

The Rt Hon Rebecca Pow MP  
Minister for Environmental Quality and Resilience,  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Date: 13 November 2023

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you for your extremely prompt response to my correspondence of 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023, asking that the Secretary of State request attendance at a statutory committee by the Environment Agency at a forthcoming Staffordshire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting to discuss the health impacts from Walleys Quarry, with the base data coming from the Environment Agency's monitoring equipment.

Thank you for indicating in your correspondence that the answers to the committee's questions are already in the public domain. However, if that is the case, then I am sure that the Environment Agency won't have any problems in attending the statutory committee just to provide those answers for committee to better understand.

Furthermore, whilst I have indicated the areas of interest, I cannot predict what committee members will ask, so I think it is probably a mistake to suggest that all questions have already been answered and are in the public domain.

Furthermore, at the Teams meeting with the Environment Agency in early October 2023, they indicated that they would be looking at the historic data and whether it could be extrapolated and that information is important to understand to understand the health impacts on the residents of Staffordshire. That information is not in the public domain and is in part what we need to explore and understand fully.

I am sure you are, like me, a great fan of the sanctity of Parliament and the right it has to get open and honest answers as part of its statutory role.

I am just asking for the same courtesy and transparency so that we can get at the facts of the situation so that the residents affected can best understand the impact that this situation has had on their health and wider wellbeing.

To be clear, without the input from the people responsible for gathering the data, we will be missing a key input to inform the health discussions for the day.

As a longstanding and experienced chair of this committee, I am happy that questions to the Environment Agency, which are outside of their remit can be easily redirected to the Health Security Agency, who have already confirmed attendance. And I am somewhat struggling to remember the Environment Agency ever extending into a health-based discussion in previous attendance at the committee, but I stand to be corrected. But I can give this assurance.

Finally, the role of committee is to stand outside of the formal Public Health, ICS and UKHSA structures so that effective scrutiny can take place, so whilst other agencies may have made joint statements, it is the outcomes from what has happened that need wider scrutiny, so that the general public can rely on the robustness of those statements.

Given the above, I think it would benefit the Environment Agency to reconsider their position, so that the committee can fulfil its statutory function at committee next Monday.

Yours sincerely



**Councillor Jeremy Pert**  
**Staffordshire Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee –**  
**Chair**  
***on behalf of the***

**Staffordshire Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

CC Member of Parliament – Aaron Bell MP

Chief Executive, Environment Agency