**Open Question and Answer Session – Tuesday 17th June 2025**

*Disclaimer Statement:*

*Please note that the following question and answer session includes summaries of questions asked by members of the public and responses provided by council staff and regulatory representatives. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, the responses are not verbatim transcripts. Council staff have sought to present information as clearly and accurately as possible based on the knowledge available at the time.*

**Why are Angus Fire not here tonight?**

Mayor Gareth Adams- BTC

Angus Fire were invited. This meeting is for regulators, Environment Agency and interested parties as to where they/we are with the issues, answering questions, this meeting is to benefit residents, allowing as much time as possible for the regulators to speak. Angus Fire received a significant number of questions, rather than Angus Fire being the lead, it was for the regulators to give their time to the residents of Bentham.

**As people have taken the time to submit questions, can those questions be answered in another form?**

Bentham Town Council to follow up with Angus Fire as they have received the questions as well.

**If there is going to be a criminal case against Angus Fire, are the Environment Agency/North Yorkshire relying on evidence gathered by Angus Fire themselves, to potentially incriminate them? Is there alternative data available taken by someone else to support a case?**

John Neville- EA

The Environment Agency expect the operator to monitor and provide information; the EA may use the data/evidence from a consultant employed by Angus Fire. The EA may carry out their own check monitoring and collect information that will be evidenced that may go towards a case.

**Why are North Yorkshire Council not testing the Bentham allotments? Other Councils are doing testing of soils.**

Dr Kevin Carr- NYC

North Yorkshire Council are working with Angus Fire, looking at what the consultants employed by them have done, NYC are new to this so need to review the testing and rationale of what has been done. With the challenge of budgetary constraints, NYC may request Angus Fire to test these areas, there may be levels there which are unknown.

**Will you ask them to test further sites beyond what has been tested already?**

Dr Kevin Carr- NYC

NYC need to review what has been done already. Angus Fire have used recognised independent consultants so it is not in their interests to tell lies.

John Neville- EA

Yes, the C4SLs {note at page end regarding this} levels are the guide used at the moment. The Environment Agency is aware of the sites where this testing is being done, this one is at a different stage, with different aspects to it. There are levels that other Councils may be testing in allotments, testing may happen in future. Angus Fire have conducted testing around site and have provided this information, and the Environment Agency will follow up in line with legislation.

**Comment from member of public:**

**A consultant can offer an interpretation and present information from a different point of view, depending on their expertise, background, and objectives. Their perspective may vary from others, which can provide valuable insights or alternative solutions.**

**Linked to pathways – allotments have potential for significant harm, [Church allotments] some testing has already taken place, airborne testing needs to take place.**

**Thorton-Cleveleys – investigations into soil contamination around allotments.**

**MOP comment:**

**‘*It is possible that the way a consultant to collect factual information and an offer an interpretive result, but a different consultant to you is that same factor of information come up with a different interpretation. So just because Angus’ consultants are collecting data, doesn’t mean that data is necessarily invalid, because they will have the professionalism to actually collect data according to things like British standards, the way they present that is one question and they may well present it in favour of Angus, and other consultant who may be working for either of the council or EA may wish to spin it a different way. And so it’s not necessarily a bad thing that Angus’ consultant are doing the work and paying for it, and Rambol are an excellent company but I am aware there is a big mistake in their report.’***

**Environment Agency have been looking at testing in** **Thorton-Cleveleys, looking at data from analysing vegetables. There is potential for significant harm from the allotments, we need to be looking at the PFAS contamination in the soils but also the PFAS contamination pathway of the vegetables that are being grown there. Can this testing be funded now without delay? Or apply precautionary principal and shut the allotments?**

Mayor Gareth Adams (BTC) verified that the allotments being referred to are those located next to the church.

John Neville- EA

There are different circumstances for these areas. The Thorton-Cleveleys site had a focus on the air deposition not necessarily driven by potential water contamination, from the air there was potential risk which has led to some testing of the produce grown in the allotments.

**Is there a smaller air impact in Bentham compared to Thorton-Cleveleys?**

John Neville- EA

 The Thorton Cleveleys site is a larger chemical production site active since 1950s, had potential direct emissions to air,hence the wider investigation going on there. This is the best answer available.

**How is the information on levels and on health being gathered, who is doing the research, how long will it take to yield results and when will more information be available?**

Dr Victoria Turner - NYC Public Health

From a health perspective, whilst there have been a number of research studies done more detailed information on what health issues may occur at specific PFAS levels is still needed. A national taskforce from UKHSA is looking into the evidence around PFAS and health impacts, but it may take some time to see any published conclusions.

In the meantime, by undertaking standard precautions to protect their health, residents should be able to minimise any potential risk from PFAS or other environmental hazards they may encounter.

For example:

* Wash and peel vegetables to remove soil and other contaminants such as bacteria
* Cover cuts and grazes while swimming in rivers or other open water sources.
* Avoid ingesting water while swimming in rivers or other open water sources.
* Attend routine health screenings when offered, keeping up to date with immunisations
* If you have any medical symptoms you are concerned about, get them checked out by an appropriate professional.

**In the past, foam has been noticed in hedgerows, concluding there was airborne transportation, is this significant? What’s the difference between this and Thorton-Cleveleys? Is there reason to look at airborne transit, what would cause this to happen?**

Dr Kevin Carr- Scientific Team Manager at North Yorkshire Council

Information like this is valuable to the investigation. The type of foam that contains PFAS is denser than other types, so the chances of the PFAS related blowing away after testing is significantly less, compared with the other types of foam.

There has been no focus on airborne transit, rather a focus on ground water.

**Mayor Adams asked what is necessary for NYC to start the process of investigating airborne transportation and pathways?**

NYC would have to engage with Angus Fire to gain better understanding of the processes involved- including material releases, their sources on the plant, what were they for, what part of the process did they relate to, what sort of material could have been released, prevailing wind direction and their destinations. These are the sorts of the things that we would need to more fully understand.

Focus so far has been on what could potentially soak into the ground into the aquifers, with concern around this reaching private water supplies. Private water supplies have been clear. There needs to be further understanding of the sort of activities that went on at the plant and where, looking at the integrity of storage lagoons and what could have seeped through the ground, any cracked land drains, are some considerations. This will help to better understand potential pathways, this is a work in progress and once there is a fuller picture this can be used to encourage more targeted testing by Angus Fire.

Mayor Gareth Adams- BTC

Bentham Town Council have regular updates with Angus Fire and can follow this up.

**How long will it all take (the member of public commented on Angus stopping using PFAS in 2004 after concerns of chemicals), and can public health have a role in collecting information on the health situation of the Bentham Community to see if there are any patterns? Could a question be ‘have you worked at Angus?’ to see if there is a pattern? Not necessarily conclusive, as there are other factors to consider, but this will be a useful study in order to feed into other information. At the first meeting, several specific forms of cancer were mentioned to be associated with PFAS, there was concern expressed about how many of those were anecdotally shared in the Bentham community.**

Dr Victoria Turner – NYC Public Health

The public health team is happy to help, although we were not involved in the initial meeting that the member of the public mentioned so are unaware of any health information or concerns shared at that point. However, we would always welcome any information that residents wish to provide to us on specific health concerns that may be helpful or relevant.

A national UK Health Security Agency taskforce is reviewing the evidence on potential health links to PFAS, including cancers, although the timescales on this are currently unknown.

John Neville corrected the information in the question to clarify that Angus stopped using PFAS in 2024, not 2004. The EA is looking at how PFAS is getting into the environment and once it is in the environment, whether pathways are present to people that could potentially lead to impacts on health.

**Member of the public talked about a ‘big black cloud’ released from Angus Fire at times, and that Angus have a black smoke license, the cloud is caused by aviation fluid being lit and put out by foam, to test the foam before being sent out. There is an alarm system for when it is about to go over the town, dependant on the wind, this cloud could go over Goodenber road or up the High Street or the school often at playtime. The cloud can be seen moving across the town, the denseness can be seen, it seems to travel very fast and drop particles along the way, these are breathed in by residents. Are the regulators aware of this cloud? The member of public has asked Angus what is in this cloud, they have said they will let them know, however MOP has never been able to find out. What is the chemical composition of this cloud? Are agencies aware of this?**

Mayor Adams – they still do this testing at site.

John Neville- Environment Agency

The EA are aware of this testing that happened on site. There have been a number of questions about the fire testing foam, and that information is not to hand at the meeting. The Environment Agency, having made notes, will provide a written response with greater clarity after this meeting, if they have this information.

**United Utilities said they can’t take PFAS out of waste water, once the water is treated, is some of what is left sold to local farmers to put on land/fields, will NYC check if these fields have high levels of PFAS on the land? Could this be mapped? Could this be the cause of the PFAS being found higher up the river?**

John Neville- Environment Agency

This process of sludge collection, dried and filtered, where it is collected and processed to use as fertiliser, has been widely used across the country for many years. Unable to answer specifically relation to Angus, as I don’t have knowledge of that happens to the sludge form the Bentham works, or where further treatment may take place. However, the Environment Agency and water companies are now looking into this, it is a wider concern, not just local to this area. PFAS is a challenge in sewage in general due to the wide range of sources.

**There has been Environmental Agency company have been present at the High Bentham Playing Fields over the last week working into the night, were they employed by Angus? They are called Adler and Allan and are employed by companies to tackle environment issues.**

John Neville- EA

Aware of the company Adler and Allan, who do tank and drain cleaning, etc. They aren’t operating on behalf of the EA, I’m unsure of what they were working on as an EA individual, but the Town Council may be able to find further information.

A member of the public informed the audience and panel that the company had been cleaning a culvert.

A second member of the public from the Bentham Playing Fields Committee confirmed that Angus Fire commissioned this.

**The member of public directed this question to Public Health individuals. The member of the public referenced a population study published in May 2025, conducted in the Veneto region of Italy, which examined the health impacts of significant PFAS contamination which happened in the late 1980’s. The research paper reported higher rates of cancer, coronary heart conditions and circulatory conditions in the affected community, with an elevated mortality rate from these conditions compared to populations in nearby mountain regions who did not have an incident of PFAS contamination in their areas. Is Public Health currently considering similar research into potential health impacts related to PFAS exposure in the Bentham population?**

Dr Victoria Turner – NYC Public Health

Current research suggests a possible link between cholesterol levels and PFAS exposure, which may tie in with coronary and circulatory health issues described. Dr Turner will investigate the study in Veneto further.

**United Utilities mentioned in their statement that they had been sampling for PFAS, but didn’t report the results. Can we ask United Utilities for these results? Should the local authorities in downstream in Lancashire be concerned? Should Bentham Town Council inform downstream local authorities in Lancashire about these concerns and any findings, so they can advocate on behalf of their residents?**

Mayor Gareth Adams- Bentham Town Council

This is a question/point that can be directed to United Utilities. From the original ENDS report Wennington and Tatham were made aware of private water supplies, through Lancashire Council.

John Neville- Environment Agency

In the same way that a notification was sent to Craven District, now part of North Yorkshire Council, a similar notice was issued to Lancashire City Council, enabling them to inform the relevant local areas and take appropriate regulatory steps.

**A local resident stated that Angus Fire has recently instructed for testing to take place at the boundary of their house, in the last couple of weeks. How do we access the results? And how do we know where it is taking place?**

John Neville- Environment Agency

The Environment Agency may be able to access the information. While they may be unable to share it immediately due to investigations, they can encourage its release by Angus Fire. Angus Fire have shared monitoring information in the past.

Bentham Town Council will also encourage for this information to be shared by Angus fire.

Angus Fire have previously shared monitoring information. If this is possible and feasible Angus Fire will be encouraged to share information. Regulators may be able to gather information for investigations; however, this information may not be possible to share with the public.

**Angus Fire have bought private houses on Duke Street, why would they do this if they are not guilty of causing pollution? As a resident at the top of Duke Street, there is concern their property may be affected. A resident from Duke Street says Angus has offered to buy the houses or decontaminate the garden, why would they do this if they are not guilty of something?**

**Member of public further commented that these properties were purchased at 20% over market price.**

Recognised by the panel that this is a question directed at Angus Fire.

**A question asking for a direct answer from North Yorkshire Council about what the health investigations are, North Yorkshire Council say you are welcoming people to come forward to you with evidence, but are you proactively doing investigations?**

Dr Victoria Turner – NYC Public Health

Work so far has involved looking at accessible information from nationally available statistics and non-public data. More work is needed with the NHS and other health partners including UKHSA to access more detailed, localised information.

The population sizes used for some of the public datasets would not show any very localised concerns, for example at the level of individual streets. The council do not have access to NHS data at this level, but will link with NHS colleagues to help build a clearer understanding of the health landscape in the local area.

While much of the current focus in the media is on cancer, there are other health questions to ask, and a broader range of health issues may need to be looked at.

It is important for the NYC public health team and UKHSA to keep close to the work being done by the regulators who are investigating potential source, pathways and receptors - this is key to attribute any health issues to possible sources. Understanding this is necessary to be able to tackle health issues through an environmental route, in terms of preventing exposure pathways.

NYC public health and UKHSA colleagues have taken comments on board from the evening and the shared local experiences. Hearing local experiences is very helpful, and it is important for us to be able to triangulate between different sources of information.

Bentham is on the edge of a number of different health service boundaries. Several health partners are not Yorkshire based, and there are a number of different health systems to work with.

**Meeting closed at 19:35.**

C4SLs — **Category 4 Screening Levels** — are **risk-based screening values** used in the UK for assessing land contamination. They help determine whether a site is potentially contaminated and whether further detailed risk assessment or remediation is needed.

When it comes to **PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances)**, C4SLs provide benchmark concentrations in soil (and sometimes groundwater) that are considered **“low risk” to human health** for specific land uses (like residential, commercial, etc.).

**Key points about C4SLs:**

* **Developed by the UK Environment Agency (EA)** to support land contamination risk management under the **Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance**.
* Represent a **“suitable for use”** level of contamination — if concentrations are below the C4SL, the site is generally considered safe for the intended use.
* Based on **toxicological and exposure assessments**, including ingestion, dermal contact, and inhalation routes.
* More pragmatic and sometimes less conservative than **SGVs (Soil Guideline Values)** because they account for **minimal risk** rather than complete risk elimination.