

Date: 19 April 2024

Damian Green, Ashford

[damian.green.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:damian.green.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Damian,

**Re: Hoad's Wood, Bethersden**

Thank you for your email of 15 April 2024 addressed to Matt Higginson. I am sorry that you were unable to make the public meeting yesterday in respect of Hoads Wood and hope that the issues preventing this are now resolved.

I am pleased to provide you with the following update.

Firstly, I can confirm that the Secretary of State has received the combined letter from the local community and interested groups and your own communication. We are providing briefings and advising on the Environment Agency's position and the actions we are taking.

With regard to the site we have either carried out or put the following into place:

- Monitoring of leachate/water run-off from the site is in place and being carried out at specific locations on the River Beult and on site. The full chemical analysis breakdown is not yet available but the flow from the site has reduced since our first sample a few weeks ago.
- Air quality monitoring in the local area will be in place by the end of April. We will take into account weather patterns where we expect odour to be present and will not be limited to any particular times or days of the week.
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) have carried out an initial thermal scan of the waste which shows the current fire risk to be very low. We will work with KFRS to repeat these scans as the weather improves. KFRS have also carried out their own operational risk assessment for the site.
- A local waste operator was permitted onto site to carry out an initial assessment of the volume of waste present. I am aware that the cost estimate has been separately shared with you.
- We are working with Natural England to explore a longer term strategy for Hoads Wood which will need to include ensuring the site is secure from further risk of criminality.
- When the results from the water quality and air quality assessments are known and finalised these will be shared with public health professionals at

Kent County Council and United Kingdom Health Security Agency for a public health risk assessment.

- We are continuing to work with all regulatory partners to mitigate the risks to the local environment and people and progressing action with a view to prosecuting those we believe are responsible for the illegal commercial waste tipping

In respect of site clearance, several options are being considered. None are straightforward but we will work with others to explore feasibility and funding options. Following yesterday's meeting with the community, we are keen to establish a smaller group of community representatives to work with and will seek to work with the Parish Council and others to this end. We will of course keep you advised of any developments and if you want to put in place any particular arrangements for communication with yourself, then please don't hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely,



**Sally Harvey**  
**Area Director – Kent, South London and East Sussex**