this statement, the law firm has asked AISG to set out exactly what it has been doing to establish the extent of PFAS contamination, and has asked that it provide the results of these investigations. It has also asked it to confirm why it was undertaking these investigations in the first place.

In relation to community and employee health and safety, the law firm has asked AISG to “explain how you have sought to fulfil your duties under Sections 2, 3 and 6 of the Health and Safety Work Act 1975 from 2013 to date”.

Section 2 outlines the general duties of employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. Section 3 outlines the general duties of employers and self-employed people to ensure the health and safety of people other than their employees and section 6 outlines the general health and safety obligations of people in the supply chain, including the design, supply, and maintenance of articles for use at work.

In the letter, Mischon de Reya has also asked AISG to confirm whether it has undertaken any health monitoring on current or past employees “considering the risks of PFAS to human health have been well known for years”.

In relation to the local community, the law firm has also asked AISG to confirm what steps it will take to “ensure the welfare of the local community” and to confirm whether it will “commit to funding blood testing in the local community, and if not, why not”.

It also asks the firm to confirm which of its products contain PFAS chemicals “currently and historically, detailing which chemicals are or were used in each, and when those products were manufactured and tested and to confirm when you stopped manufacturing products containing PFAS chemicals”.

ENDS has [previously revealed](#) that in 2023 the Environment Agency threatened to suspend Angus Fire’s permit in relation to its wastewater lagoons after it found an unpermitted discharge of PFAS to the environment.

Last week, in an exclusive investigation with Channel 4 News, [ENDS also revealed](#) that the Environment Agency is investigating Angus Fire as a new document revealed it “ignored advice and recommendations from its consultants that PFAS may be leaving the site”.

Mischon de Reya has asked AISG to explain what these lagoons were used for over the course of their lifetime, and to confirm what they are used for now. It has also asked it to confirm what further testing and remediation it intends to undertake, and in what timeframe.

Further testing on the back of ENDS initial investigation revealed that [communal gardens](#) used for growing food next to a factory were found to be contaminated with PFAS. As a result, ENDS understands that Angus Fire offered to buy residents’ houses as part of a “good will gesture”.

Mischon de Reya has asked AISG “to confirm whether this is in fact the case, and whether you intend to fund independent legal advice for those you have approached”.

Commenting, a spokesperson from Angus Fire said: “We recognise the concerns about potentially damaging environmental impacts from historic operations at our facility and regret the inconvenience and worry that this has caused. Angus Fire is engaged, and has been for several years, in a comprehensive testing programme that is ongoing and is intended to establish the extent of PFAS contamination and to help determine the remediation required.

“We have kept our regulator the Environment Agency closely informed about every step of this process. We also provide regular updates on the situation to elected local representatives. Lastly, we publish details about this work and the test results received via our microsite [www.derbs.co.uk](#).

“We have a good relationship with our local community and want to maintain that. Angus Fire is in discussions with local residents whose properties are close to the western part of the Bentham site. Those discussions are necessarily confidential, but we have proactively presented options that offer a constructive way forward and which also underscore our commitment to resolving the situation responsibly.”

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