

**DRINKING WATER INSPECTORATE**

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[Redacted]
By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: EIR2025/23450
25 November 2025

Dear [Redacted]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: PFAS Contamination in Baldock's Drinking Water

Thank you for your request for information of 3 November 2025 about PFAS contamination in Baldock's drinking water. We have handled your request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your information request and our response are set out below.

I write to express serious concern following recent reports, including coverage in The Guardian (3 November 2025), indicating that PFAS levels in Baldock's drinking water exceed the UK's proposed threshold of 0.1 µg/L. As County Councillor for Baldock and Letchworth East, I am deeply alarmed by the potential health risks posed to residents and the apparent lack of timely intervention.

I recognise that this reclassification arises from the UK's decision to adopt a more precautionary threshold for PFAS, reflecting evolving scientific understanding of their persistence and bioaccumulative risks. While this shift in regulatory standards does not imply a sudden increase in contamination, it does necessitate a proportionate and transparent response.

I formally request that the Drinking Water Inspectorate:

- 1. Disclose all PFAS monitoring data for Baldock and surrounding areas, including sampling dates, locations, and compound breakdowns.*

There are three treatment works that feed the Baldock/Letchworth zone (Bowring, Fuller and Slip end) and the summary data on our systems is provided below. Please note that none of the treatment works listed supply consumers directly. Further data can be obtained from Affinity Water at <https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/contact/email>

RAW water (pre treatment):

Site Name	Name	Qualifier	Max Result	Units
Bowring	PFHxA		0.010	µg/L
Bowring	PFOS		0.097	µg/L
Bowring	PHFhxA		0.038	µg/L
Bowring Raw 1	PFBS		0.013	µg/L
Bowring Raw 1	PFOA		0.010	µg/L
Bowring Raw 1	PFOS		0.020	µg/L
Bowring Raw 1	Sum_of_PFAS		0.012	µg/L
Bowring Raw 2	PFOA		0.095	µg/L
Bowring Raw 2	PFOS		0.018	µg/L
Bowring Raw 2	Sum_of_PFAS		0.012	µg/L
Fuller Raw 1	PFOA		0.043	µg/L
Fuller Raw 1	Sum_of_PFAS		0.000	µg/L
Fuller Raw 4	PFOA		0.010	µg/L
Fuller Raw 4	Sum_of_PFAS		0.000	µg/L
Slip End Raw 1	Sum_of_PFAS		0.000	µg/L
Slip End Raw 2	Sum_of_PFAS		0.000	µg/L

Treated water maximum results

Site Name	Name	Qualifier	Max Result	Units
Bowring	PFecHS		0.012	µg/L
Bowring	PFHxA		0.007	µg/L
Bowring	PFOS		0.051	µg/L
Bowring	PFPA		0.005	µg/L
Bowring	PHFhxA		0.026	µg/L
Bowring	Sum_of_PFAS		0.094	µg/L
Bowring Raw 1	Sum_of_PFAS		0	µg/L

Zone samples

Site Name	Name	Qualifier	Max Result	Units
Baldock/Letchworth	PFOS		0.029	µg/L
Baldock/Letchworth	PHFhxA		0.014	µg/L
Baldock/Letchworth	Sum_of_PFAS		0.042	µg/L

Name	Number in Tier 1	Number in Tier 2	Total
PFOS		7	7
PHFHxS	1	6	7
Sum_of_PFAS		7	7
Total	1	20	21

There have been 5112 tests carried out on these supplies including both raw and operational. The vast majority (95%) have been less than the limit of detection, and there have been none in the Tier 3 category. For your information the maximum levels for each tier are: Tier 1: <0.01 µg/l; Tier 2: <0.1 µg/L; and Tier 3: ≥0.1 µg/L

2. *Clarify the timeline and scope of regulatory response, including any directives issued to water suppliers and local authorities.*

The DWI issued in October 2023 a notice to Affinity Water Ltd in as part of their improvement programme. The notice relates to an AMP8 scheme for PFOS at Bowring treatment works, which supplies the Bowring and Baldock/Letchworth zones (population 50,761). AMP8 refers to the eighth Asset Management Period (2025-2030) for water companies in England and Wales, a five-year regulatory cycle focused on infrastructure upgrades, sustainability, and customer service. The notice is publicly available on our website at: <https://www.dwi.gov.uk/water-companies/improvement-programmes/affinity-water-improvement-programmes/afw-2023-00008/>

The notice has the following ongoing actions for the duration of the notice:

1. Blending of the raw and treated waters to ensure PFOS concentrations in the water leaving Weston Hills Service Reservoir remain below 0.1 ug/l.
2. Weekly sampling of the raw water from the Baldock Road source for PFOS with appropriate escalation and investigation of any deviation from expected results.

The notice will deliver:

1. Enhance the blending control between Baldock Road raw water, Bowring raw water and Fuller WTW treated water by 31 March 2026.
2. Install granular activated carbon (GAC) contactors at Bowring WTW by 31 March 2030.
3. Initiate sampling programme for the new GAC as it comes online to establish removal effectiveness and lifespan by 31 March 2030.

To date, the company are on track with delivering the scheme (although, being an AMP8 scheme, it is early days). The data below shows that PFOS concentrations remain below 0.1 ug/l.

3. *Confirm whether affected communities have been notified, and outline plans for public engagement and risk communication.*
4. *Provide guidance on interim measures, including filtration, alternative supply options, or health advisories.*

The guidance we issued to water companies on PFAS (https://dwi-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/24141825/DWI_PFAS-Guidance_Mar_2025.pdf) explains actions required at each Tier levels 1, 2 and 3. As there have been no recorded events of samples reaching Tier 3 there has been no

requirement for contacting the public or local authorities. Please note that the Tier 3 guideline has been agreed with the UK Health Security Agency as health protective.

Regarding the links provided, as the information you have requested is already publicly available and easily accessible to you in another form or format, regulation 6(1)(b) of the EIRs exempts Defra from providing a copy of the information with this response to your request.

Information disclosed in response to this EIRs request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIRs and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

We attach Annex A, explaining the copyright that applies to the information being released to you, and Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

DWI FOIA and EIR team

dwi.enquiries@defra.gov.uk

Annex A

Copyright

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Annex B

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Damian Lynch, Head of Information Rights via email at InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk and they will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure is on our website.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure.

The ICO can be contacted using the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>