

Environmental Audit Committee

Addressing the risks from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS): Government Response

Second Special Report of Session 2026–27

HC 519

Environmental Audit Committee

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Second Special Report

The Environmental Audit Committee published its Ninth Report of Session 2024–26, [Addressing the risks from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\)](#) (HC 852), on 23 April 2026. The Government Response was received on 15 June 2026 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

The government thanks the Environmental Audit Committee for conducting their inquiry and subsequent report, [Addressing the risks from Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances \(PFAS\)](#), published on 23 April 2026.

The report makes 20 recommendations covering preventing PFAS at the source, human exposure and risk management, and addressing pollution.

On 3 February 2026, the UK Government fulfilled its commitment, made in the revised [Environmental Improvement Plan 2025](#), by unveiling a new plan to better protect the nation and environment from harmful forever chemicals.

PFAS, commonly known as ‘forever chemicals’, represent one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time, and there is growing evidence that their widespread use has generated risks to both people and the environment, which will likely remain for hundreds of years.

The UK’s first-ever [PFAS Plan](#) sets out how we will work across government, industry, regulators, agencies, the scientific community and the public to:

- understand the sources of these chemicals,

- tackle how they move around in the environment, and
- act to reduce public and environmental exposure.

The plan reflects the government's commitment to protect public health and the environment while supporting innovation and economic growth.

Responsibility for chemicals regulation primarily sits with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and its agencies, including the Environment Agency (EA).

Defra works closely with the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) on impacts to industry and competitiveness, and with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on the operation of UK REACH. It also collaborates with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) on chemicals in food, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) on protecting public health, and the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) on chemicals in consumer products.

Wider engagement takes place with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), His Majesty's Treasury (HMT), and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) where policy interests intersect.

Many aspects of PFAS policy are devolved, and the UK Government will continue to work closely with devolved governments on PFAS policy development and delivery.

The structure of this response corresponds to the order of recommendations given in the Committee's report. Paragraphs with recommendations are quoted, with recommendations in bold and italics and the government response underneath.

Preventing PFAS at the source

Applying the Environmental Principles

Recommendation 1 (paragraph 25)

The Government must act in line with the environmental principles, taking preventative and precautionary action to reduce cumulative PFAS exposure to both people and the environment. We expect the Government to set out in its response how its approach to PFAS has been developed with due regard to precautionary principle within the environmental principles policy statement.

The Environmental Principles Policy Statement is a distinctive and essential feature of the UK's environmental governance framework, providing a clear and legally recognised foundation for embedding environmental protection across government policy, and we welcome the Committee's focus on the environmental principles and their importance. The Policy Statement sits at the heart of our approach, providing the framework through which we identify risks and prioritise action to protect the environment and public health, and has been given due regard to in the development of the PFAS Plan. As a result, our response to PFAS is grounded in a strong commitment to safeguarding both the environment and public health through proportionate, evidence-based action.

An example of our commitment to the environmental principles is reflected in our application of the Precautionary Principle. Due to the very high persistence of PFAS there is plausible evidence that a risk of serious or irreversible pollution could occur if PFAS emissions continue. There remains uncertainty over the scale of potential harm of PFAS and its impacts on wildlife, ecosystems, biodiversity and public health.

The PFAS Plan's approach recognises this concern, and the actions are supported by consideration of the Precautionary Principle. The plan sets out how we are strengthening our understanding of PFAS and taking targeted action to reduce their presence in the environment. It outlines a coordinated set of interventions which, when taken together, identify the key sources of harmful PFAS and how they move through the environment, allowing us to take action to stop them.

Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)

Recommendation 2 (paragraph 36)

The Government should make use of existing EU-UK dialogue mechanisms to support UK alignment with EU REACH to avoid unnecessary regulatory divergence. Whilst UK Government may choose a different approach in some areas, without such alignment, UK manufacturers risk accidentally being placed at a competitive disadvantage, and the UK public may face greater exposure to PFAS due to the absence of the more precautionary approach being pursued in the EU.

This government has committed to resetting the UK's relationship with the EU and building a closer partnership based on shared interests. We agree with the Committee that maintaining a coherent and proportionate chemicals regulatory framework, while working closely with the EU, is

important to minimise unnecessary divergence, uphold high environmental and public health standards, and support the competitiveness of UK industry. Existing UK-EU dialogue mechanisms will play an important role in supporting cooperation and alignment where appropriate to achieve these outcomes.

UK Businesses tell us that divergence creates unwanted business complexity, increased business uncertainty, higher trade barriers, and duplicative regulatory costs. That is why we have committed in the Environment Improvement Plan to reforming UK REACH. The aim is to enable protections that address chemical pollution to be applied more quickly, more efficiently and more closely aligned with our closest trading partner the EU.

We recognise that our supply chains, ecosystems and markets are deeply interconnected with those of the EU, and many of the challenges we face, including on issues such as PFAS are better tackled together. We are committed to cooperating with the EU on our shared environmental objectives, recognising those common and cross-border challenges we both face.

We already have mechanisms in place to support this collaboration on chemicals, through the structures of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement including the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Specialised Committee as well as Article 395 under the Level Playing Field Trade Specialised Committee.

Through these forums, the UK remains committed to technical cooperation and information sharing on environmental issues such as PFAS; learning lessons from our respective approaches, helping to reduce unnecessary friction and maintaining our mutual high environmental ambition in a way that works for citizens and businesses alike.

Already this year we have had constructive conversations with the EU on chemicals at the annual Article 395 meeting which took place in February and are exploring further opportunities this year for technical exchanges on specific areas, including PFAS. We also welcome the engagement industry, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are having with the EU and their constructive and supportive role in promoting cooperation between the EU and UK. In particular, we have been working with chemicals trade bodies, including the Cosmetics, Toiletries and Perfumeries Association (CTPA), to highlight the importance and benefits of closer EU-UK cooperation on chemicals.

Recommendation 3 (Paragraph 38)

The Government should reform UK REACH by March 2027 to avoid further delay in restricting PFAS. The Government should set targets at half the statutory maximum timescales and ensure that the Health and Safety Executive has the resources to meet these accelerated timelines.

We share the Committee's ambition to ensure UK REACH remains an effective and proportionate framework for managing risks to human health and the environment, including those posed by PFAS, while supporting innovation and maintaining industry competitiveness.

We are already working to reform UK REACH so that restrictions can be applied more quickly, more efficiently and in a way that is more closely aligned with our closest trading partner, the EU. This would represent a different approach from the current process, rather than simply reducing the maximum timescales within the existing statutory model.

We intend to draw from EU regulatory decisions unless there are compelling reasons to diverge. In this context, EU regulatory decisions include final EU REACH restrictions. In so doing, we will retain full control over our regulatory decisions.

This approach aims to reduce uncertainty, provide a clearer direction of travel for both industry and regulators, and avoid the time-consuming, costly and unnecessary duplication of EU scientific assessments.

To introduce these reforms, we plan to undertake both targeted engagement on key policy design issues, including what would be compelling reasons for divergence, and formal public consultation.

We are committed to introducing reforms, including any necessary legislation, by December 2028.

Restricting PFAS

Recommendation 4 (Paragraph 46)

The Government should adopt an essential-use approach to regulating PFAS, prioritising the rapid restriction of PFAS in non-essential applications. Clearly defined exemptions should be set for essential uses, with time-limited derogations where substitutes are still being developed.

A key outcome of the PFAS Plan is enabling industry to transition away from PFAS use towards safer alternatives. As set out in our response to recommendation 3, this includes drawing from final EU REACH regulatory

decisions unless there are compelling reasons to diverge. We await to see how the final EU REACH universal PFAS restriction applies to non-essential applications.

We are currently working across government to explore the most effective routes to address risks and will consider (if applicable) where essential-use approaches, or other relevant approaches – such as the EU use, have been helpful in other countries.

The PFAS Plan sets out that we will need to support the transition to safer alternatives whilst recognising where critical PFAS uses are still currently needed. Where PFAS are used to deliver important societal or environmental benefits, such as in certain medical applications, decisions on any exemptions or continued uses will be made by Ministers in light of the available evidence, including consideration of risks, benefits and the availability of suitable alternatives. Any risks associated with PFAS should be carefully managed throughout their lifecycle to protect people and the environment. Care must also be taken to ensure that efforts to reduce PFAS use do not lead to unintended adverse environmental impacts.

While the essential use concept has been applied to smaller groups of chemicals, extending it to PFAS presents additional complexities. The EU's Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability (2020) proposed applying the concept to PFAS, but the EU is currently considering a broad PFAS restriction under REACH. As this process is ongoing, the final approach has yet to be determined. The proposal and associated scientific assessments consider factors such as the availability of alternatives and the time required for transition, with the overall aim of reducing PFAS-related risks while supporting a move to safer alternatives where appropriate.

Recommendation 5 (Paragraph 47)

The Government should commission the Health and Safety Executive under UK REACH to bring forward restrictions on PFAS in nonessential consumer products (e.g. food packaging, cookware and school uniforms) without delay and begin a phased restriction from 2027.

Tackling PFAS in non-essential consumer products is an area where action could potentially deliver meaningful benefits for both public health and the environment. Reducing avoidable uses of PFAS, particularly where safe and effective alternatives are available, is a key objective of the PFAS Plan and will be an important part of our wider efforts to address the legacy and future risks posed by these persistent chemicals.

We are working across government to explore the most effective routes to address these risks. This includes work to consider how best to manage chemicals in consumer products more broadly, including PFAS. This will

include a consideration of regulatory and non-regulatory options for certain products, including options to promote transparency and choice for consumers, while supporting industry to move away from PFAS, using all appropriate levers to incentivise safer alternatives wherever possible.

As the Committee has acknowledged, the current UK REACH framework does not always facilitate new restrictions to be introduced rapidly, and reforms to improve these processes will take time to implement. That is why our focus is on delivering UK REACH reform as quickly as possible. The new approach should enable us to draw more from EU regulatory decisions to inform and accelerate GB decision-making. We await to see how the final EU REACH universal PFAS restriction applies to non-essential consumer products.

In developing policy, we wish to carefully consider the benefits of restrictions for protecting human health and the environment against wider impacts, including costs to consumers and businesses, while also considering the safety and performance of alternatives. We are continuing to monitor developments in the EU to ensure future UK action is evidence-based, proportionate and effective.

Recommendation 6 (Paragraph 57)

The Government should draw on independent scientific and regulatory expertise in taking a group-based approach for PFAS regulation within three months of the EU's forthcoming assessment. This should include assessing options for grouping PFAS with similar structures, so that future restrictions can be applied more swiftly, and effectively as new evidence emerges.

The government agrees with the Committee on the potential benefits of a group-based approach to PFAS regulation in addressing risks more effectively and efficiently and already draws on extensive independent scientific and regulatory expertise in this area.

As set out in our response to recommendation 3 and 4, we await to see the final EU REACH universal PFAS restriction, including how it applies a group-based approach.

The HSE's Regulatory Management Options Analysis (RMOA) on PFAS set out a clear rationale for a grouping approach based on OECD's foundational work. The RMOA was recognised by Defra's independent Hazardous Substances Advisory Committee (HSAC) as "comprehensive and well researched", with a methodology that is "thorough and logical" and provides a reasoned basis for grouping PFAS. Together, this evidence will help ensure any future UK approach is effective, proportionate and grounded in the best available science.

Recommendation 7 (Paragraph 58)

The Government should consult on the establishment of an industry funded mechanism to rapidly assess the properties and risks of newly developed PFAS before they are permitted for use and invest in the development of safer alternatives. This mechanism should prevent regrettable substitutions, incentivise safer alternatives and enable faster, more effective regulatory decisions, with proposals published within 12 months of the publication of this report.

Reducing PFAS emissions and supporting the transition to safer alternatives are central to the long-term approach set out in the PFAS Plan. As outlined in our response to recommendation 4, a key outcome of the plan is to enable industry to move away from PFAS use, while avoiding regrettable substitution by promoting stronger collaboration between industry, academia, regulators and researchers to support the development and uptake of effective alternatives.

Under UK REACH, businesses are already required to understand the hazardous properties of substances, assess their uses and potential exposures, and communicate relevant information through the supply chain before placing substances on the market. This framework is designed to ensure that risks can be identified and managed appropriately, recognising that risk depends not only on a substance's intrinsic hazardous properties but also on how it is used and controlled.

Introducing a further regulatory approval process for new PFAS before they can be placed on the market would represent a significant change to the current UK REACH framework and would need to be considered alongside wider developments in chemicals regulation, including reforms being considered in the EU.

Within the existing framework, REACH restrictions remain an important mechanism for managing unacceptable risks where evidence indicates regulatory intervention is required. As set out in earlier responses, we await to see the final EU REACH universal PFAS restriction.

Alongside regulatory measures, we recognise the value of industry-led action to promote the responsible development and use of chemicals. Through the PFAS Plan, we have committed to promoting innovation in safer alternatives, building stronger links between researchers and industry, and supporting international work to assess available alternatives.

This will include engaging with industry platforms, such as the Chemical Industries Association (CIA) PFAS Information Exchange Forum, to explore how information generated through UK REACH can be used more effectively

to support informed decision-making, encourage responsible substitution, accelerate investment in safer alternatives, and reduce the risk of regrettable replacement of PFAS with equally harmful substances.

In addition, the Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSbD) toolbox, developed with the EU Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals (PARC), will further support designers, developers and risk assessors in identifying solutions that deliver functionality while improving safety and environmental sustainability.

Human exposure and risk management

Health Impacts

Recommendation 8 (Paragraph 65)

The Government should invest in long-term research on the health effects of PFAS exposure in the UK population. Within 12 months, it should publish a delivery plan setting out epidemiological studies to assess the cumulative impact of multiple PFAS and the establishment of biomonitoring programmes for groups with higher exposure. For communities and occupations with known or suspected elevated PFAS exposure, the Government should also provide enhanced health screening, enabling early detection of health impacts, identification of trends, and reduced anxiety for affected individuals.

Building a robust evidence base on the long-term health effects of PFAS exposure, including for higher-risk groups, is important to inform proportionate and effective public health responses.

Human biomonitoring is a way of measuring chemicals in the body by testing samples such as blood or urine. UKHSA are developing a human biomonitoring programme to establish background levels of selected environmental pollutants including PFAS.

For substances like PFAS that are widespread in the environment, human biomonitoring results reflect exposure from many different sources, including food, drinking water, air and everyday products. Thus, most people in the UK are likely to have measurable levels of PFAS in their blood, but it is not possible to tell where the exposure came from. At this time, PFAS blood testing does not predict future health problems and can sometimes create unnecessary concern. For these reasons, PFAS biomonitoring is not currently recommended through the NHS or private blood tests.

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) has undertaken PFAS related work on a number of occasions, including reviewing the scientific basis of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) tolerable weekly intake (TWI) for the sum of four PFAS (2022). COT will also consider the global epidemiological evidence base and identify gaps to inform future research.

Following the publication of the COT Interim Position Statement in 2023, a COT PFAS subgroup was established to undertake the Committee's own consideration of the evidence base and risk assessment of PFAS. The subgroup aims to review relevant evidence to support human health risk assessments in relation to existing and legacy exposure through food, drinking water, and the environment; and will provide guidance to UK Government Departments and Agencies undertaking such assessments. This work is ongoing and will be published on the COT website when available. This subgroup is supported by UKHSA and FSA joint Secretariat. COT acknowledges that its review of PFAS will be an extensive and lengthy undertaking.

UKHSA is also undertaking a rapid evidence review aiming to support their remit in preparing for and responding to incidents involving PFAS. The identification of a site or area with potentially elevated environmental concentrations of PFAS, where emitting sites have been identified as a potential source, can lead to local community concerns. This review will improve our understanding of the evidence on the potential health impacts from sites where PFAS emissions or contamination have been identified. It is intended that the review will be published in summer 2026.

UKHSA are developing capabilities to assess human exposure to PFAS (human biomonitoring) using state of the art analytical techniques. The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU) on Chemical Hazards and Threats includes work led by UKHSA to establish a human biomonitoring platform to allow the development of reference (background) values for environmental pollutants including PFAS. This work is a collaboration with the Health Survey for England using blood and urine from a representative sample of the English population. Preliminary results are expected later in 2026.

Recommendation 9 (Paragraph 67)

The Government should draw on international best practice and collaborate with established PFAS research programmes to ensure that the UK is fully aligned with and contributing to this global evidence base. This will enable the Government to make evidence-based decisions more quickly and reduce the cost to the UK taxpayer.

A synthesis report summarising the UK's international engagement, findings and planned actions should be published within six months of this Committee's report.

International collaboration is essential to strengthening the evidence base on PFAS, supporting timely, evidence-based decision-making, and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort and cost. We thank the Committee for recognising that PFAS is a global challenge that no country can address alone. The government is committed to ensuring that the UK remains at the forefront of international efforts to better understand and address the risks these substances pose to people and the environment.

As set out in the PFAS Plan, the UK is already playing an active role in a range of international initiatives to improve understanding of PFAS risks and strengthen global chemicals management. Through the Stockholm Convention, we contribute to international assessments of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and support the development of global controls on the most concerning PFAS. We are also supporting efforts to establish PFAS as a permanent issue of concern under the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC), helping to drive greater international coordination on research, monitoring and risk management. In parallel, the UK continues to financially support the OECD's work on PFAS nomenclature, testing methods, hazard assessment and alternatives assessment, which provides an important foundation for regulatory action worldwide. We are also exploring opportunities to further strengthen scientific collaboration through emerging international research and evidence partnerships, including through the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP-CWP), which has the potential to play a significant role in coordinating global scientific evidence and identifying future research priorities.

Closer engagement with EU research and regulatory initiatives is an important part of our approach. This government is committed to strengthening scientific cooperation with our EU partners and ensuring the UK remains connected to world-leading research and expertise. This includes our participation in PARC, one of the world's largest collaborative chemicals research programmes, which is generating valuable evidence on PFAS hazards, exposure pathways, monitoring approaches and alternatives assessment.

Beyond intergovernmental collaboration, we recognise the important contributions made by universities, research institutes, industry and NGOs in advancing understanding of PFAS and developing safer alternatives. For example, Defra held a series of workshops earlier this year focused on sewage sludge, including academics, industry, and NGOs, to identify future research priorities and co-develop research proposals. These will further

our understanding of the risks posed to human and environmental health by contaminants of concern, including PFAS, and provide recommendations for improved management.

Through the PFAS Plan, we are strengthening links between researchers, regulators and industry, supporting the sharing of data and expertise, and building communities of practice focused on PFAS management and alternatives development. This international engagement is embedded within our domestic policymaking processes, helping us make full use of existing evidence, avoid unnecessary duplication of research, and benchmark our approaches against international best practice, to ensure UK action on PFAS is proportionate, effective and informed by the best available science.

Human exposure pathways

Recommendation 10 (Paragraph 77)

The Government should set limits on the levels and types of PFAS permitted in food, giving producers, retailers, and regulators a consistent basis for protecting public health. This should include establishing and monitoring limits on PFAS entering the food chain through agricultural processes. The Government should publish these limits within three months of the publication of the Committee on Toxicity’s review to draw on the expertise.

Protecting public health from harmful chemical exposures is a priority for this government. We recognise the importance of tackling exposure to PFAS through food and are committed to ensuring that decisions in this area are guided by the best available scientific evidence.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is following the Committee on Toxicity’s review closely and risk management options, including setting maximum levels for PFAS in food, will be considered following the publication of their review. Any risk management options will need to consider overall risk to consumers and ensure that regulatory levels set are as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA), taking account of available occurrence data.

The FSA has been working with the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) to strengthen testing capability for PFAS across a range of everyday foods such as fish, eggs, milk and vegetables. The FSA is also gathering occurrence data through on-going targeted monitoring and surveillance programmes.

As announced at the UK-EU Leaders’ Summit on 19 May 2025, the UK and EU have agreed to work towards a common Sanitary and Phytosanitary Area, which will include food safety standards.

Recommendation 11 (Paragraph 78)

Whilst PFAS-containing consumer products remain on the market, the Government should introduce interim limits on PFAS levels and require standardised labelling to ensure consumers are fully informed. Implementation should be led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, working with the Food Standards Agency and the Office for Product Safety and Standards. This should take effect within six months and remain in place until PFAS are restricted in non-essential consumer goods.

As set out in the PFAS Plan, greater transparency around PFAS in consumer products is an important part of building public confidence, supporting informed consumer choice and enabling the transition away from PFAS use. The government is grateful for the Committee's focus on this issue and recognises that these recommendations are intended as interim measures pending longer-term regulatory action on PFAS.

While government has an important role in supporting this agenda, we believe that industry is often best placed to lead improvements in the provision and sharing of information. There are already encouraging examples of businesses responding to consumer demand through voluntary disclosure and "PFAS-free" claims, as well as seeking greater information from suppliers about the chemicals used in products and materials. We will continue to support efforts to improve transparency across supply chains in ways that are practical, proportionate and responsive to consumer and business needs.

We recognise the Committee's interest in both interim limits on PFAS in consumer products and improved consumer information. As set out in our response to recommendation 5, we are working across government to identify the most effective and proportionate measures to address risks from PFAS in consumer products. We await to see the final EU REACH universal PFAS restriction. Given the large number of PFAS substances, the wide range of products in which they are used, and the need to consider risks in the context of specific uses, developing regulatory limits across consumer products would require a substantial evidence base and careful assessment of the implications for consumers and businesses.

Defra recently commissioned research, building on the work of the UK Chemicals Stakeholder Forum PFAS Working Group, to assess policy options for PFAS management, including disclosure of PFAS in products and provision of information at the point of sale. The findings highlighted a number of practical implementation challenges and have informed the development of policy options under the PFAS Plan. The [final report](#) was published on 21 May 2026. We are continuing to explore how transparency

can be improved as part of wider work on product information and labelling, while ensuring that any future approach is coherent, evidence-based and aligned with broader product labelling reforms.

Through the PFAS Plan, we have also committed to improving public access to information on chemical risks, including through the development of UKHSA's "Chemical Risks to Human Health" website, due to launch later this year. We will also continue to work across government, including closely with OPSS, and with both retail and industry to explore ideas to help strengthen supply chain transparency, support informed decision-making by consumers and businesses, and ensure future policy development is grounded in the best available evidence.

Monitoring and enforcement

Recommendation 12 (Paragraph 84)

The Government should provide full detail, in its response, on how its PFAS monitoring strategy will support enforcement and remediation. This should include a clear explanation of how monitoring results will be used to identify risks, guide remediation activity, and underpin regulatory enforcement.

As part of a robust PFAS monitoring strategy, EA is prioritising monitoring activity and using the resulting data to identify risks, target regulatory action, and support remediation, in line with the intent of this recommendation. The PFAS Plan outlines this work which and how we will work with relevant regulators across devolved governments as appropriate, to ensure a coherent and consistent approach to PFAS monitoring, enforcement and remediation across the UK.

EA's PFAS monitoring programme is a core component of the PFAS Plan and is being used to identify risks, prioritise regulatory action, and guide remediation efforts. Monitoring data are used to identify hotspots, assess trends, and inform riskbased prioritisation of regulatory interventions, including permit reviews and compliance action. EA operates one of the most comprehensive PFAS environmental monitoring programmes in the world.

The PFAS Risk Screening Programme has provided a structured mechanism for combining monitoring data with information on potential source sites and sensitive environmental receptors. This has enabled the development of a national picture of the nature and extent of potential PFAS contamination across England, alongside a prioritised ranking of facilities requiring further

assessment. The overarching aim is to support the targeted allocation of regulatory resources towards those sites where intervention is most likely to effectively address contamination risks.

EA applies robust, scientifically grounded approaches to interpret PFAS monitoring data. Techniques such as Generalised Additive Models are used to identify longterm trends, spatial variability and seasonal patterns, while accounting for uneven sampling and data below detection limits. Grouping PFAS by structure and chain length enables coherent interpretation across a diverse set of substances.

Interpretation is undertaken carefully, recognising methodological and environmental complexity. Results are considered alongside Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) and trends are interpreted in the context of relatively short monitoring periods, evolving networks and strong spatial variability linked to both point and diffuse sources.

This approach provides clear but balanced insight into environmental behaviour and risk. Monitoring shows statistically robust declines in legacy PFAS such as PFOS and PFOA in English rivers (around 30% since 2016), demonstrating that regulatory controls are delivering measurable improvements. At the same time, analysis highlights continued widespread presence, local exceedances, and differences between environmental compartments, with shortchain PFAS dominating water and longchain PFAS accumulating in biota.

EA also makes its PFAS data publicly available and works with researchers and stakeholders to maximise its value, recognising that ongoing monitoring and evidence development are needed to strengthen understanding and support effective decision-making.

Environmental monitoring data informs advice to local authorities on contaminated land, private water supplies, and planning applications where risks to sensitive receptors are identified. Where monitoring identifies potential PFAS issues linked to regulated activities, EA has powers to act. A transparent link between monitoring, risk management, and enforcement is essential to build confidence that the strategy delivers meaningful environmental and public health protection.

Operator led monitoring plays a critical role where more detailed, site-specific information is required. EA can require companies who operate under an EA permit to undertake enhanced monitoring and investigations to better characterise PFAS sources, pathways and risks. Where operator led monitoring is required, EA heavily scrutinises the methods and data produced throughout the process. This approach supports proportionate

regulation, enables targeted enforcement and remediation, and ensures that costs are borne by those responsible for pollution, in line with the polluter pays principle.

EA is currently gathering data from multiple non-hazardous landfill sites to establish the scale and scope of the presence of PFAS and subsequent emissions from these landfills. The work includes:

- Investigating the leachate source term and whether the existing on-site treatment technologies are capable of destroying/removing the PFAS from the effluent.
- Investigating the landfill gas source term and whether landfill gas emissions present a challenge like landfill leachate.

These studies will inform future regulation by introducing enhanced monitoring by landfill operators, undertaking site-specific risk assessments on leachate and potentially landfill gas emissions. Finally, engagement with the wider industry to explore alternative treatment technologies where required.

The transport and emission of PFAS from wastewater treatment has been investigated in the Chemicals Investigation Programme (CIP). CIP represents a collaboration between EA and the ten wastewater companies in England and Wales.

Recommendation 13 (Paragraph 85)

The Government should accompany this with an assessment of the resources required for the Environment Agency to deliver their responsibilities outlined in the PFAS Plan and commit to providing the associated funding in its response.

It is important for EA to be appropriately resourced to deliver its responsibilities under the PFAS Plan. Delivering this work is a significant undertaking, given the scale and persistence of PFAS contamination, the need for monitoring, permit reviews, regulatory enforcement and technical support to other regulators, and the challenges posed by scientific uncertainty and historic contamination.

EA's resources and priorities are considered through established business planning, performance management and governance processes, which provide ongoing oversight of delivery against agreed objectives and enable resource requirements to be reviewed as priorities evolve.

Through these arrangements, we will continue to assess EA's medium and long-term resource needs in relation to PFAS and consider how best to support sustainable delivery, including through options available under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Addressing pollution

Supply chain and disposal

Recommendation 14 (Paragraph 94)

The Government should consult on mandatory PFAS disclosures across supply chains within six months, requiring manufacturers and importers to report the presence and purpose of PFAS in products placed on the UK market to support safe handling and disposal.

Improving transparency of PFAS within supply chains is distinct from consumer-facing information considered in recommendation 11. Clearer information on where PFAS are used, in what quantities, and for what purposes can support regulatory decision-making, improve waste management outcomes, and help identify opportunities for transitioning to safer alternatives.

Existing regulatory frameworks already provide mechanisms for communicating information on chemicals through supply chains. Under UK REACH and the GB Classification, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) regime, suppliers are required to provide information on hazardous substances through safety data sheets and other means where relevant. We are also closely monitoring international developments designed to improve supply chain transparency, including the EU's SCIP database under the Waste Framework Directive and emerging Digital Product Passport initiatives, to better understand their effectiveness, implementation challenges and potential applicability in a UK context.

We have also considered options for mandatory PFAS reporting through the Defra-commissioned research referenced in our response to recommendation 11. This work found that obtaining information on what PFAS is contained in mixtures and articles, and their concentrations, would be challenging in many cases. Given that chemical supply chains are often global, spanning multiple jurisdictions, this adds significant complexity to tracing PFAS use, as information may be fragmented, inconsistently recorded, or not readily accessible. As a result, mandatory reporting requirements would require careful design to ensure they are practical, proportionate and capable of delivering meaningful improvements in

transparency. Through delivery of the PFAS Plan, we will continue to engage with industry to explore how supply chain transparency can be improved over time.

Recommendation 15 (Paragraph 95)

The Government must set out in its response a timeline to divert PFAS waste from landfill towards safer treatment or destruction technologies to manage increasing volumes of PFAS waste without causing further environmental contamination.

Effective PFAS waste management which addresses the risks associated with disposal to landfill is very important. We recognise the need to reduce the potential for PFAS to enter landfill and to support the development and deployment of more effective treatment and destruction options to manage increasing volumes of waste and prevent further environmental contamination.

We are conducting a review of policies required for landfills to ensure they continue to meet environmental standards in the future. POPs and PFAS will be an important consideration for this work, and we are presently gathering further information required for potential future interventions.

International approaches to the disposal of PFAS contaminated waste, and the applicability of such approaches to UK waste streams, will be assessed. Any transition away from landfill will need to be phased and evidenced, taking account of available treatment and destruction capacity, environmental outcomes, and potential unintended consequences.

Waste policy is devolved, and the UK Government will continue to work closely with devolved governments to support coordinated development and delivery of waste policy in this area.

Remediation

Recommendation 16 (Paragraph 108)

The Government should apply the polluter pays principle to prevent ongoing and historic PFAS contamination and consult by March 2027 on establishing a national PFAS Remediation Fund. The Government should:

- ***explore the implications of an emissions levy for PFAS on the UK REACH candidate list, to deter ongoing environmental contamination and hold polluters responsible;***

- ***consider options for extending the polluter pays principle to products manufactured overseas and imported into the UK;***
- ***ensure that when the Government extends the polluter pays principle that UK manufacturers are not at a disadvantage to overseas manufacturers of products;***
- ***increase dedicated central government funding for local authorities to remediate where no responsible party can be identified; and***
- ***ensure that the Remediation Fund and associated enforcement are overseen by the Environment Agency, and ensure that the Environment Agency has the necessary resources and skills required to implement any monitoring and enforcement responsibilities.***

As set out in our response to recommendation 1, the Environmental Principles Policy Statement sits at the heart of our approach to environmental policy. The Polluter Pays Principle is central to our approach to chemicals management, including through the PFAS Plan. The Committee is right to focus on how this principle can be applied to PFAS contamination and the government thanks the committee for highlighting its importance. Given the persistence of PFAS and the potentially significant costs of remediation, there is a strong case for ensuring that those responsible for pollution bear the costs of preventing, managing and remediating its impacts wherever possible.

The government welcomes the Committee's recommendations on levies, remediation funding and financial responsibility for PFAS contamination, and agree that these proposals warrant serious consideration as part of our longer-term approach. The Defra commissioned research, referenced in our response to recommendation 11, assessed the potential introduction of a levy on the manufacture and import of PFAS. The report research found that such a levy could help reduce PFAS emissions and apply the Polluter Pays Principle in a fair and transparent way. It also highlighted the potential impacts on competitiveness, maintaining a level playing field with overseas producers, and any additional costs that could ultimately be passed on to consumers. These findings have informed the development of policy options under the PFAS Plan and provide a valuable evidence base, as we continue to explore the potential role of levies, remediation funds and other financing mechanisms.

We are also closely monitoring approaches being developed internationally, including PFAS-specific levies and remediation funds, to understand how they operate in practice and the outcomes they deliver. Alongside this, we recognise the potential role, in some sectors, that collective funding

arrangements can play in managing environmental liabilities, supporting remediation, and providing greater certainty and resilience for businesses facing significant pollution-related costs. These experiences and models will provide important lessons as we consider how best to strengthen the application of the Polluter Pays Principle in a way that is effective, proportionate, supports sector resilience, and delivers meaningful environmental outcomes.

The Polluter Pays Principle is already embedded within a number of existing regulatory frameworks. Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, provides the legislative basis for addressing instances of contaminated land. Under this legislation, those responsible for land contamination, including historic contamination, can be held liable for remediation costs. Affected parties may also seek redress through the courts, providing an additional route through which the costs of pollution can be borne by those responsible. However, unless voluntary action can be progressed, any investigation required to establish an evidence base and determine liability is undertaken by the regulator, usually at public expense. Contaminated land is a devolved policy area, and we work closely with devolved governments, as appropriate, to ensure a coordinated approach is implemented when required.

EA plays a key role in overseeing PFAS remediation, where contamination affects controlled waters, or where sites are designated as Special Sites under the contaminated land regime. It also provides technical guidance and scientific advice to local authorities and other regulators managing PFAS risks. For ongoing emissions of PFAS to the environment, these can be regulated by the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. EA inspects and audits industrial installations to ensure they are complying with the conditions of their permits. If operators are not compliant with the conditions in their permit, EA works with operators to ensure they come back into compliance. EA also has extensive powers to take enforcement action where appropriate, including through fines and criminal proceedings.

We also recognise the challenges that arise where no responsible party can be identified, or where remediation costs exceed local capacity. In these circumstances, local authorities can face significant financial pressures. We are continuing to consider how existing support mechanisms can help address these challenges, including through the Land Remediation Pathfinder Scheme, announced in Autumn 2025, which aims to provide financial relief for the cost burden of the Landfill Tax (Lft) on land contamination remediation projects. The scheme will provide grants to local, combined, and mayoral authorities to cover unaffordable Lft costs in cases where the tax acts as a determinative barrier.

We will continue to explore opportunities to strengthen the application of the Polluter Pays Principle in relation to PFAS, drawing on emerging evidence, stakeholder views and international experience. This work will form an important part of the longer-term delivery of the PFAS Plan and help inform future consideration of funding mechanisms, liability, remediation and enforcement in a fair, proportionate and effective way.

Recommendation 17 (Paragraph 115)

The Government should support the development and deployment of scalable, cost-effective PFAS remediation technologies by directing investment through UK Research and Innovation into research, innovation and practical support.

Accelerating the development and deployment of effective PFAS remediation technologies will be essential to addressing the long-term legacy of PFAS contamination. Given the complexity and scale of the challenge, investment in research and innovation will play a critical role in developing practical, scalable and cost-effective solutions.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is already supporting projects that tackle environmental contamination in waterways and industrial wastewater through innovative treatment technologies, helping to build the scientific and technical foundations needed for future PFAS remediation.

We are committed to exploring further opportunities with UKRI for targeted investment in PFAS remediation innovation, with the aim of allocating funding for such projects to be granted from 2027/28. Our intention is to help accelerate the development of effective and sustainable remediation technologies and strengthen the UK's capability to tackle PFAS contamination.

Recommendation 18 (Paragraph 116)

The Government must publish formally approved guidance for PFAS remediation to provide businesses, local authorities and regulators with the certainty needed to deliver timely, safe and effective remediation.

The government recognises the value of formally approved guidance to support timely, safe and effective PFAS remediation, and is taking forward work to develop this in a way that reflects the current and evolving evidence base.

In line with the UK PFAS Plan, EA is developing technical guidance for regulators, industry and landowners on the investigation, assessment and management of PFAS contamination across environmental media. The guidance will support riskbased decision making, improve consistency

across regimes (including planning, environmental permitting and contaminated land), and help to avoid unintended consequences such as pollutant transfer or incomplete treatment.

This work builds on a growing evidence base, international best practice and emerging research on PFAS remediation. EA has already produced substantial tools to support consistent regulatory decisions, including the 2024 Lines of Evidence framework and recent evidence reviews on soil stabilisation and permeable reactive barriers, which together enable structured assessment of effectiveness, sustainability, uncertainty and longterm risk.

Further work is needed to translate this evidence into clear, accessible guidance that can be applied consistently across Environmental Permitting Regulations, the contaminated land regime, and the planning system. This includes clarifying expectations for site characterisation, treatability testing, verification and longterm monitoring, and addressing residual liabilities where PFAS is immobilised rather than destroyed.

Given the persistence of PFAS, historic contamination and slow movement through soils and groundwater, improvements in environmental outcomes may take time to be fully realised.

In the short to medium term, success will be evidenced by credible progress in reducing releases and controlling pathways, including reduced emissions or mass loads, improved site management, and better control of PFAS sources and waste streams.

Over the longer term, success will be demonstrated by stabilisation and recovery of environmental receptors, reduced exposure risks to people and ecosystems, and declining longterm liabilities. A weightofevidence approach, combining early indicators with longterm monitoring, will therefore be applied to confirm durable environmental protection.

Destroying PFAS

Recommendation 19 (Paragraph 124)

The Government should assess the volume of PFAS containing waste expected from forthcoming restrictions and determine whether UK high-temperature incineration capacity is sufficient. The Government should write to the Committee with its findings and proposed actions within six months.

The government recognises the importance of understanding the implications of PFAS restrictions for waste management infrastructure, including whether sufficient treatment and disposal capacity is available to manage additional PFAS-containing waste safely. We are keeping this issue under active review.

HSE's forthcoming Final Opinion on PFAS in firefighting foams, expected later in 2026, will set out their overall assessment of any potential restriction and the challenges involved. The issue of PFAS waste treatment has been considered in HSE's restriction proposal work on PFAS-containing firefighting foams.

We recognise that capacity constraints already exist, with facilities continuing to manage waste arising from restrictions on PFOS and PFOA under the POPs regime. Should a restriction on PFAS in firefighting foams be introduced, any transition period would provide an opportunity for additional treatment capacity to come online, including the development and deployment of new technologies capable of destroying or irreversibly transforming PFAS.

This work, alongside ongoing engagement between Defra, EA, and the waste sector, will help inform our understanding of future treatment and disposal capacity requirements, including the role of high-temperature incineration.

Recommendation 20 (Paragraph 125)

The Government must commit, within six months, to funding the research and development of non-incineration PFAS destruction technologies through UK Research and Innovation and Innovate UK.

Further research and development into alternative destruction technologies plays a key role in supporting incineration capacity in the UK. Developing effective non-incineration methods is needed to build a sustainable long-term approach to managing PFAS waste and reducing the risk of further environmental contamination.

UKRI is already supporting a range of projects aimed at addressing this challenge, including research into innovative technologies such as ultrasound treatment and catalytic degradation, which have the potential to break down PFAS compounds without relying on conventional high-temperature incineration.

While funding allocations for PFAS-related research in 2026/27 have already been agreed, we are committed to exploring further opportunities with UKRI for targeted investment in innovative PFAS destruction technologies, with the aim of allocating funding for such projects to be granted from 2027/28.

Our intention is to support the development, testing and demonstration of promising non-incineration technologies, helping to accelerate their path from research to real-world application.