Report produced for Bentham Town Council for Monday 2nd November 2026

By C Burrow, Town Clerk and RFO

Introduction

A report produced for Bentham Town Council regarding the formation of a Community Liaison Group to address concerns over Environment Issue and the Angus Fire site located on Station Road, High Bentham.

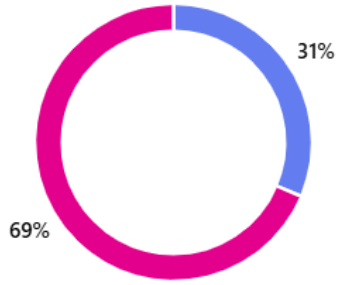
The suggestion to form a Community Liaison Group (CLG) came from the Environment Agency as a recommendation to allow the public to seek and receive answers to questions concerning the PFAS issue in and around Bentham from regulators such as UK Health Services, North Yorkshire Council, Environment Agency and the potential of Angus Fire themselves.

Bentham Town Council actioned the Clerk on Monday 7th September 2026, minuted as 93.6, to seek public opinion on the formation of a CLG, to clarify if there was a public requirement for such a group or individuals willing to engage and be part of the group who would represent different demographics within the community. This would be advertised through social media, the Council website and the local newsletter. The public consultation used Microsoft Forms, a suggestion from the Environment Agency's Customer Engagement Team.

The public consultation became active on 9th September, closing Monday 12th October 2026. This report intends to give an overview of the background of the PFAS concerns in the community of Bentham, analyse the data collected from the public consultation, establish a model of how the Council's CLG could function and give the Council three recommendations to consider.

Summary of Public Feedback

A total of 67 people responded to the public consultation.



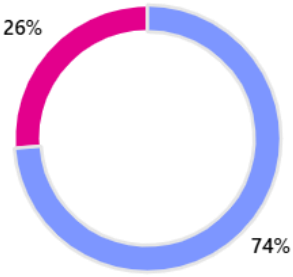
To the question do you think there is a need for a Community Liaison Group?

69% of people responded with no.

31% of people responded with yes.

To the question how aware are you of the concerns regarding PFAS and the Angus Fire site?

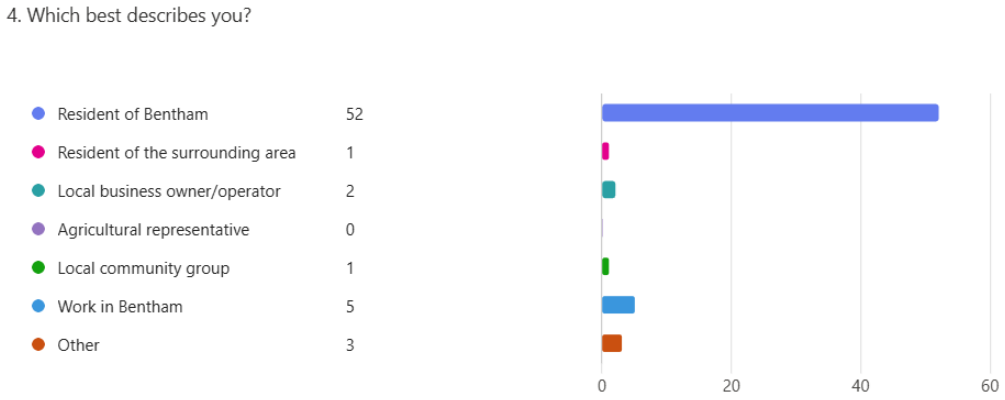
74% of responders stated very aware, 26% are fairly aware and 0 said not aware.

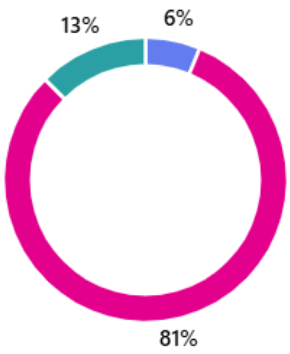


Of those which responded to yes there is a need for a Community Liaison Group, the public listed what they would like the group to achieve in ranked order with providing clear and regular information being the main priority:



Response to question 4, demonstrates that the majority of people engaging with the consultation are Bentham residents:





When questioned if they would consider being part of the CLG, 81% responded with no, 13% said maybe and only 6% (4 people) answered yes.

Options and Implications

Option 1 – Establish a Community Liaison Group

Forming a CLG would create a regular forum for residents, regulators and relevant organisations to share information and follow up concerns, forming a neutral and constructive forum. Consisting of members from the local community representing stakeholders, for example members representing Bentham Playing Fields, Allotment association, residents, agricultural representatives, North Yorkshire Council, the Environment Agency, UKHSA or relevant experts, potential of Angus Fire, these meetings would be

hosted by Bentham Town Council, with Council members attending and clerked by the Town Clerk[1]. The CLG would meet every 2 to 3 months, depending on need, and have 8-12 members.

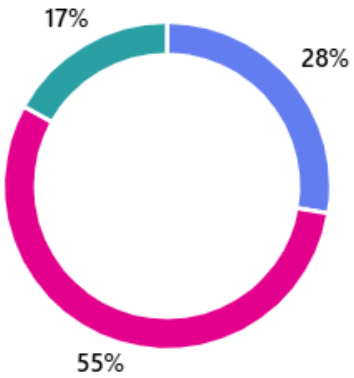
The CLG would have an established term of reference, drafted by the Council with guidance from the Environment Agency. Requiring 4 to 5 hours of clerking time each month, the Environment Agency, when asked, said there was currently no allocated funding for CLG, therefore this would come out of the Council budget for 2027 – 2028, established in November 2026[2], which can form part of the Precept demand[3] in December 2026.

Option 2 - Continue existing arrangements

Not proceeding with the CLG avoids creating another meeting structure, not consuming valuable clerking hours, no extra pressure on Council members with only six out of the potential eleven seats filled and struggling for community involvement.

Alternatively, the Council could consider having another public engagement event, more of a drop-in day time format having regulators available to speak to residents on a more informal individual basis, with a public meeting in the evening.

As part of the public consultation demonstrated:



When asked would you support the Town Council organising a wider public meeting or drop-in event about the PFAS concerns?

28% (18) of people responded yes, 55% responded with no and 17% of people responded with maybe.

Therefore, out of 67 people asked, a potential engagement of up to 29 attendees.

Option 3 – Consult Further Before Consideration

Reopening the public consultation or providing an alternative public consultation format would allow for a different demographic to contribute and the potential of higher engagement from residents. However, this would delay the final decision of the Council and requires additional consultation work and further clerking time.

To ensure a varied demographic is reached, the Council could engage face to face with the public at community events or have a paper-based consultation format. Polls on social media have been well received in the past with over 500 people responding to the question of the money from the sale of the Community Youth Building being gifted to the Bentham Playing Field Association. This could be a quick and easy way to consult the public.

[1] Local Government Act 1972 c.70 Part VII Staff section 112

[3] Local Government Finance Act 1992 c14 Chapter IV Preliminary Section 39

In conclusion

Whichever option is chosen it is important for the public to feel as if they have been listened to, the PFAS and Environmental Issues is a matter that evokes strong opinions and emotive responses, the town is divided as to support for Angus Fire and concern regarding the environment issues linked to the site