

## **Email from Mr. Thomas, Town Clerk, Eton Town Council 19/3/14:**

Dear Ms.

I am sorry that you found my response disappointing, but I suspect there are a lot of lessons to be learned from an event that probably doesn't have a precedent, given the unusual weather we had recently.

Had TW or the EA given us advance notice of what they intended doing, or subsequently advised us that they had done it, then I am sure the Town Councillors would have wanted to respond more directly. I understand that the agencies in question were in contact with South Bucks District Council and Dorney Parish Council as the ditches were in those Authorities administrative areas, but they did not contact us. As I said in my letter, I also did not receive any complaints directly from any residents, and I only discovered RBWM's involvement after hearing from Cllr. Lawless that he had contacted them about local concerns. At that point I telephoned Craig Miller and was able to report on his contact with local residents and the pressure he had applied to TW and the EA.

RBWM actually should have a considerable influence with these agencies because of its' responsibilities surrounding Public Protection and Public Health, so it did seem logical for Craig Miller to pursue matters with TW and the EA, which he was doing.

Given the lack of information being passed onto the Town Council, it was impossible to respond more effectively, and we will be pressing the agencies to involve us fully and much more quickly in future.

In order to clarify the statutory position for residents, I mentioned in my response to you that the Town Council has no powers to force any of the Agencies to take action, but of course we could have tried to apply more pressure ourselves had we received more information at an earlier stage. This was only stated to outline the legal position, and certainly not as a justification for avoiding involvement on behalf of residents. Unfortunately the residents also did not contact us, so we were not aware of the nature of the local concerns.

I think there are many lessons to be learned by all concerned, and I have e mailed Craig Miller offering support and asking him to involve the Town Council in any public meeting being organised with TW and the EA. I have no doubt that better communication between everyone concerned is a definite lesson for us all, and revised policies and procedures for TW and the EA also need to be considered. Hopefully these can be addressed at a future meeting with the Agencies concerned.

Yours sincerely

**Chris Thomas**  
**Town Clerk**

Eton Town Council

Dear Mr. Thomas,

Thank you for your statement.

This is very disappointing; residents will have expected ETC to respond more effectively.

I can appreciate ETC may feel they cannot action any resolution and, without knowing ETC's legal remit, we could be mistaken in assuming you have bandwidth for action. However, your outrage regarding communication/damage and weight behind the issue would have helped greatly. I can't help but feel you weren't sufficiently apprised of the damage/distress and appalling lack of effective communication resulting in wildlife being decimated and villagers and their animals becoming ill.

I'm surprised that such an appalling issue would only have been investigated dependent on the level of complaint from residents. Shouldn't actions to protect the village or at least register concern be made without residents having to complain?

During conversations over the past weeks it became clear residents had incorrectly assumed ETC/RBWM would jump to defend the village automatically.

TW/EA may be the agencies responsible for dealing with recent flooding, however by standing by ETC are giving a clear signal that discharge of raw sewage into accessible watercourses without hazard notification is acceptable now and in the future. The sheer fact that ETC did not receive any information from either agency is remiss. We will continue to highlight the communication issue such that residents will, at least, be secure in the knowledge that the correct local authorities and representatives will be contacted in event of future discharge.

After emails and telephone conversations Craig Miller visited Cornwall Close residents and did chase TW, however, we have received no further update or actions.

TW issued a letter after much haranguing by residents and RBWM however, it minimized the serious issue, was economical in the truth of the emission and failed to answer the queries raised. BBC Berks received a comment from TW following press contact to apologise for 'rotten meat smell' and confirm they were sending in the tankers. Again, this is misleading as access has been requested via EA to Dorney Common to vacuum raw sewage from the ditch extending towards Dorney farmhouses. The Eton Wick clean up and repairs to the stream and adjacent land is still to be confirmed, as is the date for ceasing discharge.

Surely, it is in ETC's interest to investigate the failures/effects and ensure you are advised of future issues. I understand Mr. Lawless is hopeful ETC will press RBWM for a written update and public meeting with TW/EA in attendance.

Yours sincerely,

## **Email from Mr. Thomas, Town Clerk, Eton Town Council 14/3/14:**

### **Boveney and Roundmoor Ditch Sewage Pollution**

Dear Ms.

In response, I feel that I should start by making it clear that neither the Town Council nor RBWM have any responsibility for the ditches affected, and indeed have no statutory powers for dealing with the sewage contamination. Ultimate responsibility lies with Thames Water, and the Environment Agency as the regulatory body for protection of the environment.

However, the Town Council has been concerned about the issue, and many of the Town Councillors live in Eton Wick and have themselves been affected by the problem.

As stated, Thames Water and the Environment Agency are the responsible bodies for dealing with the recent problems that resulted from the heavy rain and flooding. The Town Council however has been monitoring the matter, and Councillor Peter Lawless in particular has been working behind the scenes to alert Councillors and Officers at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead to the problems.

The Town Council however received no direct information about the problems from any agency, and also received no complaints directly from residents. When recently made aware of the local concerns, the Town Clerk contacted Craig Miller, the Royal Borough's Head of Public Protection, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March to find out what measures were being taken by the Royal Borough. Mr Miller advised that he had put considerable pressure on Thames Water to give better advice and information to local people about the issue, and to rectify the problems at Slough sewage works. This resulted in Thames Water writing to all residents of Eton Wick to explain the nature of the problem, what they would be doing about it, and to put minds at rest about the quality of the drinking water from taps. A meeting between Thames Water and the Environment Agency was also due to take place the following week to discuss remediation measures.

Cllr. Lawless has responded to a large number of enquiries from local people, and he produced an information factsheet which was posted in local shops.

The Town Council was advised of the position at its' meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> March and was happy that the Royal Borough would continue to put pressure on Thames Water to get remediation works underway as soon as possible.

In response to your specific questions :-

**Short Term** – I can't really answer any of these questions as they relate to actions taken or not taken by TW or the EA, and these agencies will need to respond.

**Mid Term** – I will raise these questions with Councillors at the next meeting of the Town Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> April. However, this will require TW and the EA amending their procedures so that they notify both RBWM and the Town Council of future applications for discharge, rather than just South Bucks District Council in whose administrative area the ditches lay.

**Long Term** – I can't answer these questions either at the moment and responses may well be required from TW the EA, but I will raise the matter with RBWM and at the next Town Council meeting.

I trust this gives you an adequate response for now.

Yours sincerely  
Chris Thomas

Dear Mr. Thomas,

Would be grateful for your assistance please.

As you will be aware from Mr. Highy, Mr Lawless and Mr. Lovell, Eton Wick residents are working to raise awareness and seek resolution to the TW sewage discharge into Roundmoor and Boveney Ditch.

Residents were not aware of the problem until waters receded. Early on the 25/2 my attention was drawn to a swan in distress. He was covered in grey slime and unable to clean his feathers. When I ventured into the garden I was appalled to find highly odorous, slimy effluent covering banks and gardens. Fish were dead floating in the water; a fox was lying dead in the reeds, wildfowl had either died or left our beautiful stream. Sadly, the village as a whole was affected. Due to flood levels Roundmoor Ditch backed up into Colenorton Brooke also polluting the watercourses on this side of the village. We are surrounded by smelly, degrading effluent.

This discovery resulted in us spending many days trying to gain information from Thames Water, the Environment Agency and RBWM. Rather than again describe this tortuous time I have attached the leaflet issued to residents living next to the stream, homes close by and meeting points within the village to spread the word. Whilst a number of residents had started to question authorities, the leaflets gave focus for complaint and we started to see some action.

A number of residents are now acting together to raise awareness, question the agencies involved and work for short, mid and long term solutions.

The problems since EA's issue of the open ended licence on 19/1 are now well known. Items have appeared in the press over the last two weeks and today Mark Cannon was interviewed on BBC Radio Berks; the matter is also featured on the BBC website.

However, there are questions to be answered and we would be grateful to receive an update on actions being taken by Eton Town Council. During a conversation with my neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Lovell on Sunday. Mr. Lovell advised it was a Borough matter not ETC. When we both raised the issue of representation by our local town councillors, Mr. Lovell replied he understood ETC had issued correspondence but could not confirm recipients, contents or response.

Some Eton Wick residents have received a letter from TW which trivialises the issue plus they have received a leaflet containing the RBWM response. However, we have not received comment or confirmation of actions from ETC, Cllr. Lawless or Mr. Afriyie MP. It appears it is only the residents fighting this issue. I would be grateful if you could confirm actions taken as we will be providing another update leaflet this weekend.

This has been a sad and upsetting matter; fundamentally due to lack of communication and respect for residents. As soon as the discharge occurred each body should have worked with the correct local authorities and residents/landowners to raise awareness. Due this appalling failure residents and their pets became ill and wildlife suffered without rescue. The matter has united the village; it would be remiss to underestimate the strength of feeling.

The following are a representation of the questions residents would like answered?

Short term:

Why were residents and landowners not informed and warning notices displayed at time of discharge?

How did EA manage to advice Public Health England and SBDC but not RBWM?

Why did the EA wait until 6/2 to issue public health warnings?

Why were local animal rescues not advised?

Why did TW fail to tell the truth to residents who questioned engineers following installation of hydrogen peroxide pumps and aeration equipment at the cattle grid?

Why, despite complaints and visits from TW on 25/2 during which we requested urgent action, did TW wait until 3/3 to issue 'trivialising' correspondence?

When will the discharge cease? (Floodwaters have now subsided but the discharge continues particularly at night).

What will be the published programme of works to clean up the stream and adjacent land/properties?

When will the works commence?

Will TW make recompense for property damage and losses due to personal illness and to cover vet bills due to failure in notification?

Will TW ensure all residents are made aware? (EA have confirmed each resident will have to contact TW personally)

What will be the published plan of action to re-stock the stream and protect its bio-diversity?

Will RBWM be responding to residents requests to review their council tax banding as they are living next to an open sewer with a high chance this will be a regular occurrence?

Will TW make recompense to residents for any affect on their house value. Vendors are legally obliged to make known any neighbour disputes of matters affecting their property at time of sale?

Mid term:

What will all relevant bodies learn from this matter and will they document and set in place a comprehensive emergency procedure should an application for discharge be made in future?

How can we ensure our local elected representatives support residents and respond/communicate effectively with residents during such incidents?

Long term:

What rights do residents have and what action can they take to prohibit the discharge?

What criteria need to be met before EA allow TW to discharge storm tanks?

What are the alternative options to avoid discharge?

What investment is TW making to ensure sewer system can cope with additional planned homes for Slough and climate change?

What can be done to strictly monitor water quality?

Can the natural water element, removed during construction of Jubilee River, be re-instated with cost carried by TW?

Interestingly, we met with Stuart Keable (EA Fisheries Officer) on Tuesday this week. Stuart was extremely concerned by his findings and helpful in his advice; he will also be raising the issue within EA generally. Stuart also mentioned TW and EA have been called to the Dorney Parish Council AGM next week to face questions and provide solutions. He was surprised that residents would not be represented there; he was unaware we are represented by RBWM and ETC.

Could you confirm whether ETC also intend to call EA/TW to order and will it be possible for resident representatives to attend please.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on [redacted] or by email at anytime if you would like to discuss the issues, visit the affected areas or require further information.

Your assistance is much appreciated and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,