



Water Quality & Safety Public Meeting Minutes

06th March 2025
18:00hrs (Jersey Rugby Club)

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1. Welcome and Introductions

Attendees:

- Steve Luce (SL), Minister for the Environment
- Tom Binet (TB), Minister for Health and Social Services
- Peter Bradley (PB), Director of Public Health, Government of Jersey
- Kelly Whitehead (KW), Group Director of Regulation, Government of Jersey

1.1 Introduction by Kelly Whitehead

- KW welcomed attendees and noted that papers from the last meeting were available:
 - Minutes of the Report Four Scoping meeting (11 February).
- She explained the change of venue to the Rugby Club due to high attendance at the last meeting and invited feedback on future locations.
- An attendee raised concerns about accessibility and signage. KW confirmed that alternatives, including Le Quennevais School, were being explored.
- Attendees were encouraged to submit feedback and questions via regulationenquiries@gov.je
- KW confirmed that questions and answers would continue to be compiled into a document on the website, updated monthly.
- She outlined the agenda:
 - Welcome and Introductions
 - Report Four Update
 - Report Three Update
 - Q&A – Questions raised in Report Four Scoping Meeting
 - Q&A – Open floor
 - Meeting close

2. Report Four Update – PFAS in the Environment

2.1 Report Four Meetings

- The Report Four Scoping Meeting was held on 11 February 2025 at Les Ormes, attended by over 60 islanders.
- A brief recap was provided for those who did not attend.
- Minutes from the Scoping Meeting were made available at today's meeting and will be:
 - Emailed to the mailing list.
 - Published on www.gov.je on 7 March.
 - Attendees were encouraged to submit any corrections or concerns to regulationenquiries@gov.je
- The first public Report Four online meeting of the PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel was held on 27 February 2025; minutes will be published soon.
- Upcoming public meetings: 26 March, 30 April, 29 May 2025. Links will be emailed a week before each meeting.

- *Post-Meeting Addition: To accommodate time zone differences for treatment experts from the US, there will be an additional public panel meeting on 23 April at 4 PM.*
- Additional questions received since 11 February have been added to the Q&A document, which is regularly updated.
- Comments and feedback on minutes are welcomed.

2.2 Report Four Scope

- Global Regulation – Reviewing international PFAS regulations to identify best practices for Jersey.
- Expert Evidence – Gathering input from specialists and subject matter experts.
- Environmental Testing – Developing and implementing PFAS testing methodologies.
- PFAS Reduction Treatments – Exploring ways to reduce PFAS in drinking water, infrastructure, and groundwater.
- PFAS in Food – Assessing PFAS levels in food sources and determining safe intake levels.

3. Public Health & Report Three update

3.2 Clarification from Peter Bradley on recent JEP article

- PB reassured attendees that he does not dismiss the possibility of PFAS issues across the island, not just in specific areas.
- He explained that more is known about the hotspot airport area due to the historical use of PFAS containing firefighting foams, making it easier to draw firm conclusions.
- More information will emerge as the independent PFAS panel publishes Report Four.
- A clarification statement will be included in the next newsletter. Islanders with queries after receiving it are encouraged to get in touch.
- He asked for patience regarding the panel reporting process, acknowledging that while it takes time, progress is being made on Report Three.
- An attendee asked if exact quotes were used in the recent JEP article and if he had contacted the media for corrections.
 - PB confirmed that he had reached out to correct inaccuracies, but no corrections were made.
 - He noted that the headline was not based on any direct quote from him.

3.2 Clinical Review Service Update

Peter Bradley

- The Plume is not just an area around the airport—concerns extend to St Ouen's as well.
- An attendee stated that referring to St Ouen's in this context is misleading.
 - PB clarified that the wording came from media headlines, not his statements.

Launch of the Clinical Review Service

- A technical review will be launched shortly, with the service starting in March.
- Dr. Sofia Tosounidou and Dr. Momin Ahmed will lead the service due to their major interest in PFAS.

- Clinics will be appointment-based, lasting about an hour per session.
- Individuals who have been contacted will have the opportunity to book an appointment.

Questions from the Audience

- **Q:** Are only those who have been previously tested eligible for the clinic? Is there a cap on the number of patients being seen?
- **A:** Currently only those people who have been previously tested by Government will be invited to the clinic. There is no cap on the number of patients to be seen, but there are a limited number of patients can be seen per clinic. The availability of the physicians is the limiting factor at the moment. This will be reviewed.
- **Q:** Will the clinic offer PFAS testing or re-testing?
 - **A:** This is not yet confirmed. It may be an option, but we need to check whether it will be possible. The clinical review will focus on a general medical assessment and offer advice on managing medical issues.
- **Q:** Will clinicians review other medical results or information?
 - **A:** Yes, the sessions will provide a general medical review for each patient.

Report Three Update

- Report Three will outline available treatments to reduce PFAS levels.
- The report and any recommended treatments taken forward will be available later in the year.
- The timeline for Report Three is being finalised with Ministerial input.

3.3 Clinical Review Service Details

Service Eligibility

- Islanders who had their blood tested by Public Health in 2022 will receive a letter inviting them to book an appointment for the new clinical review service starting in late March.

Service Overview

- The service offers consultations with PFAS-informed doctors to:
 - Review medical history
 - Discuss health concerns
 - Provide onward referrals if applicable

Service Leads

- Led by Dr. Sofia Tosounidou (Consultant Rheumatologist)
- Supported by Dr. Momin Ahmed (Consultant Haematologist)

Appointment Details

- Clinics available on Monday afternoons, Fridays, and Saturdays
- Locations: General Hospital & Enid Quenault Health and Wellbeing Centre, St Brelade
- Appointments will last up to 60 minutes

How to Access the Service

- Islanders will be contacted directly with a letter explaining how to book an appointment.
- Those receiving a letter should follow the instructions provided to secure their booking.

3.4 Report Three Update

Final Panel Meeting on Report Three

- The panel reviewed recommendations on testing, re-testing, and clinical interventions.

Next Steps

- Report finalisation is underway.
- Public meeting for Islander feedback scheduled for 3rd April.
- Feedback period: 3rd – 24th April.
- Government response expected in Summer 2025.

4. Q&A – Responses to Questions from the Previous Meeting

- The Minister for the Environment (MENV) provided responses to questions raised at the previous public meeting. These responses addressed key concerns from Islanders and provided updates on ongoing work related to PFAS.
- The Minister's remarks were based on a prepared document, Ministers Q&A Response Statements - 6th March 2025, which outlined the Government's position on various aspects of PFAS regulation, environmental monitoring, and public health considerations.
- Below is a summary of the Minister's key points as presented at the meeting:

4.1 Minister's Opening Remarks

- The Minister for the Environment (MENV) opened the Q&A session by addressing concerns raised at the Report Four scoping meeting. They reaffirmed the government's commitment to transparency, public engagement, and action based on scientific evidence.
- Key points from the Minister's opening remarks included:
 - Acknowledgement of public frustration regarding delays in action and information-sharing, with reassurance that the government is committed to accelerating the implementation of expert recommendations.
 - Emphasis on the safety and quality of the water supply as a top priority, with water regulation and treatment forming the first phase of Report Four.
 - Recognition of PFAS contamination as a global issue, requiring effective management and remediation strategies.
 - Highlighting Jersey's leadership in public transparency, with all Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel meetings conducted in public—a rare approach globally.
 - Announcement that Jersey will be the first in Europe to provide clinical interventions to reduce PFAS levels in human blood, underscoring a strong commitment to public health.
 - Acknowledgement that for those directly affected, these actions may feel like "too little, too late," with a personal commitment to ensuring exemplary government action moving forward.
 - Explanation that not all questions could be answered in full during the meeting, but that a detailed Q&A document had been circulated covering all outstanding points.
 - Following these remarks, the Minister proceeded to address specific questions from the last public meeting as detailed below.

4.2 Government Approach, Commitment, and Legislation

- The Minister for the Environment addressed key areas of concern regarding the government's approach, transparency, and legislative commitments related to PFAS.

Panel's Access to Information

- The Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel has access to all relevant historical data.
- The government values the expertise of the panel and relies on world experts to interpret the science.
- The Chair has confirmed that neither he nor the panel members have ever been asked to suppress information.
- The government remains fully committed to the openness and independence of the panel.

Politicians' Ability to Make Decisions on PFAS

- The complexity of PFAS and its emerging science requires informed decision-making beyond the expertise of politicians.
- The panel was established specifically to provide expert guidance.
- The panel's public engagement with both "experts by experience" and "subject matter experts" ensures a broad and informed perspective.
- This process ensures that policy, regulation, and direct action are evidence-based and informed by global expertise.

Implementation of the Panel's Recommendations

- The government is committed to implementing the panel's recommendations where appropriate.
- Any recommendations not taken forward will be clearly explained and made transparent.
- Dedicated officer resources are in place to ensure recommendations are implemented at pace.
- The Public Health Department is actively fast-tracking clinical interventions.

Implementing Stricter Water Regulatory Standards

- Developing effective PFAS legislation requires comprehensive research and consultation.
- International regulatory standards are being reviewed to ensure the best approach for Jersey.
- Any new regulations must be practical and feasible for implementation.
- A commitment has been made to introduce a robust regulatory standard for PFAS in mains water within this government term.
- Legislative changes must be considered alongside advancements in water treatment technologies.
- Report Four will provide the necessary evidence base for making informed regulatory decisions.

Considering the Impact of PFAS Beyond the Plume

- The Plume refers to the affected area around the airport, extending into a section of St Ouen's Bay caused by the historic use of firefighting foams containing PFAS.
- A recent hydrogeological survey forms part of an ongoing monitoring programme assessing PFAS spread and concentrations.
- This independent report will be published in Q2 this year.
- The government acknowledges the need to assess PFAS contamination island wide.
- The focus on the Plume area is not misleading but a targeted response to the most affected areas.
- The government recognises that PFAS is more widely present and is expanding testing and monitoring efforts to determine background levels across the island.

4.3 Wider Testing, Exposure Reduction, and Water Treatment

- The Minister for the Environment addressed concerns regarding expanded testing, limiting new PFAS exposure, and water treatment developments.

Wider Testing and Priority Areas

- A comprehensive testing programme is being prioritised.

- The aim is to better understand the extent of PFAS contamination to inform response strategies and regulatory actions.
- Testing will focus on:
 - Food sources
 - Boreholes
 - Sea foam, water, and spray
 - Materials recycled to land
 - The results will be considered in Report Four, and the data will be made publicly available.

Limiting New Exposure and Recycling

- The government is examining the impact of new PFAS exposure.
- Consideration is being given to limiting the import and use of PFAS-containing products.
- A key focus is understanding PFAS levels in materials recycled back onto land or discharged to sea.
- Report Four will help establish potential regulatory levels for these exposures.

Water Quality and Treatment Plant Delivery

- Acknowledgement of public concerns regarding water quality and treatment options.
- Building a new water treatment plant typically takes between 2 to 5 years.
- Jersey Water has already started necessary preparatory work and will be in a strong position to act on the findings of Report Four.

4.4 Supplementary Information: Water Quality, Boreholes, and Firefighting Foam

- The Minister for the Environment provided further supplementary information on water supply quality, borehole use, and the historical use of firefighting foam containing PFAS.

Water Supply Quality

- Concerns have been raised regarding the safety of mains water.
- Jersey Water adheres to current regulatory standards and conducts regular testing.
- Jersey Water publishes an annual Water Quality Report.
- The 2024 Water Quality Report demonstrated 100% compliance with current UK and EU PFAS regulatory standards.
- Jersey Water has committed to further reducing PFAS levels in the supply.

Borehole Use in Public Water Supply

- The St Ouen boreholes impacted by historical PFAS contamination were never used as primary water sources but were occasionally used to support water resources.
- The most contaminated borehole (Borehole 1) was permanently removed from use in 2009.
- The remaining boreholes were used intermittently until November 2022, after which they have not been used.

Private Boreholes

- Approximately 2,500 households rely on private boreholes for water supply.

- Report Four will assess treatment options for private boreholes.
- The report will also consider specific guidelines and treatment options for private well owners.

Use of Firefighting Foam Containing PFAS

- Tracing exact timelines of historical firefighting foam use is difficult.
- In the 1990s, global recognition began to emerge regarding the potential environmental harm of PFAS in firefighting foams.
- By that time, governments worldwide, including Jersey, were learning about these concerns.
- Jersey Airport stopped using AFFF PFOS-based foams in 2004.
- Foams containing short-chain PFAS were phased out by 2020.
- Jersey has since transitioned to using PFAS-free firefighting foams.
- The government is committed to mitigating the impact of historical PFAS use.

5. Audience Q&A Session

- A designated Q&A session was scheduled for later in the meeting, allowing attendees to raise new questions. However, questions were also raised throughout the presentation, and the following section summarises key discussions.

5.1 Extent of the Impacted Plume

An attendee stated that they keep reading only about PFOS in the bay but live across from the runway in St Peter. In 2019, Environmental Health tested their borehole, found a small trace of PFOS, and advised them to continue using the borehole as levels were below WHO guidelines. The attendee asked how many people have PFOS in their boreholes?

The attendee further stated that in 2022, PFOS was found in their blood, and they have since been diagnosed with a terminal illness. They criticised Environmental Health for not updating its advice and noted that while residents in the bay received clean water at no cost, their household—despite being 400m from a plane crash site—had been ignored. They also stated that their medical care now costs the Health Department £5,000 per month.

Response:

- SL acknowledged that wider borehole testing is now being carried out and apologised for the previous limited focus on specific areas.
- He accepted that hotspots exist around the airport due to historical plane crashes and stated that greater efforts are now being made to assess these areas.

5.2 The Plume Area and Locations Where Foam Was Historically Used

An attendee challenged the definition of the plume area, stating that the Government incorrectly describes it as where firefighting foams were historically used. They referenced Report P176 (2004), which mapped the boundary of the plume area but noted that foams were primarily used at the Fire Training Ground (FTG), not within the plume itself.

Response:

- SL & KW apologised for any incorrect use of language and agreed to clarify definitions in the Q&A document. The description has been changed in the Q&A document, and the link provided to the current plume area map.

5.3 International Cover-Up Allegations

An attendee, who stated that they require stem cell treatments for blood cancer at an ongoing cost of £120,000 per year, described their health issues as a result of drinking borehole water. They claimed to have spoken with a leading French journalist, who suggested that PFAS contamination is part of an international scandal and cover-up.

Response:

- KW thanked the attendee for their comment.

5.4 Treatment of Borehole Water Used for Drinking

An attendee who uses bottled water asked for an update on guidance regarding the treatment of borehole water for drinking. They also raised concerns about potential interruptions to bottled water availability.

Response:

- SL stated that he had recently considered this issue after overhearing a customer in a shop inquiring about water filtration.
- He confirmed that information on treatment options would be provided later this year.
- He cautioned against purchasing filtration systems online without verified effectiveness, advising residents to rely on science-based recommendations.
- The attendee followed up by asking whether they should avoid buying filters from local shops. SL clarified that his concern was specifically about online purchases, not products available on the island.

5.5 Types of PFAS

An attendee raised concerns about the length of the carbon chain in different types of PFAS used in firefighting foams (AFFF). They noted that until 2022, a foam containing PFHxS, a C6 compound, was still in use. They expressed concern that while C8 compounds were phased out due to their known risks, C6 compounds might later be found to be similarly problematic. The attendee acknowledged that the fire service had attempted to reduce risks by changing AFFF formulations but felt this had not significantly improved the situation.

Response:

- KW acknowledged the comment and confirmed that the concerns would be addressed in the Q&A document.

5.6 Health Access

An attendee questioned why individuals with high PFAS blood test results—obtained through private testing or other sources—were not being given the same access to doctors as those tested by Public Health in 2022. They asked why medical support was being focused only on those in the plume area.

Response:

- SL: Testing and medical interventions started in the plume area because it was identified as the recognised hot spot. The Government acknowledges that additional blood tests have been conducted privately, but it is not feasible to offer interventions to everyone immediately. The approach is to begin in the plume area and expand over time.

Following this, several attendees commented:

- Some raised concerns about the cost of obtaining private blood tests in Germany.
- One attendee stated that they had requested a PFAS blood test from the General Hospital but had been refused, leading them to seek private testing. They urged for greater transparency and accountability.
- Another attendee referenced a JEP headline that suggested there was no PFAS contamination outside of St Ouen, arguing that this was misleading and unfair to those living outside the plume area.

Additional Responses:

- TB: Acknowledged frustrations and apologised, stating that Ministers have been working on the issue for 13 months but cannot change past decisions.
- TB & SL: Confirmed that they had personally undergone PFAS blood testing, clarifying that they had paid for their tests like everyone else.
- TB: Highlighted significant pressures on Government resources, explaining that with an ageing population and stretched budgets, it was not possible to offer 100,000 tests at £1,000 per test or universal treatment. The Government must take an equitable approach within financial constraints.
- PB: Clarified that the Government had not stated that PFAS was only present in St Ouen. He reiterated that they were following the planned approach and awaiting further findings from Report Three.
- PB: Acknowledged concerns about clinical review capacity and eligibility and confirmed that this would be reviewed and addressed in the Q&A document.

5.7 Government Resources and Accountability

An attendee raised concerns about government spending, suggesting that wasteful expenditure—such as the hospital site selection process—has impacted funding for essential services like healthcare. They argued that financial mismanagement should not result in the public suffering.

Response:

- TB: Stated that since the last election, the Government has been working to prevent wasteful spending. He acknowledged past issues but emphasised that the focus should now be on the future, with the hospital project moving forward.

5.8 Independent Water Regulator

An attendee asked who regulates Jersey Water and suggested that Jersey should establish an independent regulator. They compared the situation to Thames Water in the UK, highlighting issues with shareholder-driven funding models. The attendee also referenced a previous comment about residents being told their water was safe, questioning the reliability of such assurances.

Response:

- SL: Expressed full confidence in the existing regulatory staff but acknowledged that the idea of an independent regulator could be considered in the future. He stated that the current system provides robust oversight, with the Minister for the Environment (MENV) responsible for setting drinking water standards.
- SL: Confirmed that Report Four will examine water quality standards.

5.9 Foam Manufacturers' Political and Legal History

An attendee requested that the Government's agreement with the chemical manufacturer 3M be made public, along with the States Assembly's in-camera Hansard minutes related to PFAS contamination. They referenced historical cases where chemical companies delayed accountability, including DDT, thalidomide, and Agent Orange.

Response:

- SL: Stated that while the Government is actively addressing the issue, he could not comment on past Hansard records or historical agreements.

5.10 Growing Food in the Plume Area

An attendee stated that they stopped growing commercial crops in the plume area 10 years ago after being advised by the Government to conduct their own risk assessment. They referenced guidance from contacts in the USA, who indicated that similar land would be classified as a toxic waste cleanup site under American regulations. They asked who could help them restore the land for farming. Another attendee noted that Professor Ian Cousins had already advised on how to remediate contaminated land and questioned why they needed to wait for Report Four before action could be taken.

Response:

- SL: Confirmed that commercial crops from the area have been tested.
- An attendee countered that these crops had been mixed with potatoes from Grouville, raising concerns about potential contamination.

- SL: Stated that Report Four will provide independent recommendations on how to treat contaminated land and water. He emphasised the need to wait for the report's findings before implementing actions.
- TB: Acknowledged that there is no quick fix to the issue.

5.11 General Taxation in Jersey

An audience member suggested that Jersey's 20% tax rate limits the Government's ability to afford PFAS cleanup. They pointed out that when combined with the 12.5% care rate, the total tax burden is similar to New Zealand's 30% rate.

Response:

- TB: Acknowledged that the base tax rate is not enough to fund everything the Government wants to achieve and that not all actions can happen overnight.
- Stated that cleaning up 30,000 verges of land would be costly and that while progress may feel frustrating, Jersey's testing and response efforts are more comprehensive than those in many other jurisdictions.
- Emphasised that the Government is actively working on resolutions.

5.12 Island-Wide PFAS Exposure

An attendee asked whether PFAS exposure is now considered an island-wide issue.

Response:

- SL: Confirmed that PFAS contamination is recognised as a wider issue and that testing is taking place beyond the plume area.
- Stated that the Independent Scientific Panel is gathering data and evidence to better understand the scale of exposure.
- Acknowledged that if PFAS is found in a borehole outside the plume area, further investigation will be necessary to determine the source.

6. Closing Remarks

- KW thanked all attendees and encouraged feedback or suggested changes to be sent to regulationenquiries@gov.je
- Reminded attendees that the next in-person public meeting would take place in early April.

Meeting closed at 19:05