

2 March 2026

Deputy Hilary Jeune
Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel
Scrutiny Office
Morier House
Halkett Place
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Dear Deputy Jeune,

Proposition P.26/2026 – PFAS limits under the Water (Jersey) Law 1972

Further to your recent request, this letter sets out Jersey Water's position on Proposition P.26/2026, which proposes introducing a statutory PFAS limit of 4 nanograms per litre (ng/l) in drinking water by 1 January 2031. We support clear and evidence-based PFAS regulation and remain committed to meeting a new standard. At the same time, we believe the proposition has been brought forward before essential scientific, financial and technical information is available. This creates risks for Government, Jersey Water and Islanders.

Drinking water in Jersey is safe and comfortably meets applicable UK and EU standards for PFAS. The Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel has confirmed that water in Jersey presents no cause for concern and their recommendations regarding PFAS standards are designed to "future proof". The Panel has also confirmed that the average daily intake of PFAS for Islanders (from food and water) remains below the guidance limits set by the European Food Standards Authority (EFSA).

Our concerns regarding the proposition as it stands center around the following key points:

- **Consideration of the full scientific evidence and stakeholder engagement**

The Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel and the Hydrogeological PFAS Steering Group have not yet completed their work. Their findings will directly influence the choice of treatment technology, the costs involved and how PFAS is managed across the Island.

The proposition represents a step change in regulation for Jersey concerning a matter of considerable public interest, substantial cost and far-reaching consequences. It should therefore be the subject of formal stakeholder consultation.

- **Ensuring funding clarity before the standard is approved**

For States Members to make an informed decision, the full costs and funding approach need to be understood. Without this information, it is challenging to assess value for money or the affordability of the proposition.

Achieving 4ng/l will require major new treatment infrastructure that does not currently exist in Jersey, with early cost estimates of £140 million to £210 million. This level of

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investment cannot be funded by Jersey Water. The proposition should clearly set out how the Government intends to fund the work.

- **Understanding the impact on customer bills**

The significant costs associated with meeting the 4ng/l limit could increase water bills by as much as 70% - 110%, using the numbers above and depending on the funding approach. Water in Jersey could become amongst the costliest in the world, challenging affordability and acceptability for Islanders and businesses. A full understanding of the impact on water bills is essential to inform the decision.

- **Amending the delivery timeline**

The proposed deadline of just under five years does not fully reflect the scale and complexity of the project. Based on the required steps, including pilot trials and the planning, funding, procurement and construction of a new treatment facility; a more realistic timeframe is a minimum of seven years.

- **Considering PFAS within Jersey's wider water resource and water security needs**

PFAS treatment cannot be considered in isolation from broader water issues that the Island faces, such as water resource resilience and climate-related pressures. An integrated approach is needed to ensure decisions in one area don't exacerbate risks in another.

The sections that follow set out these considerations in more detail.

1. Consideration of the full scientific evidence and stakeholder engagement

The proposition has been lodged before the Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel and the PFAS Steering Group have completed their work. The Panel's final report is not due until the spring, and the Steering Group has not yet issued findings on PFAS remediation in the key catchments around the airport. These outputs will directly influence decisions concerning the treatment technology required, how much it will cost and how PFAS should be managed across the Island.

Although the Panel's recommended water quality limit is unlikely to change, the remaining parts of its work, including the Government's position on the disposal of water treatment solids to agricultural land, are essential to determining the feasibility and cost of any treatment option. Without this information, any assessment of costs or practicality is based on assumptions rather than firm evidence.

The Steering Group's work on the polluted catchments in St Ouen's Bay and Pont Marquet may also affect the scale of treatment needed. These important sources of water are out of service due to higher levels of PFAS. If remediation allows these water resources to return to service with lower PFAS levels, the overall treatment burden at the main works could be reduced, lowering both cost and complexity. Until this is known, any planning must assume the worst-case scenario, which could risk unnecessary over-investment.

PFAS affects multiple areas of water management, environmental protection and future infrastructure planning. Considering the regulatory limit in isolation, without accounting for these wider factors, risks piecemeal decision-making that may not deliver the best or most cost-effective outcomes.

For these reasons, we had expected the proposition to follow the completion of the Panel's and Steering Group's work and comprise a comprehensive suite of measures to address PFAS in the round, including all environmental, financial and operational requirements. While

this would take additional time, we believe a holistic approach would lead to better outcomes for Islanders and more effective long-term management of PFAS.

The proposition has been lodged without formal stakeholder consultation or engagement, and before the outcomes of consultation on the Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel's draft recommendations are known. Given the significant impact of the proposed legislation on Jersey Water's operations, we would have expected to be formally consulted on the proposed regulatory changes prior to publication. While we have kept the Environment Department and Minister updated on our PFAS work, a structured engagement process would have enabled us to contribute more effectively ahead of the proposition being issued.

2. Ensuring funding clarity before the standard is approved

The proposition states that there are no additional financial or staffing implications for the Government. This does not reflect the Government's stated intention to fund the investment required for long-term PFAS treatment, as set out in the Investing in Jersey Fund documentation.

Jersey Water has been progressing its technical work alongside the work of the Panel. In 2025, we completed feasibility studies and laboratory testing on more than ten possible treatment options. Pilot trials are now starting in 2026 as we develop our treatment strategy. All of the work to date shows that consistently meeting 4ng/l will require major new infrastructure that does not currently exist in Jersey. A new Islandwide treatment facility is estimated to cost between £140 million and £210 million. Given the scale of costs, further examination of options is ongoing, including the concept of a centralised PFAS-only treatment facility, but this option still carries technical and cost uncertainties.

This scale of investment is beyond Jersey Water's ability to fund. Meeting the new limit will only be possible if Government funding is agreed and in place. If the proposition is approved without clear funding provisions, there is a risk that the standard will be in force but the funding needed to meet it will not be available, preventing compliance with a regulatory water quality standard. This would create significant operational, financial, regulatory and reputational risks for both Jersey Water, the Government and the Island. We recommend that the proposition explicitly links the new water quality standard to the funding mechanism required to deliver it. This connection would provide the certainty needed for the project to proceed responsibly and with confidence.

The Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel has been clear that full lifecycle cost analysis and proper pilot testing are needed before choosing the most suitable treatment option. This work has not been completed by the Government, and Jersey Water's own costings will not be final until our pilot trials finish in mid to late 2027.

At this stage, all cost estimates are based on early information and assumptions that still need to be tested. Given the scale and complexity of meeting a 4ng/l limit, relying on preliminary figures carries a high level of risk. The conclusions could change once more reliable data becomes available.

To avoid this risk, more time is needed to build a clearer technical and financial picture before the new standard is approved. In the meantime, Jersey Water has offered the Government of Jersey Treasury Team full access to our project design work, cost estimates and engineering advisers. This will allow the Government to understand the assumptions behind the numbers and the limitations of the current, early-stage data.

For States Members to make an informed decision, the full costs and funding approach need to be understood. Without this information, it is challenging to assess value for money or whether it is affordable for the Government to fund.

3. Understanding the impact on customer bills

In addition to the investment required to meet the proposed limit, the annual operating costs of achieving the standard are also expected to be significant. For example, the cost of using granular activated carbon (GAC) alone could exceed £1 million per year, depending on how frequently the material needs to be replaced and recycled.

The combined effect of the capital investment and increases in annual operating costs mean a significant increase in water bills for customers. Based on the work completed so far, meeting the proposed standard could increase water bills by as much as 70%-110%, using the capital costs outlined above. The precise impact will depend on the treatment solution selected and the funding model agreed.

This scale of increase would be unprecedented for Jersey and could place considerable financial pressure on households and businesses. Water in Jersey could become among the most expensive in the world, with bills needing to rise by 15-25% every year, for the next five years. The average household water bill is currently around £450 per year, with business bills significantly higher.

Given the existing cost-of-living pressures, there is a real risk that more Islanders and businesses will struggle to afford their water and other essential bills. For a regulatory decision involving such substantial capital and operating costs, it is essential that the full implications for customers are understood before the standard is approved.

Because of the scale of investment required, sufficient time is also needed to explore all viable treatment options. A balance may need to be struck between the regulatory limit set and what is realistically affordable for customers. For example, Jersey Water is about to begin pilot trials of a new liquid powdered activated carbon (LPAC) process. LPAC may deliver meaningful reductions in PFAS concentrations at a fraction of the cost (less than £10 million) of the technologies required to achieve 4ng/l. However, the proposition rules out this option because LPAC is not expected to meet the 4ng/l threshold, and because it requires the continued ability to discharge treatment solids to agricultural land, a matter on which the proposition is silent.

Setting a statutory limit without a clear understanding of these financial consequences risks committing Islanders, businesses, Jersey Water and the Government to obligations that could prove undeliverable, unaffordable and unsustainable. For this reason, it is essential that the States Assembly has full visibility of the bill impacts before making a final decision. This will help ensure that the outcome improves water quality while remaining affordable for Islanders in the long term.

4. Amending the delivery timeline

The proposition sets a compliance timeline of four years and nine months. The Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel recommended implementation “as soon as is practicable and within five years”, although their detailed report notes that “ideally five years” would be required. The Panel also acknowledged that factors specific to Jersey could extend the timeline to “five or more years”.

Jersey Water advised the Panel in September 2025 that meeting the standard within five years would be highly ambitious. This is because several major steps must be completed before a new treatment facility can operate. These include:

- Setting up and completing pilot trials (12-18 months)
- Selecting and acquiring a suitable site, which may require compulsory purchase
- Securing Government funding

- Developing detailed designs
- Obtaining planning consent (likely in the Green Zone)
- Procuring contractors and equipment
- Construction (could be at least three years)
- Testing and commissioning (a minimum of 12 months).

The Panel emphasised the need for realistic timelines and warned against optimistic assumptions. In this context, the proposed timeline does not reflect the scale of the project or the additional complexities that apply in Jersey.

Based on the work required, a more realistic, though still ambitious, timeframe would be no less than seven years from enactment (for example, to 1 April 2033). A key factor will be the speed of the Government's funding approval process. If compliance were required by 1 January 2033, funding would need to be confirmed and available in 2027 to allow work to begin.

The Panel recommended considering an interim PFAS limit while the longer-term solution is delivered. If the timeline is extended, we suggest using the results of the LPAC pilot trials, due to complete in March 2027, to set an interim limit. While LPAC is not expected to achieve 4 ng/l, it could deliver meaningful reductions from today's levels.

The Panel has confirmed that current water quality does not present a cause for concern and that the proposed 4ng/l limit is a future-proofing measure. Average PFAS intake for Islanders from food and water remains below the EFSA's guidance value. In this context, allowing additional time to deliver the necessary infrastructure is both practical and reasonable.

The compliance date should therefore match the actual duration needed to complete the work safely and effectively. Setting a deadline that cannot realistically be met increases the risk of non-delivery, higher cost and does not provide a sound basis for long-term planning or robust regulation.

5. Considering PFAS within Jersey's wider water resource and water security needs

PFAS treatment is only one part of Jersey's long-term water management challenge. The Island is already facing significant pressures on water resources due to climate change, population growth and limited storage capacity. These pressures continue to grow and will require substantial ongoing investment.

Current projections show that, without additional infrastructure, Jersey could face daily water shortages of up to 8.6 million litres (45% of daily demand) by 2035. To address this, Jersey Water is planning a 50% increase in desalination capacity by 2030 at an estimated cost of £26 million. Further, much costlier investment in additional resilience and future water resource development is expected to be needed in the medium to long term (2035+).

The funding from Jersey Water required for PFAS treatment will need to come from a limited capital envelope. If all available funding is directed towards PFAS treatment, there is a real risk that essential projects to maintain the Island's water security, such as desalination expansion, water efficiency improvements and future resource schemes could be delayed or made unaffordable. An intent to extend mains water connections also falls into jeopardy.

It is therefore important that PFAS regulation is considered in the context of Jersey's wider water resource needs and climate-related pressures. Decisions about the PFAS standard will shape the investment choices available for other vital infrastructure, and the States Assembly should have full visibility of these interdependencies when assessing the proposition.

A joined-up approach will help ensure that investment in PFAS treatment supports, rather than constrains, the Island's ability to maintain secure and resilient water supplies for the future.

Conclusion

Jersey Water fully supports the introduction of a clear, health-based PFAS standard for the Island. Our current water supply remains safe and the proposed limit is a forward-looking measure designed to strengthen long-term protection. We are committed to meeting a new standard and to playing our full part in delivering an effective and affordable solution for Islanders.

Our recommendations are intended to help the States Assembly make its decision on the strongest possible evidence. Given the scale, cost and national importance of this project, it is essential that States Members have a complete understanding of the scientific, financial and operational implications before the new standard is approved.

In summary, to support informed decision-making, we suggest that the following be taken into account by the Scrutiny Panel when considering the proposition:

- **Complete the work of the Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel and Steering Group and conduct stakeholder engagement** - Provide the evidence to help States Members make decisions based on clear, complete and reliable information and reduce the need for assumptions in treatment solution design. Consult on the proposed regulatory changes.
- **Ensure funding clarity and alignment with the standard** - Ensure capital and revenue costs are fully understood when assessing the proposition, which should incorporate a commitment to and details of the funding mechanism.
- **Consider the impact on customer bills** - The solution needs to be affordable for customers. It is essential that there is a full understanding of the impact of this decision on water bills for Islanders.
- **Adjust the delivery timeline to reflect the work required** - Allow enough time to enable effective delivery while still achieving reductions in PFAS as soon as reasonably practicable.
- **Consider the wider water resource and resilience impacts** - PFAS treatment is one of several water challenges competing for investment. It is important to ensure that decisions on PFAS treatment support, rather than constrain, the Island's long-term water security.

Jersey Water remains committed to working collaboratively with the Government, Scrutiny and the wider States Assembly throughout this process. We will continue to provide access to our technical work, costings and advisers to support transparent decision-making and help shape a long-term PFAS and water-management strategy that delivers reliable, sustainable and cost-effective outcomes for the Island.

We would be pleased to provide any further information that the Scrutiny Panel may require.

Yours sincerely



Helier Smith
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