



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

UK Health Security Agency  
10 South Colonnade  
London E14 4PU

15<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Dear Calum,

Thank you for your letter of 5 May regarding perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in relation to the former RAF Upper Heyford airbase site.

I have addressed your queries below.

**How UKHSA currently works with environmental and public health regulators such as the Environment Agency in cases where PFAS contamination is identified and there is potential for human exposure.**

The UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA) remit is to advise other Government Departments and Agencies on the risks to public health from environmental exposure to PFAS via soil, water and air. This includes the Drinking Water Inspectorate, Environment Agency (EA) local authorities, other partners and members of the public. There are various legislative frameworks under which land contamination is addressed in England. UKHSA has no regulatory responsibilities or powers to address contaminated land, but supports the regulators and communities potentially affected. Local authorities have a legal obligation to inspect their areas to identify and remove unacceptable risks to public health and the environment, and act as a regulator to ensure that contaminated land is made suitable for its current use. UKHSA has published a factsheet on contaminated land in residential settings, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-potentially-contaminated-residential-land-gardens-and-allotments/contaminated-land-in-residential-settings-factsheet>.

**The potential human health implications of PFAS exposure via soil, water, or air pathways in residential or educational settings.**

Investigation of the health implications of per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) exposure is an active research area and there are limitations and uncertainties for many PFAS chemicals. These include the lack of toxicity and human epidemiological data. However, in animal studies for some PFAS such as perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), adverse health effects have been reported for dose levels greater than human exposure levels. Human epidemiology studies have reported

associations between PFAS exposure and several health effects, including liver effects, effects on the immune system, effects on the developing foetus, infant and young child, and cancer. However, information relating to even the most studied PFAS (PFOS and PFOA) is often inconclusive.

**Evidence or guidance relating to exposure risks where previously contaminated land may be disturbed during construction or redevelopment activity.**

Local authorities have the statutory responsibility for authorising construction or redevelopment activity under planning legislation. Normally, if there are concerns about potential land contamination, the local authority will apply a condition to the planning permission to ensure the land is suitable for its future intended use. The onus is then on the developer, who would usually employ a specialist environmental consultancy to undertake bespoke risk assessments for the site and undertake any remediation as agreed with the local authority.

I hope this information is helpful for you and your constituents.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Hopkins', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Professor Susan Hopkins  
Chief Executive  
UK Health Security Agency