

Email to Craig Miller 25/3/14:

Dear Craig

Hopefully you will be able to move things forward for the residents of Eton Wick at your meeting on the 25th. At the risk of repeating myself I have detailed below the key issues we would like addressing

We now have confirmation from Thames they have been discharging un-treated effluent into Roundmore Ditch from early December! Why no communication from them to residents until 03rd March !

Non existent combined response / communication to residents from T.W. , E.A. , R.B.W.M. and Eton Town Council, even though copied in on all emails. No public health notices displayed.

When responses did start to happen they were mostly defensive, listing reasons for non - action, not helpful to residents. All emails available.

Why does the natural water element of Roundmore Ditch now terminate on the north bank of the Jubilee river, meaning all water south of the river, through Eton Wick, is now 100% treated effluent of inconsistent standard.

This obviously happened when the Jubilee river was built, before that we had a natural stream combined with treated effluent water piped into it. Why, when was this decision made?

We are told the release of un - treated storm sewage into main rivers is an unfortunate occasional necessity. One of the main mitigating comments Thames Water frequently use is how 'dilute' this sewage is in large rivers, i.e. causes less harm. We can assure Thames it is **NOT** very dilute sending it into our network of small streams and ditches running through Eton Wick, taking a 3 mile route though our community before it reaches the Thames.

On its way it -

- Floods onto open common land where dog walkers frequent, horses are ridden, children play, cattle are grazed and anglers fish. Several residents pets have been ill, as have residents which has been reported in local media..
- It then runs adjacent to approx 150 homes, flooding into peoples gardens, driveways etc. Creating a permanent sewage stink around the village and in peoples houses.
- On the other side to these homes it floods into crop fields with again public access paths.
- After this it runs through our village recreation ground with children playing etc.
- Then more fields, footpaths before finally reaching the Thames!
- Within the stream it caused 98% fish and macro-invertebrate destruction, denuded the stream of all bird life, ducks, moorhens, kingfishers, herons etc all gone, hopefully not harmed.
- The resident pair of swans living on the stream covered in sewage slime, food source gone, swan lifeline un-able to assist at first.

There has to be a better way of getting this sewage 'dilute' straight into a large volume of water where all the above can be avoided!

We would like to know the chemical make up of the water we are living alongside.

With T.W. using our streams in Eton Wick as 'optional open sewers' this will clearly have an effect on house values. We would also seek to have our council tax re-banded.

We look forward to hearing of progress on these matters, thank you.

Kind Regards
Mark Cannon

Email from Craig Miller 17/3/14:

I am going to raise the co-ordination and flow of information with Thames Water today by e-mail and again at a meeting I have arranged with them and the EA on the 25th as the information you have has not been sent to or copied to the local authority.

Thank you for forwarding this information onto me it is useful.

Best regards

Craig Miller

Email from Craig Miller 18/3/14:

Dear Mr,

Thank you for your email addressed to the Leader of Council.

Councillor Burbage has read your e-mail and asked Councillor Cox, Lead Member for Environmental Services to arrange for me to respond to you directly in respect of this matter.

I am sorry that you feel the Public Protection Unit of the council has not been involved with the investigation and resolution of the sewage discharge events into the Roundmoor and Boveney ditches. Please let me assure you that council officers and I have been actively engaged with this matter since receiving contact from a resident at the end of February. I have listed below a summary of the actions that the council has undertaken in respect of this matter so far and details of future steps that are to be implemented in this regard.

Council officers immediately made contact with Thames Water (TW) following notification of this event to ascertain details of the incident and to request that information be issued to residents of Eton Wick. Council officers also investigated reports that households had been issued with water sampling pots and concerns regarding mains water quality. Our officers escalated this matter within TW who were able to confirm at that point that the water sampling pots had not been issued by them. Further investigation by council officers identified that the sampling pots had been distributed by a private company as part of their advertising campaign to provide water softening products. This was purely coincidental timing. TW did respond to the councils request for information to be issued to residents by posting information onto their website reassuring customers that mains drinking water was safe. The council continued to ask for further information to be made available to residents in respect of the discharge into the ditch itself and TW subsequently issued a letter to residents in the vicinity of ditches with information about this event. I can confirm that all residents who made contact with the council either directly or through their local elected member in respect of this matter received a response providing an update and advice and guidance.

As you may be aware, the council does not have any legal jurisdiction in respect of the watercourse or discharges into it. This is a matter that falls within the remit of the Environment Agency (EA). In view of this, council officers have and continue to be in direct contact with the EA in respect of this matter. As with TW, officers requested that the EA make information available to residents about this event and requested details about the duration of the event and subsequent clean up plans etc. We currently await details of the plan and have chased this information this week.

RBWM does provide public health advice and guidance in events such as this. The council's flooding webpage has throughout this incident and the wider flooding events carried useful information and advice for householders in respect of health and hygiene associated with flooding incidents. I also left a supply of Public Health England leaflets containing public health guidance relevant to this event with a resident who was coordinating resident's responses for distribution when I visited their property to assess the situation on the ground on the 7th March 2014. Our Environmental Protection officers responded to complaints received from residents who were affected by noise and water vapour arising from the aeration pumps and generators located adjacent to the cattle grid access onto Dorney Common. Our officers were able to have the generators moved successfully mitigating the noise and vapour impact on the neighbouring residents. Council officers also made contact with the Swan Lifeline charity to provide advice in respect of public health considerations when rescuing swans or wildfowl from the water. At the time of our call the charity advised us that they were content to leave the birds in situ.

The council's public health team and colleagues from Public Health England have also had direct contact with the Deputy Head of the local school in Eton Wick during w/c 10 March in respect of an enquiry from the Head of the School about sickness absence. Investigations did not find links to the Roundmoor and Boveney event but highlighted symptoms and the same prompt recovery expected with a viral gastroenteritis, likely to be Norovirus.

The Senior Health Protection Practitioner found that the school had implemented correct infection control procedures and issued advice and guidance to the school to back up the actions that they had already implemented.

The council continues to maintain pressure on both TW and the EA and I can confirm that I have arranged a meeting with TW and the EA along with colleagues from Public Health and the neighbouring local authority for next week and will be seeking detailed information from both parties about the clean up from this event. I will also be focussing on the communication from all parties associated with this event and how this can be improved. In addition, I am currently in the process of organising a public meeting in Eton Wick with representatives from TW and the EA to explain why this event occurred and the subsequent actions from each organisation. I will of course ensure that residents are made aware of this meeting as soon as speakers and a location etc have been confirmed.

I can also advise you that Councillor Carwyn Cox, Lead Member for Environmental Services has written to the Chief Executive Officer of TW inviting him to attend a meeting with local elected members to explain his organisations performance and response to the flooding issues (including Roundmoor and Boveney ditches). This letter was sent recently and we await a response and confirmation of attendance from TW.

I appreciate that this is a worrying event for householders and assure you that the council will do all that it can within the powers it has to achieve the best outcome for residents.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you should wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Craig Miller

Email from Craig Miller 17/3/14:

Thank you for your mail.

Since my last mail of 7 March, I can confirm that I have now arranged for representatives of Thames Water and the Environment Agency to attend a meeting on 25 March with the council and representatives from our Public Health team and colleagues from South Bucks District Council. As mentioned within my last mail the purpose of this meeting will be to review this event with a particular focus on communication and the associated communication actions in response to an event such as this.

I have reviewed all of the queries and questions that you have listed within your mail and will raise these at the meeting on 25 March and seek to gain a response from the relevant organisation.

By way of further update on this event, I can confirm that RBWM public health officers and colleagues from Public Health England had direct contact with the Deputy Head of the local school in Eton Wick during w/c 10 March in respect of an enquiry from the Head of the School about sickness absence. Investigations did not find links to the Roundmoor and Boveney event but highlighted symptoms and the same prompt recovery expected with a viral gastroenteritis, likely to be Norovirus. The Senior Health Protection Practitioner found that the school had implemented correct infection control procedures and issued advice and guidance to the school to back up the actions that they had already implemented.

I will of course provide you with a further update following the meeting next week.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Craig Miller

Email from Craig Miller 7/3/14:

Thank you for your mail.

I can confirm that I have forwarded your e-mail onto the contacts that we have established within Thames Water and the Environment Agency as requested.

Since I visited your property I have made contact with Swan lifeline and provided advice in respect of public health advice that reflects the information detailed in the Public Health England leaflets left with you. At the time of my call I was advised that the sanctuary were happy to leave the swans and other wildfowl in situ. I have also spoken with the Environment Agency again and was advised that a statement was being prepared for distribution to residents.

As promised in my previous mail, I have today e-mailed both Thames Water and the Environment Agency and invited representatives from both organisations to a multi-agency meeting to review this event and highlight potential learning points. I will be looking to focus on communications around events such as this.

I was in Eton Wick this morning and note that the aeration devices have now been removed from the water adjacent to the cattle grid onto the common.

I will of course keep you updated with any information that I receive. Do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can be of further assistance.

With best regards

Craig Miller

Dear Craig,

This weekend I compiled an update leaflet including your email and posted to the 150 residents who received the original neighbourly notice. I also posted your leaflets to 19 of our close neighbours.

It was extremely interesting; many people stopped me to discuss and relate their tales of TW disinformation, wildlife casualties and illness experienced within families and by their pets.

The matter is uniting our village.

Forgetting the long terms issues for the moment (which will be addressed by concerted village action), not one resident has received the letter from TW and warning signs have not been displayed around the stream. We are still living next to an open stinking sewer without any agency informing residents of raw sewage content, safety actions or date for discharge to cease and plans for cleaning.

It is ten days since we highlighted the issue and still no response. What we do we have to do?

Residents have confirmed they are contacting RBWM regarding withholding of Council Tax and TW re: non payment of water bills until the matter is fully resolved. As TW have an open licence to pollute the stream as necessary, those living directly next to the stream also require their Council Tax banding to be reviewed. Legal advice has also been sought and remuneration is being investigated for the effect on house pricesvendors must declare any disputes or known issues within the Sellers Declaration. Who would want to live next to effluent?

I visited a neighbour yesterday to find they were mid phone conversation with Anda Tsilika at the EA. Anda confirmed a statement will be issued (hopefully next week) by the EA. Anda also confirmed TW would be responsible for cleaning the stream, banks, gardens and undertaking repairs to damaged properties. I asked whether TW would be informing residents; Anda replied it would be up to residents to contact TW individually. I can assure TW all residents will be made aware and will not be fobbed off by TW.

I raised the collection of dead wildlife including our decaying fox once more to be advised EA had contacted RBWM who confirmed disposal would be the responsibility of the landowner. So originally EA wouldn't collect carcass as not in the water, RBWM wouldn't collect as animal could be contaminated by stream water and now every one expects Eton College to dispose of the fox plus other wildlife which is dying. Anda was surprised to learn the land behind Tilstone Close/Cornwall Close/Queens Road/Princes Close running down to the river is owned by Eton College and farmed for wheat. The field behind the roads mentioned was covered completely during the flood with water containing raw sewage ... how pleasant for the food chain.

Anda also confirmed EA had now contacted farmers who graze cattle on Dorney Common to advise of contamination.

However, visitors and dog walkers are back on the common and in the field behinds our houses any chance EA/TW could put up warning notices?

I fail to understand why or how there has been such a monumental failure in communication of a public health hazard to residents, villagers, visitors, farmers and landowners. And why, knowing the reaction of residents, EA/TW have failed to respond with speed. Discourteous and disgraceful.

Can I please ask you to pass this email onto your contacts at TW and EA as a matter of urgency.

Many thanks,

Email from Craig Miller 28/2/14:

Thank you for your mail.

It was good to discuss this matter with you over the phone and to also talk to your husband this morning when I visited your property. I understand yours and your neighbours concerns about the event you have been experiencing. As discussed, our officers have been escalating this matter with Thames Water and the Environment Agency on behalf of our residents. Attached below is an e-mail that I am sending to residents who have made contact with the council in respect of this matter. Please feel free to pass this onto your neighbours if you think it would be useful for them. I also visited your neighbour (next door but one) this morning and was able to provide him with an update and details of the dialogue we have had with TW and the EA.

I left a supply of public health leaflets with your husband for distribution to people who you think it may be useful for. I have also attached a link to an electronic version in the e-mail below.

I hope the information below is helpful. I can confirm that I am also going to be in discussion with Swan lifeline to try and help address the issues that they have had.

In the meantime, I hope you have a good weekend. Do not hesitate to contact me directly if you should have any further queries.

With best regards

Craig Miller

The Environmental Protection (EP) team at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM) were made aware of this situation earlier this week. On receipt of this information our officers immediately made contact with Thames Water to ascertain details of the incident and to request that information be issued to residents of Eton Wick. TW were able to confirm at that point that the water sampling pots received by some households had not been issued by them. RBWM EP officers investigated this matter further and identified that the sampling pots had been distributed by a private company as part of their advertising campaign to provide water softening products. This was purely coincidental timing.

I note that a number of residents have indicated that they were informed that the RBWM Environmental Health team was notified of this discharge by the Environment Agency on 6th February. The RBWM EP team had no record of this notification and Environment Agency officers have confirmed to me this morning that this notification was made to a neighbouring local authority and not RBWM. For clarification, RBWM would not in any case have any legal jurisdiction over the discharge or the sewage treatment works and any subsequent impact on the water course. This is a function undertaken by the Environment Agency.

RBWM does however provide public health advice and guidance in events such as this. The council's flooding webpage has throughout the recent flooding events carried useful information and advice in respect of health and hygiene associated with flooding incidents. I have attached below an extract from the relevant section of the website for information. This web page contains links to useful information from Public Health England, the Environment Agency and the Food Standards Agency

Health and hygiene - some useful websites

Flood water may be contaminated with sewage and animal or other waste and so may contain harmful bacteria or chemicals. However the risk of illness is low because of dilution in the high volume of water. A number of agencies have advice on their websites:

- [Public Health](#)
- [Environment Agency - http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/default.aspx](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/default.aspx)
- [Food Standards Agency - http://food.gov.uk/policy-advice/microbiology/flood](http://food.gov.uk/policy-advice/microbiology/flood)

In summary, the health risk from this type of event is low as long as basic hygiene practices are observed should anyone comes into contact with the flood waters or deposits. Specific information in this regard (particularly when dealing with a clean up) is provided via the following link:

http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1317140784662 I have made visited Eton Wick today and have left a supply of this leaflet with a resident for distribution to neighbours etc. Please do not hesitate to contact me if it would be helpful for a further supply of leaflets to be provided to you for distribution to any other residents who you feel may benefit from this information.

RBWM officers been in regular contact with Thames Water and the Environment Agency throughout this week to try and get information for our residents in respect of this matter. I am pleased to report that TW did respond to the requests from the local authority and posted information onto their website yesterday to reassure their customers that the mains drinking water is safe. I am also able to confirm that TW will be sending a letter to residents with details and advice about this event. I have received a copy of this letter and attach a copy for your information.

Please let me reassure you that RBWM will maintain contact with TW and the Environment Agency in respect of this matter and will be requesting to review with both the communication and notification procedures that are implemented following events such as this.

I hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you should wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Craig Miller

Interim Head of Public Protection