

The Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra) has today unveiled its [plan for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\)](#), which it describes as a clear framework for coordinated action to tackle “forever chemicals”. The publication of the PFAS Plan was one of most highly anticipated measures announced in Defra’s [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) released in December 2025.

Environment minister Emma Hardy said, launching the plan: “It’s crucial that we protect both public health and the environment for future generations. Through our PFAS Plan, we will act decisively to reduce their harmful effects while transitioning to safer alternatives.”

The Defra [press release](#) summarises some of the key measures and interventions of the PFAS Plan as follows:

- Developing new guidance for regulators and industries to address legacy PFAS pollution on contaminated land to ensure a consistent and practical approach
- Consulting on the introduction of a statutory limit for PFAS in England’s public supply regulations to improve the condition of the water the nation drinks
- Carrying out tests on food packaging, like microwave popcorn bags and pizza boxes, to trace the presence of PFAS and support future regulatory action
- Publishing a new website to raise the public’s awareness and understanding of PFAS while also improving transparency of action being taken across government
- Reducing emissions from industrial sites through new guidance for regulators and site operators on how to improve their handling, monitoring and disposal of PFAS
- Improving the monitoring of PFAS in soils by supporting the British Geological Survey and initiating new sampling at five locations across England
- Completing work to consider restrictions on the use of PFAS in firefighting foams

Many commentators have welcomed the spirit of the PFAS Plan, but some queried (i) how and when these measures will be delivered in practice, (ii) how the various actors involved will work together to achieve them, and (iii) whether its measures go far enough to tackle the problem. The Wildlife and Countryside Link, an environmental coalition group, has been [particularly outspoken](#) about the absence of binding phase-outs in the PFAS Plan and lack of realignment with the EU. A policy adviser at the Royal Society of Chemistry also suggested that closer alignment with the EU, which is separately in the process of developing a “general” PFAS restriction under Regulation 1272/2008 on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), could help “[speed up](#)” the future regulation of PFAS.

While at this stage the PFAS Plan is helpful from a horizon-scanning perspective, businesses will need to keep monitoring the items listed above (e.g. the development of a statutory limit for PFAS in drinking water, and the new guidance for regulators and site operators on handling/monitoring/disposing of PFAS). Oral evidence is still being given as part of the [parliamentary inquiry into the risks of PFAS](#) (next address due to take place in the House of Commons on 4 February 2026).

To discuss any queries on PFAS, or generally in relation to UK chemicals regulation, please get in touch with our Environmental, Safety & Health team.

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