

Dear Callum Miller,

I hope you are well. We are aware that some community members in your area have concerns relating to PFAS in connection with the former Heyford Airfield. PFAS are a group of widely used chemicals that can persist in the environment, so these concerns are understandable.

I wanted to provide some further context on our role, including our approach to PFAS, how remediation is managed through the planning process, and our ongoing monitoring activity.

We work to protect people and the environment in England from the risks posed by chemicals, including PFAS. This includes monitoring, regulating industry, and taking action where necessary to prevent and reduce pollution. We also work closely with other organisations to improve understanding of impacts and to manage risks effectively. For example, we engage with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to ensure that future development appropriately considers these risks and enables suitable remediation where required.

PFAS is a complex issue and responsibilities sit across several organisations. We have compiled a brief, detailing roles and responsibilities further which is attached. We will be updating our [Engagement HQ page](#) to add more of the information from the attached document to our pages shortly, and can message your office when the update is live.

Please see below for additional detail on our role, including our approach to PFAS, how remediation is managed through the planning process, and our ongoing monitoring activity.

- In October 2025, we responded to a consultation from Cherwell District Council on land affected by contamination in relation to the development proposal at Heyford Park, Camp Road, Upper Heyford (application reference 25/02190/HYBRID). Our response is available on the Cherwell District Council planning [register](#). While we are not a statutory consultee on matters relating to historic contamination, the Environment Agency would still expect and request to be consulted where there is potential environmental risk, where impacts are uncertain, or where a strategic view would add value. This includes, but is not limited to, issues such as groundwater protection (for example, Source Protection Zones) and land contamination.
- Our response recommends Cherwell District Council ensure current risks are properly considered, to provide public health advice where needed, and to work closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).
- The developer is proposing further site investigation. We will review this, alongside the controlled waters risk assessment (groundwater and surface water), remediation strategy, and verification plan, following further consultation from the local planning authority.

- We will also consider controls for drainage, management of contaminated soils, and any monitoring requirements. This reflects our precautionary, risk-based approach to protect sensitive groundwater in a principal aquifer.
- The aim is to make sure that the land and any impacted groundwater is cleaned up to a standard which is suitable for its proposed intended use now and in the future. This should also mean that the land does not meet the criteria to be determined as statutory contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in the future.
- Without these safeguards, and the planning conditions we might recommend, we would advise refusal of the application due to risks to groundwater and surface water.
- Given the former use of the proposed development site as an airfield we would expect a full assessment of the presence of PFAS and details of any remediation required to protect controlled waters to be agreed with the developer.
- The monitoring location, approximately 5 km from Upper Heyford, is part of the Environment Agency's national PFAS research and monitoring programme. We are undertaking targeted sampling of groundwater and surface water across England to build a robust national picture. This is designed to improve our scientific understanding of PFAS' occurrence and behaviour in the environment and to inform future regulatory approaches, risk assessment frameworks, and environmental standards rather than to provide routine site-specific surveillance. Outside this programme, we would only sample surface waters when attending an incident, if appropriate.
- Our results showed levels of PFAS in the range of 2000 to 2300 micrograms per litre.

Subsequent monitoring by others nearer the airfield reports 27000 micrograms per litre.

We are working with Cherwell District Council to convene a roundtable discussion. This will bring together the relevant organisations to review progress to date and to ensure that PFAS, alongside wider water quality considerations, is being considered in a coordinated and joined-up way going forward.

I hope the above information is helpful, I will keep you updated on progress of the roundtable discussions.

Kind regards

Sarah

Sarah Trouw

Acting Area Director - Thames

Environment Agency