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Policy paper

PFAS Plan: building a safer future together

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Foreword

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), often called ‘forever chemicals’, represent one of the most pressing chemical challenges of our time. They are used throughout our everyday lives as their unique properties have brought significant benefits to society. They appear in non-stick frying pans in your kitchens and medical devices in our hospitals. They are used in clean energy technologies that power our industries and safety equipment that protects us from harm. Yet their persistence and widespread presence in our environment pose risks we cannot ignore.

This is an important issue for the government to address. PFAS contamination threatens public health, wildlife and the quality of our natural environment. Acting now is essential to prevent irreversible harm and to ensure that our regulatory frameworks keep pace with scientific evidence.

This plan provides a foundation for how we will act – decisively but proportionately – to manage risks. Our vision is to reduce and minimise the harmful effects of PFAS while transitioning to safer alternative substances. It reflects our commitment to protect public health and the environment while supporting innovation and economic growth.

Our approach is rooted in science and collaboration. We will strengthen understanding and awareness, tackle the sources of PFAS and how they move through the environment, and reduce ongoing exposure to

the PFAS that are already out there. We will work in partnership across the UK, with devolved governments, industry,
scientists, environmental groups and local communities. We will continue to lead internationally, contributing to global efforts to phase out harmful PFAS and share best practice.

This is a long-term challenge, but through coordinated action we can ensure that we pass on to the next generations an environment that is better than the one we inherited. Together, we will protect our environment, safeguard public health, and build a cleaner, safer future.

Emma Hardy MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

(Minister for Water and Flooding)

Introduction

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), often referred to as ‘forever chemicals’, present a complex and global challenge. They are long-lasting and widespread in our environment yet are essential for many uses in our society. PFAS are valued for their resistance to heat, water and oil, and have been widely used across industries from firefighting foams and medical devices to textiles and packaging. They can benefit society, support

economic growth, help us achieve our aims of making Britain a clean energy superpower, and contribute to meeting climate change targets and protecting the ozone layer. Their use in defence equipment and military capability contributes to protecting national security.

There is growing evidence that their widespread use and past management have generated risks of harm to people and to the environment, including wildlife. Their persistence means that some PFAS will remain in our environment for hundreds of years. While there is scope to continue to improve our understanding across all PFAS, this growing concern over potential health risks and irreversible environmental contamination means that action should not be unnecessarily delayed.

The UK government, together with the devolved governments, have been working for over 2 decades to monitor, ban, or restrict specific PFAS and address issues caused by their historic use. The way forward should involve coordinated action, with the governments working together with industry, other bodies and the public to understand and manage PFAS risks. Chemical pollutants, and especially those with the properties of PFAS, know no national borders.

This is not a challenge unique to the UK. Countries around the world are also managing the legacy of past PFAS use and the ongoing use of PFAS. Like the UK, many are taking steps to understand and mitigate the impacts. We have been working internationally to agree global prohibitions of some dangerous PFAS, and we will continue to engage internationally, learning from global best practice and contributing to collective efforts.

We wish to find the right balance between the ongoing use of some PFAS and the valuable benefits PFAS can provide, whilst ensuring we transition to safe and sustainable alternatives where appropriate. While this transition takes place and we contend with pollution from the past, there is an ongoing need to manage the prevalence and risks of PFAS in society and in the environment.

Our PFAS vision for the future

Our long-term vision is to work in partnership, taking a science-based and proportionate approach, to reduce and minimise the impacts of harmful PFAS on public health and the environment, including through the transition to safer alternatives.

We will meet this vision by:

- understanding and identifying the sources of PFAS including where they originate from

- accounting for the movement of PFAS around society and the environment, which means tackling PFAS pathways
- reducing and managing ongoing exposure to PFAS for people, animals and the environment

This PFAS Plan is structured in line with these 3 pillars:

Section 1: Understanding PFAS sources

Section 1 of this plan relates to understanding PFAS and its sources. It sets out:

- what we know about PFAS currently
- priorities for improving our understanding of PFAS use in society, its prevalence in our environment, and the risks this presents

Section 2: Tackling PFAS pathways

Section 2 relates to tackling PFAS pathways, including reducing PFAS at source and preventing PFAS from entering and circulating in the environment. Using our evidence on PFAS, we can:

- take actions to manage risks of PFAS across their full life cycle
- support the transition to safer alternatives whilst recognising where critical PFAS uses are still currently needed

Section 3: Reducing ongoing exposure to PFAS

Section 3 relates to reducing and managing ongoing exposure to harmful PFAS, to protect people and the environment, including from legacy pollution.

The 3 sections work together to manage PFAS risks in a coordinated way. Understanding PFAS helps deliver effective and well prioritised interventions that, in the longer term, contribute together to reducing PFAS risks across the environment and society. This will, in turn, reduce our reliance on costly preventative measures at the point of exposure.

What are PFAS?

PFAS are a group of thousands of chemicals. There is no universally agreed definition of 'PFAS', but these chemicals are grouped together as they share common features of organo-fluorine chemistry. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition (https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.est.1c06896) is a pragmatic choice on which to base PFAS policy and we will use it to guide the actions in this plan. It ensures a common understanding of what is meant by 'PFAS' in this plan. The OECD define PFAS as "fluorinated substances that contain at least one fully fluorinated methyl or methylene carbon atom (without any hydrogen, chlorine, bromine or iodine atom attached to it). This means that, with a few noted exceptions, any chemical with at least a perfluorinated methyl group (-CF3) or a perfluorinated methylene group (–CF2–) is a PFAS."

The beneficial properties of PFAS include tolerance to extreme temperatures and pressures, ability to repel oil and water, and chemical resistance. This has resulted in their widespread use in society. More than 200 uses have been identified (Glüge and others, 2020) (https://pubs.rsc.org/en/content/articlelanding/2020/em/d0em00291g) including in medical devices, non-stick coatings in cookware, fire-fighting foams, construction and electronics manufacture.

Given their structural diversity, grouping PFAS by their chemical identity can be challenging, but it is recognised as a pragmatic way to identify and manage the hazards and risks of PFAS.

Our approach

Global evidence shows managing the risks from harmful PFAS is challenging and there are no quick fixes.

Our approach is science-based and evidence-led. This ensures proportionate regulation is effectively prioritised and implemented to address risks in a balanced way. Our immediate priorities will focus on identified or potential risks, such as PFAS known to be used in high quantities in the UK; found most often in the environment; with properties of concern; exposure routes that may generate public health risks.

Where there are gaps in our current understanding, we will take steps to reduce uncertainties, improving our evidence base.

When deciding what action to take to address the PFAS risks, the UK government will have due regard to the environmental principles policy statement, pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. The environmental principles covered by the environmental principles policy statement are the integration principle, prevention principle, rectification at source principle, polluter pays principle and precautionary principle. Scottish ministers are required, when making policies (including proposals for legislation), to have due regard to the guiding principles on the environment under the Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021.

Regulation will be needed to protect people and the environment. Actions will be designed that work together and take account of the full life cycle of PFAS, covering its manufacture, use and the management of PFAS waste. The transition away from PFAS will take time, as will putting new regulations in place, and the trade-offs applying to new regulatory measures need to be carefully considered. We must balance ensuring that measures protect people and wildlife while recognising the potential negative impacts on society, consumers and industry. The effect of regulations will be assessed and accounted for in line with government's cost-of-living and better regulation commitments. Where critical functions are provided by some PFAS (such as in medical goods), these should be maintained to provide societal and environmental benefits that cannot currently be replaced by viable non-PFAS alternatives.

Given the global nature of PFAS contamination, we recognise the importance of collaborating internationally and learning from the experiences, research and regulatory approaches of other countries to inform our own response. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of innovative approaches applied in other countries. For example, France's introduction of a fee for emissions of PFAS from industrial sites.

The governments of the UK also expect industry to be proactive in improving our understanding of PFAS risks and supporting informed consumer choices. Industry should take steps to manage the risks from PFAS they manufacture and use, and to manage the post-use risks. The transition away from PFAS also presents an economic opportunity. A recent IQ Systemic Ltd report (https://www.systemiq.earth/reports/invisible-ingredients/) estimated that a PFAS free market in the EU could reach $14.9 billion annually by 2040.

We expect to see progress through a combination of improved public understanding, industry-led and industry-owned initiatives (such as the Chemical Industry Association's PFAS Information Exchange Forum), and transparent self-regulation. The UK government in coordination with devolved governments will aim to support industry by providing a regulatory environment that fosters innovation and investment, and that supports a thriving and growing sector.

This plan acts as a first step to meet our longer-term vision. It sets out a clear framework for understanding, identifying and responding to the risks from harmful PFAS. This framework relates to the 3 pillars of focussing on PFAS sources, pathways and exposure. The plan sets out outcomes under each of these pillars. These outcomes collectively underpin our vision.

This plan sets out some indicative actions which relate to the key outcomes. These are not intended to be exhaustive. The actions in this plan are an initial set of proposals, many of which relate to the governments of the UK, that can be built on in future. We wish the plan to act as a platform for the governments to engage further with industry, environmentalists, other bodies and the public. In so doing we will, over time, develop a wider collective set of actions and initiatives that reflect joint ownership of the PFAS challenge and the joint responsibilities towards tackling it.

Together, we can take a coordinated approach to make sure that ‘forever chemicals’ are not a forever problem.

Territorial scope

The governments of the UK will work together collaboratively and collectively with industry, other bodies, consumers and the public more widely as appropriate. Shared ownership and responsibility are key. Government regulation, and compliance by others with this, plays an important role.

This plan represents a UK approach, with the devolved governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland working collaboratively with the UK government. Where there are differences in approach owing to devolution, these are identified in the document. Under Annex 2 of the Windsor Framework, Northern Ireland continues to follow EU chemicals legislation. Northern Ireland is subject to the EU’s actions on PFAS and, where possible, will work with the UK plan.

Section 1: Understanding PFAS sources

We need to understand the sources of PFAS and their impact. This enables us to make informed decisions regarding the relative risks and benefits of the different types of PFAS and their uses. This evidence is key to providing a foundation for effective regulation that is needed to protect people and the environment.

PFAS are a large group of chemicals. While it is neither practical nor necessary to examine every individual substance, awareness of the full group and its diversity is important to inform policy interventions. PFAS share a common feature of persistence. The persistence of PFAS is a key consideration when assessing the risk of environmental contamination and subsequent human exposure. The very high persistence of PFAS present threats of serious or irreversible damage. There may be circumstances accordingly in which a lack of full scientific certainty may not present a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation. This may support actions targeted at the full group. In other cases, it may need to be recognised that sub-groups of PFAS can also have different and beneficial properties, uses and associated risks.

Prevalence and impact of PFAS in the environment

PFAS are widespread and have been found in remote parts of the globe, such as Antarctica. They are:

- highly mobile (meaning they move through and between different environmental compartments such as air, water and land)
- persistent
- able to accumulate in soils, plants and animals (especially in aquatic environments), thereby entering the food chain and humans

PFAS are prevalent in our waters and, as rivers flow into the sea, our marine environment is also exposed.

Government monitoring of PFAS in the environment (https://environment.data.gov.uk/water-quality/) has been developing and expanding for over a decade across the UK. The number of PFAS monitored has increased over the years with advancements in analytical technology and capabilities. PFAS have been found (https://environment.data.gov.uk/) in approximately 80% of surface water samples, approximately 50% of groundwater samples, and all fish samples. A similar picture exists in other countries with comparable monitoring programmes. There is scope to collect more monitoring data on PFAS levels in air, soils and the marine environment to further inform the extent of PFAS across the environment.

We work with other countries to exchange information on PFAS analysis and learn from best practice. This includes gathering and exchanging information on analytical capabilities across laboratories internationally. The scientific understanding of aggregated methods (sometimes called ‘Total PFAS’ methods), which report on the amount of fluorine or organo-fluorine

rather than on specific PFAS, is advancing. These methods may also be useful screening tools in some cases.

The UK government's national monitoring programme assesses PFAS levels in wildlife, tracking exposure to PFAS chemicals over time in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. PFAS monitoring has shown PFAS to be present in top level predators (including harbour porpoises, otters, foxes and birds of prey). There is evidence that the levels of some PFAS in our environment are harmful to certain species of wildlife. Further research is required to fully determine the extent of this, and to assess the extent to which this has an impact on ecosystems and biodiversity.

Evidence is rapidly evolving in relation to other emerging risks. One area is assessing the lifecycle of risks from the PFAS sub-group fluoropolymers. The Europe fluoropolymer market size is estimated at 70.49 kilotons in 2025 and is expected to reach 88.14 kilotons by 2030 (Mordor Intelligence) (https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/europe-fluoropolymer-market).

Another is the risks from smaller PFAS that may be formed by the breakdown of others. For example, trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) is found widely in rivers and has many sources, including the breakdown of pesticides, pharmaceuticals and refrigerants.

Data from industry-led programmes has also contributed to our understanding of the prevalence of PFAS in the environment. In 2024, English water companies performed over 770,000 analyses for individual PFAS to inform drinking water assessments. Similarly, Scottish Water have also undertaken PFAS monitoring to help assess risks to their water supplies. The water industry Chemicals Investigation Programme (CIP) has recently expanded PFAS monitoring in effluent, sludge and groundwater across the UK to better assess risks and inform future regulations.

Human exposure

A key output from our environmental monitoring is understanding the exposure pathways to people. People can be exposed to PFAS in many ways, including diet, drinking water, indoor dust and skin contact. While some PFAS, such as perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), have been well studied and regulated, the health effects of many others remain more uncertain.

While studies have reported links between PFAS exposure and several health effects, much evidence remains inconclusive to some extent. There is also evidence of differential effects across different sections of society. For example, children may be more vulnerable during early development.

This remains an active area of research, with uncertainty on their impact remaining for many PFAS.

The outcomes we hope to achieve on understanding PFAS sources and impacts are:

- improved knowledge of the uses, extent and impact of PFAS across society and in our natural environment
- more efficient and effective use of evidence for societal benefit, including by designing and delivering better coordinated research programmes across government, academia, industry and other stakeholders
- improved evidence of PFAS across different environmental compartments (such as land, air and water) and improved knowledge of PFAS exposure pathways to support effective interventions, prioritised according to risk

Improving our understanding of the extent and impact of PFAS in the environment

Monitoring PFAS in the environment can be challenging because they are complex chemicals, which usually exist in low levels in the environment and require advanced techniques to detect. We need to continue to further develop our analytical capabilities for environmental monitoring to ensure provision of high-quality evidence at a significantly reduced cost. There remains much scope to improve current knowledge of PFAS properties and of PFAS prevalence. This extends to monitoring and to research, including that undertaken by regulators, governments, industry, research foundations and other bodies.

Environmental monitoring is sometimes best combined with other evidence. For example, the main reporting mechanism for industrial emissions in the UK is the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (UK PRTR), an inventory of pollution emissions and waste transfers from industrial sites. This could be updated and expanded to cover PFAS. Levels of overall risk are determined by combining monitoring data with knowledge of toxicity. Whilst there is currently limited toxicity data across many PFAS, the ambition of developing a toxic equivalence (TEQ) approach could be considered in future, similar to that used for dioxins and furans, applied to groups of PFAS with similar toxicity.

Initial indicative actions

Action 1.1: Continue to monitor and report 2,400 PFAS samples from the freshwater environment annually (in England). In Scotland, we will continue to monitor and report on PFAS in the water environment annually (working to expand our network from approximately 300 samples in 2025 to 500

samples in 2026). Our focus will be on statutory duties, and where possible using updated methodologies aligned with the latest scientific evidence and technological advancements. In Wales, consideration will be given to the application of this approach, with plans to increase surface water sampling for a broader range of PFAS, thereby complementing statutory sampling for PFOS in biota. We will work across the UK to strengthen the national dataset and inform future risk assessments and policy decisions.

Action 1.2: By the end of 2026, make the Environment Agency's (EA's) PFAS multicriteria Geographic Information System (GIS) prioritisation map available to all public sector bodies across England, including local authorities, to support environmental risk assessment and decision-making. Explore the development of a dedicated interactive website by the end of 2027 to enhance accessibility and usability. Learning from the EA's work, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Scottish Government will consider how the approach can be applied in Scotland.

Action 1.3: Improve monitoring of PFAS in soils by supporting the British Geological Survey's feasibility study and initiating pilot sampling at a minimum of 5 representative geographical locations across England, to establish baseline concentrations and assess regional variability.

Action 1.4: By February 2028, deliver a comprehensive, multi-year assessment of PFAS contamination in estuarine and coastal environments in England, through targeted sampling and analysis of sediment, fish and benthic invertebrates, to inform environmental risk understanding and support regulatory decision-making.

Action 1.5: Consider adding further PFAS to the UK Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR), as set out in the UK government's consultation on industrial emissions published in August 2025. The PRTR already covers emissions to air of a number of fluorocarbons. The next step will be for the UK government to provide a response to this consultation.

Action 1.6: Commission research to better understand the consequences of environmental contamination by PFAS on ecosystem health and wildlife. Use this knowledge to inform actions and decisions required to manage pollutant impacts to protect and enhance ecosystems health.

Improving our understanding of where PFAS is and has been used

Information about the properties of individual PFAS substances is known when they are placed on the market, however this information is often lost once PFAS are used in articles (tangible goods with a defined shape and

function). There is scope to improve the communication of this information through supply chains. This could benefit manufacturers suppliers, retailers, consumers, waste operators, policymakers and regulators.

Greater transparency can support improved resource efficiency, enhanced recycling and recovery of materials, and the effective management of substances of concern. This is particularly relevant for products with long lifecycles which contain PFAS. An improved understanding of PFAS and its prevalence will also support research and industry efforts to explore safer alternatives and improved recyclability.

Action 1.7: Undertake further research on areas of emerging concern relating on to PFAS. This will include assessing evidence on sources of TFA and analysis of the historic and current use of fluoropolymers (or other PFAS) in the UK. This will inform understanding of their prevalence in society and of potential stockpiles in current uses, to inform policies for mitigating potential negative impacts on health and the environment.

Section 2: Tackling PFAS pathways

The high persistence of PFAS means that once in the environment they will likely remain there for many years. It is important to identify where harmful PFAS come from and how they move through the environment, so we can take action to stop them. Actions include use of our regulatory framework, working with industry and encouraging consumer choices.

Interventions should cover the full lifecycle of PFAS, including:

- addressing the sources of ongoing production and emission of PFAS
- intervening where PFAS are already circulating in our society and environment, including ensuring waste is appropriately managed
- controlling emissions from legacy sources, such as past use of fire-fighting foams

The manufacture and use of some harmful PFAS has already been restricted (https://chm.pops.int/Implementation/IndustrialPOPs/PFAS/Overview/tabid/5221/Default.aspx), thereby reducing these sources. Government regulatory action to address the sources of harmful PFAS should also be matched by action from industry, including reducing the demand for PFAS in products and processes by proactively switching to safer alternatives.

While exploring future interventions, we must recognise that critical functions are performed by some PFAS substances that provide benefits to society and the environment, for example mitigating climate change and

protecting the ozone layer. We must remain alive to the tension of managing the harmful impacts of some PFAS substances while not losing those benefits that cannot currently be replaced by viable non-PFAS alternatives and not creating new risks such as those relating to safety. Government, industry, environmentalists and others will need to collaborate closely as we seek to navigate this challenge and effectively balance outcomes.

The outcomes we hope to achieve on tackling PFAS pathways are:

- environmental monitoring of PFAS demonstrating a significant reduction of emissions of PFAS to the environment from production, use and disposal
- industry moving away from PFAS in manufacturing and consumer products, towards the growing international market for PFAS alternatives
- the public having clear, accessible information on PFAS risks and product content, enabling informed choices regarding the products they buy and use and supporting demand for PFAS-free alternatives

Addressing the use of PFAS through regulatory action

Chemicals

Our regulatory framework for chemicals can act to manage risks from PFAS by applying controls on their use and on emissions.

The UK is party to the UN Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). This aims to protect human health and the environment by eliminating or restricting chemicals that are toxic, persist in the environment, bioaccumulate in living organisms, and that can travel long distances through the environment. Through this convention, the UK and other parties have agreed to the global elimination of PFAS substances that have been found to meet the criteria to be a POP. This includes the global elimination of PFOS, PFOA and perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), including their salts and related compounds.

These prohibitions have been implemented in the UK through domestic legislation in line with the convention, prohibiting the use, manufacture and placing on the market of these substances, and taking measures to ensure the environmentally sound disposal of waste containing them. In May 2025, the convention agreed to list more PFAS for global elimination, in particular long-chain perfluorocarboxylic acids (LC-PFCAs), their salts, and related compounds. The government is now determining how it will implement this most recent prohibition domestically following this convention-level agreement.

The UK's Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (UK REACH) (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/1577/contents/made) regulatory regime is part of the chemicals regulatory framework for Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). A key aim of UK REACH is to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment in relation to the use of chemicals.

UK REACH restrictions place prohibitions and conditions on manufacture, placing on the market and use of chemical substances when there is an unacceptable risk to human health or to the environment arising from such activities. A potential UK REACH restriction on PFAS in firefighting foams has been proposed in accordance with the restriction formulation process outlined in UK REACH and is currently subject to consultation. The UK REACH candidate list indicates publicly if a substance has properties of very high concern, sending an important signal to encourage consideration of substitution away from particularly hazardous substances. Some PFAS are already included in this list, and we are currently considering the addition of further specific PFAS substances to it.

Fluorinated gases (F gases) and ozone depleting substances (ODS)
The UK is a party to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and has ratified amendments to it. It is implemented domestically through legislation which is stricter than the protocol.

Ozone depleting substances (ODS) damage the Earth's stratospheric ozone layer, which filters out harmful solar radiation. ODS use in the UK is almost entirely phased out, with only very limited uses remaining that are strictly controlled. Alternative (non-ODS) gases for such limited uses include some that are PFAS. To complete the phaseout of ODS in order to support the recovery of the ozone layer, such options should continue to be available where no other alternatives are viable.

Under the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, we must phase down our consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by 85% by 2036. HFCs do not harm the ozone layer, but they are potent greenhouse gases, with global warming potentials (GWPs) much higher than that of carbon dioxide (CO_2). They have replaced ODS in applications such as refrigeration, air-conditioning, heat pumps, and in metered dose inhalers (for example, asthma inhalers). HFCs are the main group of fluorinated greenhouse gases (F gases), accounting for 93.7% of UK F gas emissions in 2023 (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-1990-to-2023).

The assimilated F gas regulation (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2014/517/contents) provides for phasedown of HFCs. It caps and progressively reduces the quantity of HFCs placed on the market in Great Britain from production and imports. The current schedule targets a 79% reduction by 2030, compared to the 2015 baseline. In

November 2025, the UK government launched a consultation on a proposal to strengthen this phasedown (https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/amending-the-hydrofluorocarbon-phasedown-schedule) to achieve a 98.6% reduction by 2048.

As we phase down HFCs (some of which are PFAS), we must allow equipment manufacturers and users to utilise alternatives. However, some of the most viable alternatives are also PFAS. For example, hydrofluoroolefins (HFOs), which have a much lower GWP than HFCs, have been identified as a suitable alternative to HFCs but can break down to small PFAS arrowheads, such as trifluoracetic acid (TFA).

To meet our goals on protection of the ozone layer and climate, some substances classed as PFAS may be needed where no viable alternatives currently exist. F gas regulation could play a critical role in controlling the use of any HFC alternatives that are both F gases and PFAS.

Initial indicative actions

Action 2.1: Complete work to consider a UK REACH restriction on PFAS in fire-fighting foams. As the agency for UK REACH, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) published a report on PFAS use in fire-fighting foams in Great Britain (https://consultations.hse.gov.uk/crd-reach/pfas-in-firefighting-foam-fff-restriction-proposal/?_ga=2.38212961.313871963.1764256159-757445974.1718094159). This presents HSE's scientific analysis and evidence base, alongside a public consultation, for a potential UK REACH restriction. In accordance with the UK REACH restriction process, once HSE has published its final opinion on PFAS in firefighting foams, the relevant UK government minister, with the consent of devolved governments, will make a decision on implementing the proposal.

Action 2.2: Consider our approach towards further UK REACH restrictions. As set out in the Environment Improvement Plan, we will reform UK REACH to enable protections that address chemical pollution to be applied more quickly, efficiently and in a way that is more aligned with our closest trading partners, especially the EU, by December 2028.

In this context, we will consider further UK REACH restrictions. Existing EU REACH restrictions relate to:

- PFAS in firefighting foams
- PFAS in the sub-group perfluorohexanoic acid (PFHxA) including in consumer products (such as textiles, food packaging and cosmetics)
- a sub-group of perfluorocarboxylic acid PFAS (which have subsequently been listed as POPs under the Stockholm Convention and will be subject to further GB action through the POPs regulation (see Action 2.4))

Action 2.3: Progress towards the addition of more PFAS substances to the UK REACH candidate list of substances of very high concern (SVHCs),

subject to consultation.

Action 2.4: Implement our obligations under the Stockholm Convention on POPs. This includes continued regulatory and enforcement action on already-prohibited PFAS (PFOA, PFOS, and PFHxS, including their salts and related compounds), and prohibiting long-chain perfluorocarboxylic acids (LC-PFCAs), including their salts and related compounds, following recent convention-level agreement.

Action 2.5: Continue to use the current F gas legislation to manage the use and emissions of F gases (some of which are PFAS) through controls on leakage prevention, leak checks and recovery.

Action 2.6: Explore future reforms to raise the ambition of F gas legislation in a way that takes account of the balanced approach described in the Introduction above.

Working internationally to address PFAS as a global problem

Sources of PFAS are not just domestic. Pollution from PFAS is recognised as a transboundary issue, with a global supply chain of products which contain PFAS. PFAS emissions can also travel long-distances in the environment following their production and use. To contribute to raising standards of chemicals management globally, we will continue to work with our international partners.

The current international context provides scope for stronger global action on PFAS. As part of transitional arrangements, PFAS is currently identified as an interim issue of concern under the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC). Making PFAS a permanent issue of concern at the GFC's first international conference would encourage further work on improving global data and monitoring, promoting safer alternatives and exchanging information on regulatory approaches.

The new Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP-CWP) presents an opportunity to strengthen the scientific basis for global decision-making on PFAS through authoritative assessments and policy-relevant advice, helping countries prioritise actions and coordinate responses internationally.

Initial indicative actions

Action 2.7: Continue to engage in the Stockholm Convention and its consideration of POPs which are also PFAS.

Action 2.8: Continue our support of PFAS being addressed as an Issue of Concern under the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) and under the OECD's work on PFAS.

Action 2.9: Consider requesting a global assessment report on PFAS through the new Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution.

Reducing emissions of PFAS to air, land and water from industrial sites

The regulatory framework for controlling industrial emissions has been effective in reducing pollution and is broadly supported by industry. However, elements of the current framework have become outdated and require reform to keep pace with industrial transformation. Having modern, dynamic standards is essential to minimise pollution, protect the environment and public health, and support industry investment, productivity, and growth.

The environmental permitting regimes across the UK already give the relevant environmental regulators the powers to control emissions of pollutants such as PFAS, regardless of whether they are subject to other regulatory regimes such as UK REACH. PFAS have historically posed significant difficulties for regulators, with a lack of formal scientific standards, evidence and monitoring techniques making the imposition of robust controls challenging. This absence of formal standards has also created regulatory uncertainty, delays and additional costs for industry. Action is required to unlock growth and deliver clear standards that minimise pollution and reflect developments in scientific understanding, technology, and best practice.

Initial indicative actions

Action 2.10: Develop relevant cross-sector guidance for regulators, operators, and industry regulated through environmental permits to reduce emissions of PFAS and improve their handling, monitoring, and disposal. This will set out a clear requirement to industry that it must be transparent with regulators about PFAS use and emissions.

Action 2.11: Use this guidance to assess and, if needed, develop how best to ensure appropriate measures are in place to control PFAS. This could include reviews of relevant environmental permits.

Action 2.12: Develop scientifically robust and defensible environmental thresholds and standards for emissions to air, land and water for PFAS which are hazardous or have other properties of concern.

Action 2.13: Work with industry and regulators to identify and require the use of the Best Available Techniques (BAT) to prevent or minimise emissions and impacts of PFAS on the environment. This follows the commissioning of UK BAT Tranche 2, which is specifically considering 'harmful or persistent low volume pollutants'.

Preventing PFAS in landfills and waste from entering the environment

Due to widespread historic and continued use of landfilling in the UK, many wastes containing PFAS are permanently deposited in landfills. Historic landfills were mostly not engineered to contain and manage leachate and did not have requirements to contain pollutants, such as PFAS, that can be emitted not only through leachate but also through landfill gas. These can be sources of PFAS to the environment. Building on current research, further evidence gathering is needed, working with the waste sector, to improve our understanding of PFAS in waste and in waste infrastructure. This will support future regulatory and risk management measures for all landfills.

Initial indicative actions

Action 2.14: Continue to improve our understanding of the management of PFAS in waste, and risks associated with waste disposal, to support possible options for improved regulatory action to ensure appropriate waste management routes of PFAS containing waste. This will include research and engagement with industry on emerging technologies, assessment of the most appropriate destruction and disposal methods among those currently available and build on recent research, such as conducted by the EA on effectiveness of incineration.

Action 2.15: Continue to implement waste controls for those PFAS that are also classified as POPs, including legislation, enforcement, and engaging with Stockholm and Basel Conventions to agree suitable further international action.

Supporting industry's innovation in alternatives to harmful PFAS

PFAS are widely used on account of their combined beneficial properties (such as oil and water repellence, chemical, temperature and pressure resistance). This can make it difficult to develop safe alternatives to harmful PFAS which meet the high technical requirements in some applications.

Whilst there may be concerns over reduced performance of products, a recent survey of public attitudes (Royal Society of Chemistry) (https://www.rsc.org/news/2025/january/first-ever-survey-of-uk-public-attitudes-to-pfas-%E2%80%98forever-chemicals%E2%80%99) showed that many people said they would favour alternatives to PFAS that do not negatively impact their health or the environment and would be willing to accept lower performance standards as a result. A reduction in performance in other applications is unlikely to be as acceptable, for example, in industrial processes or for medical applications.

Innovations are needed in advanced materials and high-tech applications to develop sustainable substitutes across industries, including textiles, electronics and consumer goods. The implications of these industries transitioning to alternatives must be carefully considered. Whilst detailed technical work will be needed for specific applications and sectors, some common underlying challenges need to be addressed. Sharing of information between government and regulators as well as sectors and with scientists aims to help address this problem.

We already fund research into the development of PFAS alternatives. For example, for applications that support government capabilities, in 2025 the Ministry of Defence and Home Office jointly held an open competition to find alternatives to PFAS in protective materials (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/competition-innovation-in-dermal-protection-against-liquid-chemicals/competition-document-innovations-in-dermal-protection-against-liquid-chemicals).

Initial indicative actions

Action 2.16: Promote the innovation of safer PFAS alternatives in UK industry through collaborative events and forums, including through the government's Chemicals Innovation Forum.

Action 2.17: Build a community of practice between industry and researchers, by adding PFAS as a focus area within existing innovation and alternatives platforms.

Action 2.18: Support international work to assess available PFAS alternatives.

Improving public awareness and understanding of PFAS

Improved communications on PFAS can cover a number of areas and be useful for different sectors of society. Responsibility for monitoring, regulating and communicating about PFAS applies to many public bodies as

well as to industry, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and in the media. A more coordinated government communications approach will help share data more widely and easily, provide clarity relating to regulatory actions, and develop an enhanced shared understanding of PFAS risks and challenges. This will improve accessibility of information (including monitoring data), transparency and coordination (including actions taken across government).

Enhanced consumer understanding and awareness of the PFAS content of the products that consumers use, and of the associated implications for public health and for the environment, enables consumers to make more informed choices. This should not replace the need for industry and the government to ensure products placed on the market are safe, including through government regulation. However, enhanced awareness, understanding and transparency supports consumers to make their own informed judgements, balancing the cost, quality and wider environmental and health impacts of the products they buy.

Initial indicative actions
Action 2.19: In 2026, publish a webpage on PFAS to raise awareness and understanding of PFAS and improve transparency of work occurring across the government.

Action 2.20: In 2026, include PFAS in the UK government's new 'Chemical risks to human health' website.

Harnessing public sector purchasing power

Public authorities and service providers have significant purchasing power. This can be used to deliver positive environmental outcomes. The Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) set out actions that UK government departments, and their partner organisations, can take to reduce their impacts on the environment.

Initial indicative actions
Action 2.21: Consider options for introducing PFAS guidance as part of Government Buying Standards (GBS). As a first step, look to expand the current proposed guidance updates on PFAS in textiles to include guidance on PFAS in all government procurement before the next GBS review.

Action 2.22: Review Department for Education guidance for schools on procurement of school uniforms and recommend that schools consider PFAS-free alternatives.

Action 2.23: Review inclusion of requirements in tendering processes for suppliers to provide information on the use of PFAS within their products

supplied to the Ministry of Defence.

Section 3: Reducing ongoing exposure to PFAS

Given the persistence and prevalence of harmful PFAS in the environment, ongoing PFAS exposure to people and the environment needs to be managed in order to protect public health and the environment, including wildlife. We will work with consumer groups to support informed choices but regulate where needed to protect people and the environment.

People can be exposed to PFAS from a number of sources, such as drinking water, food, air and the use of PFAS-containing products, as well as PFAS in occupational settings. Regulators should continue to work together to ensure interventions are coordinated and appropriate while contributing to overall protections, and to explore adaptive, evidence-based approaches for PFAS standards and guidelines, accelerating collaborative work on new assessment methodologies. This includes prioritising grouping strategies, new and alternative testing methods, and international data sharing.

Where manufacturers use specific PFAS, they should ensure these substances are safe for their intended use. As a precautionary action to reduce potential risks from PFAS, industry and retailers should assess whether the use of PFAS is essential to achieve the desired function and should consider alternatives where possible.

Work to protect species and habitats should consider concentrations of chemical exposure to PFAS in the environment. Exposure to PFAS presents a risk to individual organisms and to ecosystems and can impact biodiversity. We need to manage different PFAS exposure routes to the environment and human health together, and ensure overall protection is delivered in a cost-effective and proportionate way.

The outcomes we hope to achieve by reducing ongoing exposure are:

- public health and environmental risks from PFAS exposure are reduced, as shown by ongoing monitoring of PFAS exposure levels
- regulations to reduce exposure to PFAS from different routes are in place and work together, to ensure a high level of protection for public health
- improved join-up between the regulations and approaches that reduce wildlife exposure to PFAS and that contribute to nature recovery, ensuring sensitive ecosystems are better protected

Assessing the risk to human health

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) is conducting an independent review of PFAS chemicals. This review is looking at the human health evidence base and at how PFAS behave in the body, and it considers whether different PFAS can be assessed together. Where possible, the COT will set health-based guidance values to inform future risk assessments and regulatory decisions.

Initial indicative actions
Action 3.1: Complete a PFAS review of evidence to support human health risk assessment.

Managing the risks from PFAS in the food we eat

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) acts to safeguard public health and protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. Food Standards Scotland, which provides this function for Scotland, collaborates with the FSA.

The FSA is working with the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) to develop and validate PFAS tests for food. PFAS testing has been developed and validated for some PFAS (Committee on Toxicity) (https://cot.food.gov.uk/Exposures%20-%20Statement%20on%20the%20EFSA%20Opinion%20on%20the%20risks%20of%20perfluoroalkyl%20substances%20in%20food) in fish, shellfish, beef, poultry, milk and eggs, while validation is ongoing for other meats, fruits, vegetables and cereals. Validation is also ongoing for 26 additional PFAS in relation to all food types.

PFAS can also be found in food packaging to make materials resistant to grease, oil and moisture. They can be found in items like fast-food wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes and some paper-based containers. The FSA, through the NRL, continues to assess whether PFAS are present in UK food packaging. Initial work focused on sampling specific food contact materials (FCMs), such as takeaway boxes, and found negligible PFAS presence. We continue to monitor and review evidence on PFAS presence in food packaging and other FCMs.

PFAS also have the potential to enter natural water sources. We need to ensure our evidence base is robust and improve our understanding of whether bottled waters, which are considered a food, are at risk of contamination.

Initial indicative actions

Action 3.2: Carry out work on testing PFAS in food contact materials (FCM). We will look to strengthen analytical capability for PFAS testing in FCMs using international standards. We will prioritise high risk materials where the use of PFAS is prevalent.

Action 3.3: Where tests are not yet available, further develop and validate tests for PFAS in foods. We will continue to improve NRL capability for PFAS testing in foods.

Action 3.4: Continue developing and carrying out monitoring programmes to gather data on PFAS in food and FCMs to inform risk assessments and to support any future regulatory measures.

Action 3.5: Explore collecting data on the risk of PFAS in bottled water through avenues such as engaging with industry, risk mapping and research within the next year.

Continuing to improve the water we drink

Drinking water across the UK is of a very high standard and is amongst the highest quality in the world. In England and Wales drinking water is regulated by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) and in Scotland by the Drinking Water Quality Regulator (DWQR). Action on PFAS has been undertaken by both regulators.

Water companies have a statutory duty to carry out assessments to identify risks to the quality of the drinking water they supply. Drinking water must not contain any micro-organisms, parasites or substances at concentrations or values which would constitute a potential danger to human health. This includes PFAS.

In Scotland, a statutory standard of 0.1µg per litre for the sum of 20 individually named PFAS compounds was introduced into legislation on 1 January 2023. The DWQR has also instructed the public water supplier, Scottish Water, to sample for a further 29 named PFAS. The DWQR issued Information Letters on PFAS to Scottish Water in 2009, and again in December 2022. The second Information Letter set out requirements for risk assessment, sampling and analysis, along with operational requirements for controlling the risk from PFAS.

Instructions were given for regulatory reporting of PFAS detections to the DWQR, Health Boards and local authorities, based on tiered action levels, along with details of actions to be taken in the event of tiers being breached. As confirmed in the DWQR's Annual Report for 2024, there have been no exceedances of the statutory standard. Two research projects to refine

drinking water risk assessment for PFAS were commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2024, with the output of the research used by Scottish Water to refine its risk assessment system and inform sampling programmes.

The DWI has provided guidance to water companies in England and Wales since 2007 to manage risks from PFAS. It uses a graduated and increased response within a tiered system based on concentrations of PFAS detected. Updated in August 2024, the guidance requires water companies to monitor and report on the sum of 48 named PFAS. This is one of the most comprehensive monitoring programmes globally. PFAS concentrations of 0.1 µg per litre and above must be reported to the DWI as a water quality event and all necessary actions to reduce concentrations must be taken. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) agreed this was a robust level with an appropriate safety margin to ensure our drinking water is not a danger to human health. There is currently no evidence of PFAS above the permitted level of 0.1 µg per litre in drinking water supplies. This supports the effectiveness of industry mitigation strategies and shows that water companies are complying with the guidance.

We will consult on introducing a statutory limit for PFAS into our public supply regulations. In the future, should PFAS levels exceed those permitted, this will make it easier for the DWI to take any necessary enforcement against water companies. The DWI and, in future, the new water regulator (being established following the Cunliffe Review) will continue to monitor the publications and advice provided by the World Health Organisation and by the UK's Committee of Toxicity in relation to PFAS and will act according to the scientific evidence to safeguard public health from the risks of PFAS in drinking water.

Initial indicative actions
Action 3.6: Consult on the introduction of a statutory limit for PFAS in England's public supply regulations.

Improving the quality of our waters

Ensuring our lakes, rivers and seas are free from levels of chemicals that cause harm is essential to protect ecosystems and biodiversity and to protect public health. A wide range of regulatory and non-regulatory measures will contribute to strengthening the management of future sources of PFAS into the water environment. These measures, combined with a commitment to manage legacy issues in the environment, will address the risk of further deterioration of water quality, and lead to longer term improvements. Measuring success and supporting actions requires us to develop clear standards or thresholds of concern.

There is currently one statutory environmental quality standard (EQS) for one PFAS. Monitoring data indicates other PFASs are present in the water environment at levels of concern. Setting quality standards for water bodies provides clear regulatory standards to support the management of PFAS.

Initial indicative actions

Action 3.7: Continue to develop toxicological thresholds (such as predicted no effect concentrations (PNECs)) for PFAS that may impact on the quality of our water environment. These support regulatory actions (as in section 2, above) and may, subject to outcomes of water regulation reforms, be used to support options for new environmental quality standards (EQS) for PFAS including consideration of new priority substances and of EQS developed in other jurisdictions.

Action 3.8: Evaluate the feasibility of developing improved testing methods for persistent, mobile and toxic (PMT) substances, including PFAS, building on the government's interim approach to PMT substances. This will provide clearer evidence to support risk management of substances that can contaminate water resources, including groundwater.

Reviewing the risks of PFAS in sewage sludge being spread to land

Sewage sludge is the solid waste formed during wastewater treatment processes. PFAS in sludge, and other contaminants of emerging concern, is an area of interest due to the potential impact on the environment and human health. Treated sewage sludge, sometimes known as biosolids, contains useful plant nutrients and acts as a soil improver. Approximately 94% of sludge from water companies is recycled to land (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wastewater-treatment-in-england-data-for-2022/wastewater-treatment-in-england-data-for-2022), but it is only used on around 1.9% of farms in Great Britain (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/latest-british-survey-of-fertiliser-practice-report). 4.1% is incinerated, and the rest is reused, for example in land restoration.

The Chemicals Investigation Programme analysed samples of treated sludge (https://ukwir.org/water-industry-technical-report?object=0fe09f07-deee-4e10-be33-eeee475bcb08&version=1) destined for land application from 11 sludge treatment sites in England and Wales to monitor the concentrations of substances of concern including some PFAS, namely PFOS, PFOA and perfluorobutane sulfonate (PFBS). The findings shows that the occurrence and concentration of PFOS and PFBS is variable across samples. Further research is ongoing to improve the evidence base on the behaviour and destiny of contaminants. There are ongoing trials, being undertaken by

water companies and funded by the Ofwat Innovation Fund, to trial new technologies to remove contaminants such as PFAS from sludge. We remain alert to new research findings and will act where necessary, guided by evidence, to protect the environment and human health, including through reviewing the regulatory framework for sludge spreading.

Initial indicative actions

Action 3.9: Continue to steer work under phase 4 of the Water Industry's Chemicals Investigation Programme (CIP) (https://ukwir.org/water-chemicals-investigation-programme) and help shape the scope of investigations for phase 5. CIP4 will include examining the fate of contaminants beyond the boundaries of treatment sites, with the aim of building evidence to support understanding of potential risks to human health and the environment.

Action 3.10: Consult on reforms on how sewage sludge use in agriculture is regulated and whether this should be included in the Environmental Permitting Regime.

Action 3.11: Collaborate with industry to research future wastewater treatment options to reduce contaminants in sludge and explore whether these options could contribute to tackling PFAS and other pollutants.

Action 3.12: Use systems research approaches to bring together diverse stakeholders, to map out the current state of knowledge and build a broader understanding of the problem from source to mitigation, to help identify key evidence gaps, and to shape future research and development priorities on contaminants by Q2 of 2026.

Addressing legacy PFAS pollution

We face a large scale of legacy PFAS contamination. This includes land contaminated from fire-fighting foams and from emissions from industry and landfill. To effectively prioritise actions to protect public health and the environment, regulators take a risk-based approach to assess and act at sites of highest concern. In England, this is informed by the EA's risk screening project which identifies potential PFAS sources and provides a high-level overview of the most likely contaminated sites. This tool serves as a starting point for more localised investigations, helping stakeholders to identify sites of concern and offering valuable information on how to assess and manage risks. It enables the EA and its partners to focus resources where they are most needed and to mitigate significant risks effectively.

We will build on this work to provide guidance and support to enable actions to be delivered by local authorities or others as required. Setting out this approach to addressing legacy pollution and working in partnership will enable growth. Clearer guidance can stimulate the development of

remediation technology and provide confidence such that land can be redeveloped.

Initial indicative actions

Action 3.13: Set out a clear and transparent framework for prioritisation of risks and potential actions required at sites for PFAS based on the national risk screening programme.

The EA will support relevant authorities in England in assessing and understanding PFAS-related risks using outputs from the National Risk Screening Project. This support may include providing guidance and data interpretation to inform prioritisation of site investigations.

Action 3.14: Devolved governments and regulators will consider whether and how the principles of the EA's risk prioritisation tool can be applied in Scotland and Wales.

Action 3.15: Provide updated information, advice and guidance on PFAS to support relevant local authorities in fully carrying out their contaminated land responsibilities under part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, where legacy PFAS contamination may be present.

Action 3.16: Develop technical guidance for regulators and industry on dealing with land affected by legacy PFAS contamination across all relevant regimes. This could include planning, voluntary remediation, Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR) and part 2A, to ensure a consistent and practical approach.

Action 3.17: Investigate opportunities to work with partners towards developing clearer, evidence-informed standards and guidelines for different PFAS substances. Provide mechanisms for addressing current uncertainties in human health and environmental impacts.

Managing the risks of PFAS in consumer products

PFAS are used in many consumer goods. These include stain- and water-repellent textiles (including carpets, clothing and footwear), non-stick products (such as cookware), polishes, waxes, paints, cleaning products and cosmetics and personal care products. The use and presence of these goods in homes results in exposure to PFAS. Individuals who have made prolonged use of PFAS-containing products may have higher PFAS exposure levels. In addition to the potential health risks, PFAS from consumer goods can present environmental risks during the manufacture and post-use phase of the lifecycles of these products.

The overall cost-of-living impact of regulating PFAS in consumer goods is a key consideration that will be considered fully. Transition periods and a proportionate and targeted regulatory approach will minimise compliance costs. Many sectors are already moving away from PFAS. As global demand for alternatives grows, safer alternatives at affordable prices should become more readily available. Reducing PFAS exposure from consumer goods delivers clear public-health benefits and strengthens confidence in the safety of products.

Initial indicative actions
Action 3.18: Consider consumer articles as part of any work to consider PFAS restrictions under UK REACH (see section 2).

Action 3.19: Work to consider potential restrictions or regulatory measures on PFAS use in specific consumer product groups.

Next steps

This plan is a stepping stone to meet our longer-term vision. To monitor implementation of the plan, the below table sets out a full list of indicative actions, delivery outlook and responsible owners. As a commitment set out in the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP), review and reporting of this plan will become part of our statutory reporting cycle for the EIP.

List of indicative actions: Section 1

Understanding PFAS sources

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
1.1	England and Scotland will continue to monitor and report annually, with Scotland expanding its sampling network, using updated methodologies	GB	Continue strengthening the national PFAS dataset by applying updated scientific methodologies and maintaining both tactical and strategic	Environment Agency (EA), Scottish Government, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Welsh Government, Natural

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	to strengthen UK dataset to guide future risk assessment and policy decisions. In Wales, consideration will be given to the application of this approach, with plans to increase surface water sampling for a broader range of PFAS, thereby complementing statutory sampling for PFOS in biota. We will work across the UK to strengthen the national dataset and inform future risk assessments and policy decisions.		monitoring to ensure cost-effective, flexible delivery. This will support high-quality evidence for future risk assessments and policy decisions. Maintain 2,400 PFAS samples per year in England and expand Scotland's sampling network from 300 in 2025 to 500 by 2026. In Wales, expand surface water monitoring of PFOS and PFOA from 600 samples to 850 samples and look to increase the range of PFAS analysed.	Resources Wales (NRW)
1.2	Make the Environment Agency's (EA's) PFAS multicriteria Geographic Information System (GIS) prioritisation map accessible to public sector;	England	Publish PFAS GIS Prioritisation map by the end of 2026. Develop interactive website by Q3 2027.	Defra, Environment Agency, Scottish Government, SEPA

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	develop interactive website and share learning from the EA's work. The Scottish Government and SEPA will consider how the approach can be applied in Scotland.			
1.3	Improve monitoring of PFAS in soils by supporting the British Geological Survey's feasibility study and initiating pilot sampling at a minimum of 5 representative geographical locations across England, to establish baseline concentrations and assess regional variability.	England	Planned delivery for pilot study in 2026 to 2027.	Environment Agency
1.4	Deliver a comprehensive, multi-year assessment of PFAS contamination in estuarine and	England	Deliver a comprehensive, multi-year assessment of PFAS contamination in estuarine and	Environment Agency

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	coastal environments in England, through targeted sampling and analysis of sediment, fish, and benthic invertebrates, to inform environmental risk understanding and support regulatory decision-making.		coastal environments in England by February 2028.	
1.5	Consider adding further PFAS to the UK Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR), as set out in the UK government's consultation on industrial emissions published in August 2025. The PRTR already covers emissions to air of a number of fluorocarbons.	UK	Publish UK government response to the consultation.	Defra
1.6	Commission research to better understand the consequences	UK	Undertake a programme to review and synthesise existing	Environment Agency

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	of environmental contamination by PFAS on ecosystem health and wildlife. Use this knowledge to inform actions and decisions required to manage pollutant impacts to protect and enhance ecosystems health.		ecotoxicological knowledge on PFAS and commission targeted research to fill priority gaps in understanding their impacts on ecosystems and wildlife. This will include: mapping current evidence and identifying critical gaps, particularly for less-studied PFAS; collaborating with international partners to leverage global research; generating new evidence where feasible, with a focus on UK-relevant species and ecosystems.	
1.7	Undertake further research on areas of emerging concern relating on to PFAS. This will include for assessing evidence on sources of TFA	UK	Scope research project options in early 2026.	Defra

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	and analysis of the historic and current use of fluoropolymers (or other PFAS) in the UK. This will inform understanding of their prevalence in society and of potential stockpiles in current uses, to inform policies for mitigating potential negative impacts on health and the environment.			

List of indicative actions: Section 2

Tackling PFAS pathways

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
2.1	Complete work to consider a UK REACH restriction on PFAS in fire-fighting foams. As the agency for UK REACH, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) published a report on PFAS use in fire-fighting foams	GB	HSE published proposed FFFs restriction with public consultation that is open until February 2026. HSE's final opinion expected in 2026, and Defra's decision	Health and Safety Executive, Defra (with consent of devolved government

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
	in Great Britain. This presents HSE's scientific analysis and evidence base, alongside a public consultation, for a potential UK REACH restriction. In accordance with the UK REACH restriction process, once HSE has published its final opinion on PFAS in firefighting foams, the relevant UK government minister, with the consent of devolved governments, will make a decision on implementing the proposal.		on the restriction expected in 2027.	
2.2	Consider our approach towards further UK REACH restrictions. As set out in the Environment Improvement Plan, we will reform UK REACH to enable protections that address chemical pollution to be applied more quickly, efficiently and in a way that is more aligned with our closest trading partners,	GB	Align UK REACH with closest trading partners, especially the EU, by December 2028. Consider restrictions on PFAS sub-groups in line with existing EU measures.	Defra (with consent of devolved government Health and Safety Executive

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
	especially the EU, by December 2028.			
2.3	Progress towards the addition of more PFAS substances to the UK REACH candidate list of substances of very high concern (SVHCs), subject to consultation.	GB	Publish a new strategic approach to the UK candidate list in early 2026. HSE to publish and consult on relevant PFAS in summer 2026, aligned with the strategic approach. Additions to the UK candidate list to follow the HSE decision-making process within 45 days of consultation closing (expected autumn 2026). Further additions may occur based on priorities in each annual UK REACH work programme.	Health and Safety Executive, Defra (with consent of devolved government
2.4	Implement our obligations under the Stockholm Convention on POPs. This includes continued regulatory and enforcement action on already-prohibited PFAS	UK	Restriction of LC-PFCAs to be implemented by end of 2026.	Defra (with consent of devolved government

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
	(PFOA, PFOS, and PFHxS, including their salts and related compounds), and prohibiting long-chain perfluorocarboxylic acids (LC-PFCAs), including their salts and related compounds, following recent convention-level agreement.			
2.5	Continue to use the current fluorinated greenhouse gas (F gas) Regulation to manage the use and emissions of F gases (some of which are PFAS) through controls on leakage prevention, leak checks and recovery.	GB	Ongoing implementation of existing regime under 2014 F gas regulation.	Defra, Scott Governmen Welsh Governmen
2.6	Explore future reforms to strengthen F gas legislation while maintaining a balanced approach (as outlined in the introduction to section 2 of the PFAS Plan).	GB	2026 to 2027.	Defra, Scott Governmen Welsh Governmen
2.7	Continue to engage in the	UK	Engagement at the upcoming	Defra

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
	Stockholm Convention and its consideration of POPs which are also PFAS.		POPs Review Committee 22, in late 2026 (and annually). Engagement at the next Stockholm Convention Conference of the Parties (COP) in mid-2027.	
2.8	Continue our support of PFAS being addressed as an Issue of Concern under the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) and under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD's) work on PFAS.	UK	First international conference of the GFC expected to decide on PFAS as an issue of concern in November 2026.	Defra
2.9	Consider requesting a global PFAS assessment report on PFAS through the new Intergovernmental science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution (ISP-CWP).	UK	Request of PFAS assessment report likely only to be possible once the ISP-CWP has agreed policies on work programme development.	Defra
2.10	Develop relevant cross-sector guidance for regulators,	UK	Engagement with all 4 nations and their	Defra, Environmen Agency, Scottish

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
	operators, and industry regulated through environmental permits to reduce emissions of PFAS and improve their handling, monitoring, and disposal. This will set out a clear requirement to industry that it must be transparent with regulators about PFAS use and emissions.		regulators during 2026.	Governmen SEPA, Wels Governmen Natural Resources Wales (NRW
2.11	Use this guidance to assess and, if needed, develop how best to ensure appropriate measures are in place to control PFAS. This could include reviews of relevant environmental permits.	UK	For consideration upon completion of the guidance outlined in action 2.10.	Defra, Environmen Agency, Scottish Governmen SEPA, Wels Governmen NRW
2.12	Develop scientifically robust and defensible environmental thresholds and standards for emissions to air, land and water for PFAS which are hazardous or have other properties of concern.	UK	Develop thresholds and standards for emissions of the most toxic PFAS to air, land and water, based on available (eco)toxicology data. This approach may require	Defra, Environmen Agency, Scottish Governmen SEPA, Wels Governmen NRW

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
			additional research to underpin the methodology and is closely linked to action 1.6.	
2.13	Work with industry and regulators to identify and require the use of the Best Available Techniques (BAT) to prevent or minimise emissions and impacts of PFAS on the environment. This follows the commissioning of UK BAT Tranche 2, which is specifically considering ‘harmful or persistent low volume pollutants’.	UK	Ongoing through UK BAT Tranche 2 and will continue upon commissioning of future tranches.	Defra, Environmen Agency, Scottish Governmen SEPA, Wels Governmen NRW
2.14	Continue to improve our understanding of the management of PFAS in waste, and risks associated with waste disposal, to support possible options for improved regulatory action to ensure appropriate waste management	UK	Ongoing work on landfill leachate through EA with landfill operators to develop best-practice sampling and analysis methods. Technical guidance expected in 2026 to 2027.	Defra, Environmen Agency

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
	routes of PFAS containing waste. This will include research and engagement with industry on emerging technologies, assessment of the most appropriate destruction and disposal methods among those currently available and build on recent research, such as conducted by the EA on effectiveness of incineration.			
2.15	Continue implementing waste controls for PFAS also classified as POPs, through legislation and enforcement, while engaging with Stockholm and Basel Conventions as part of coordinated international action.	UK	Waste controls already in place for 3 PFAS POPs listings, following legislation in 2025, and Stockholm Convention has agreed listing of new PFAS for global elimination. Ongoing work with Basel convention to determine appropriate international action regarding waste containing and contaminated by	Defra

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
			newly listed PFAS POP.	
2.16	Promote the innovation of safer PFAS alternatives in UK industry through collaborative events and forums, including through the UK government's Chemicals Innovation Forum.	UK	Remain active members of the OECD's per-and poly-fluorinated chemicals (PFC) group and support its work through funding when opportunities align with UK priorities.	Defra
2.17	Build a community of practice between industry and researchers, by adding PFAS as a focus area within existing innovation and alternatives platforms.	UK	Delivery of collaborative industry innovation events in 2026 to 2027.	Defra, Department Business an Trade, UK Research ar Innovation
2.18	Support international work to assess available PFAS alternatives.	UK	Promote research and development funding opportunities, including through events as outlined in Action 2.17, to support delivery in 2026 to 2027.	Defra, Department Business an Trade, UK Research ar Innovation
2.19	Publish a government webpage on PFAS to raise public awareness and understanding of	UK	Launch a PFAS information webpage by the end of 2026.	Defra

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
	PFAS and improve transparency of work occurring across the government.			
2.20	Include PFAS in the UK government's new 'Chemical risks to human health' website.	UK	By end 2026.	Defra, UK Health Secu Agency
2.21	Consider options for introducing PFAS guidance as part of Government Buying Standards (GBS). As a first step, look to expand the current proposed guidance updates on PFAS in textiles to include guidance on PFAS in all government procurement before the next GBS review.	UK	Defra is reviewing and updating the Government Buying Standards currently.	Defra, HM Treasury
2.22	Review Department of Education guidance for school on procurement of school uniforms and recommend that schools consider PFAS-free alternatives.	UK	Review to begin in 2026 by exploring the option to include recommendation as a non-statutory school uniform procurement guidance for schools to consider.	Department Education

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibi
2.23	Review inclusion of requirements in tendering processes for suppliers to provide information on the use of PFAS within their products supplied to the Ministry of	UK	Explore the inclusion of tendering process requirements for suppliers in 2026.	Ministry of Defence

List of indicative actions: Section 3

Reducing ongoing exposure to PFAS

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
3.1	Complete a PFAS review of evidence to support human health risk assessment.	UK	Publish rapid evidence review in early 2026. Ongoing provision of discussion papers to COT.	UK Health Security Agency
3.2	Carry out work on testing PFAS in food contact materials (FCM). We will look to strengthen analytical capability for PFAS testing in FCMs using	England and Wales	Ongoing work, with the extent being dependent on the outcomes of the UK-EU SPS negotiations in 2026.	Food Standards Agency

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	international standards. We will prioritise high risk materials where the use of PFAS is prevalent.			
3.3	Where tests are not yet available, further develop and validate tests for PFAS in foods. We will continue to improve NRL capability for PFAS testing in foods.	England and Wales	Testing supports implementation of potential future regulation, with the extent being dependent on the outcomes of the UK-EU SPS negotiations in 2026.	Food Standards Agency
3.4	Continue developing and carrying out monitoring programmes to gather data on PFAS in food and FCMs to inform risk assessments and to support any future regulatory measures.	England and Wales	Ongoing work, with the extent being dependent on the outcomes of the UK-EU SPS negotiations in 2026.	Food Standards Agency
3.5	Explore collecting data on the risk of PFAS in bottled water through avenues such	England	Future regulation is dependent on outcomes of the UK-EU SPS	Defra

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	as engaging with industry, risk mapping and research within the next year.		negotiations in 2026.	
3.6	Consult on the introduction of a statutory limit for PFAS in England's public supply regulations.	England	Consultation planned for 2026.	Defra, Drinking Water Inspectorate
3.7	Continue to develop toxicological thresholds (such as predicted no effect concentrations (PNECs)) for PFAS that may impact on the quality of our water environment. These support regulatory actions (as in section 2, above) and may, subject to outcomes of water regulation reforms, be used to support options for new environmental quality standards (EQS) for PFAS including	England, Scotland and Wales	Publish PNECs for some PFAS in 2026. Ongoing technical development through 2026 for more PFAS to determine if PNECs can be derived.	Defra, Environment Agency, Scottish Government, SEPA, Welsh Government, NRW

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	consideration of new priority substances and of EQS developed in other jurisdictions.			
3.8	Evaluate the feasibility of developing improved testing methods for persistent, mobile and toxic (PMT) substances, including PFAS, building on the government's interim approach to PMT substances. This will provide clearer evidence to support risk management of substances that can contaminate water resources, including groundwater.	UK	Finalise project and workshop outputs report, in 2026, to inform next steps of research.	Defra, Environment Agency
3.9	Continue to steer work under phase 4 of the Water Industry's Chemicals Investigation Programme	England and Wales	Findings from CIP4 investigations will be available from 2027. CIP5 will begin in 2030.	Defra, Environment Agency

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	(CIP) and help shape the scope of investigations for phase 5. CIP4 will include examining the fate of contaminants beyond the boundaries of treatment sites, with the aim of building evidence to support understanding of potential risks to human health and the environment.			
3.10	Consult on reforms on how sewage sludge use in agriculture is regulated and whether this should be included in the Environmental Permitting Regime.	England	Consult in early 2026.	Defra
3.11	Collaborate with industry to research future wastewater treatment options to reduce contaminants in sludge and	England	To be considered as part of water regulatory reforms.	Defra

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	explore whether these options could contribute to tackling PFAS and other pollutants.			
3.12	Use systems research approaches to bring together stakeholders, map out current knowledge and identify key evidence gaps and shape future research and development priorities on contaminants.	UK	Complete stakeholder engagement and evidence mapping by 2026.	Defra
3.13	Set out a clear and transparent framework for prioritisation of risks and potential actions required at sites for PFAS based on the national risk screening programme.	England	Outputs from risk screening programme already in use by EA. Start development of a clearer policy framework in 2026.	Defra, Environment Agency
3.14	Devolved governments and regulators will consider whether and how the principles of the Environment Agency's (EA's)	GB	Evaluate applicability of EA's risk prioritisation tool for PFAS in Scotland and Wales in 2026 to 2027.	Defra, Environment Agency, Scottish Government, SEPA, Welsh Government, NRW

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	risk prioritisation tool can be applied in Scotland and Wales.			
3.15	Provide updated information, advice and guidance to help local councils manage contaminated land under part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, where legacy PFAS contamination maybe present.	England	Engagement with local authorities as required to inform the development of clear evidence-based guidance for local authorities in 2026.	Environment Agency, local authorities
3.16	Develop technical guidance for regulators and industry on managing legacy PFAS contamination across all relevant regimes. This could include, planning, voluntary remediation, Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR), and part 2A, to ensure a	UK	Publish technical guidance on legacy PFAS contamination by 2027.	Environment Agency, local authorities

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
	consistent and practical approach.			
3.17	Investigate opportunities to work with partners towards developing clearer, evidence-informed standards and guidelines for different PFAS substances. Provide mechanisms for addressing current uncertainties in human health and environmental impacts.	UK	Investigation is dependent on available (eco)toxicology data as outlined in action 2.12.	Defra, Environment Agency, UK Health Security Agency
3.18	Consider consumer articles as part of any work to consider PFAS restrictions under UK REACH (see section 2).	GB	Align UK REACH with closest trading partners, especially the EU, by December 2028. Updates on protection of consumers and the environment, through UK restrictions. to be provided through annual UK REACH	Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Government, Health and Safety Executive

Action number	Description	Territorial scope	Delivery outlook	Responsibility
			work programme.	
3.19	Work to consider potential restrictions or regulatory measures on PFAS use in specific consumer product groups.	GB	Joint Defra-OPSS roundtable to be held in early 2026, with a range of stakeholders, to discuss PFAS risks associated with their use in consumer goods, such as period products.	Defra, Office for Product Safety and Standards

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