

Dear Rachel,

Thank you for your response; the questions were raised with RBWM and have since been amended in readiness for the forthcoming Public Meeting. However, many remain as detailed below and I have responded in red to ensure text is clear.

Thank you,

Melanie

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**From:** CUSTOMER.FEEDBACK@THAMESWATER.CO.UK  
[mailto:CUSTOMER.FEEDBACK@THAMESWATER.CO.UK]  
**Sent:** 28 March 2014 12:51  
**To:** xxxxxx  
**Subject:** IRef:1011713364 Our Ref :

-Thames Water  
Customer Resolution  
PO Box 436  
Swindon  
SN38 1TU

Telephone: 08456 410038  
Fax: 01793 424291  
Email: [Customer.Feedback@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:Customer.Feedback@thameswater.co.uk)

28 March 2014

Our Ref : 33120816

### **Sewage contamination**

Dear Ms Critchell

I've been passed your email from the RBWM. I'm very sorry to hear that you were affected by the discharging and I appreciate how upsetting this must've been for you. I hope that the answers I provide you are of assistance. I have only answered the questions we're able to do so.

Sadly, unless you have lived next to an open sewer for three months you will be unable to appreciate the effect on Eton Wick and Dorney residents. Perhaps you would understand better had TW failed to communicate the level of hazard in your location, killing wildlife and resulting in residents, their children and pets becoming ill.

### Short term

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

I hope you'll accept our sincere apologies for the slow communication. We had approximately 150 sewage treatment works in a similar position and all of our efforts were being directed at keeping them compliant with their regulatory obligation and keeping the sites running when faced with serious site flooding.

Three months is a complete underestimation for 'slow communication' and an apology is simply insufficient. Villagers will not accept your excuse for failing to advise of a serious public health hazard simply because you had 150 sewage treatment works in a similar position. At the recent Dorney Parish Council meeting your representative, Hilary Murgatroyd, also apologised confirming TW were too 'stretched' to even display signs near the water courses. If you have responded similarly to the other 149 discharges, I suspect you will be over stretched in making reparation. You are certainly already too overstretched to investigate and understand this matter allowing you to respond in an effective and sincere manner.

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

Regrettably, I'm unable to answer this question as we didn't set up the hydrogen peroxide dosing, a contractor was engaged to do this. However, I'm very disappointed to hear that the contractor wasn't helpful at the time of their visit. I can assure you that this will be taken up with them as this isn't the level of service we expect our customers to receive.

Yet again, TW try to blame another party. The pump engineers may well have been contractors but the TW engineers, with your logo clearly emblazoned on their vans and bodies, were not. You feel TW contractors inability to provide correct information is not the level of service you expect customers to receive. However, TW failed to notify residents and landowners of the hazard from day one ... pot, kettle, black?

**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?**

I'm sorry to hear you feel our correspondence trivialised the events, I can assure you that this was not our intention. I've been made aware that the initial letter was sent on 26/2, I'm sorry you didn't receive yours till a later date.

Incorrect. Jim Jenkins initially forwarded the proposed letter to Craig Miller at RBWM dated 28/2/14. This letter was in fact delayed and residents received a letter dated 3/3/14 on the 4-5/3/14. The content matched the original proposed letter. However, the letter was not issued to all residents as requested and receipt seemed to be on a scattergun approach. After three months discharging, residents expected a full explanation, a date for the discharge to cease and clear proposals to clean the stream and make recompense. It was, as one resident described the letter, 'a pat on the head' letter.

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

I've been advised we stopped discharging into the watercourse on 12/3. While I understand water levels may have subsided, our networks were still impacted by the wet weather and working under full capacity.

Incorrect. Jim Jenkins at the Dorney Parish Council on 19/3 confirmed discharging had only just ceased as TW needed to empty the tanks to clean the debris remaining. In an email to the Angling Trust on 18/3, TW's Richard Aylard commented STW had reached the point where it was able to treat incoming flows and would begin to address the retained storm tanks.

**What will be the published programme of works to clean up the stream and adjacent land/properties?** A clean up plan has been agreed with the EA and will start with hoovering sediment from the Boveney ditch then this will be followed by gravel replacement as directed by the EA. Then, the fish will be restocked. I'm not able to provide you with a specific date at this time as we're waiting the outcome of the meeting, which was carried out on 25/3 and any further decisions that have arisen from this.

I attended the meeting with TW/EA/RBWM on Monday afternoon. Great emphasis was indeed placed on spawning grounds/re-stocking as this was the area the team specialised in. However, it was clear to see TW failed to understand the impact on residents and the level of clean up they were expecting to the banks, accessible land and their gardens/property. The TW representative assured us he would relay the concerns to the correct team. You have also clearly missed replying to the issue. Documented details of clean up are requested and expected.

**When will works commence?** We are currently working with the contractors to determine availability, but I can assure you that we will be starting the works as soon as possible. **A documented programme is requested and expected.**

**Will TW make recompense for property damage and losses due to personal illness and to cover vet bills due to failure in notification?** Any claim will have to be made by the individual claimant. We will need to see all documentation to support the claim such as photographs, copies of paid invoices, quotations for repairs or evidence to show loss. All claims will be considered on their own merit. Until a claim is received, we're not able to confirm whether any compensation would be considered but we will happily look at each claim that comes in.

The suffering caused to residents and animals is completely down to TW's failure to advise speedily and correctly on aspects of public health. By way of our website, leaflets and public meeting we will ensure all residents are aware of claim process.

**Will TW ensure all residents are made aware (EA have confirmed each resident will have to contact TW personally)** While we do all we can to reduce the impact to our customers, we have no obligation to inform residents of when a storm discharge occurs. We do operate a customer centre who work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and we would ask that reports are made to us so we can ensure our records are up to date as to who has been affected.

This question refers to recompense to residents and asks whether TW will make all residents aware of routes for recompense. Your answer refers to making residents aware of future discharges, and is in light of recent TW actions high handed and failing in understanding the impact on our villages. TW are fully aware of the date and time STW tanks go to discharge. Do not hide behind a procedure that makes residents responsible for alerting TW to sewage discharge. Jim Jenkins confirmed STW were unable to cope with an additional 1100l/s throughout the last three months which TW discharged into our village. The discharge was so great the minor watercourse banks were exceeded and TW flooded the lands directly adjacent to the stream surrounding our village with effluent. Let me make this quite clear .... TW flooded our villages with water containing untreated effluent without notice at any point.

**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?** While I appreciate your strength of feeling, we're not actually obliged to compensate any person wishing to sell their home, who has been affected by flooding. **You have missed the point completely. We are not highlighting flooding per se.** Residents home values are affected by living next to an open sewer which TW retain the right to pollute whenever they deem necessary. Plus, as described above, the only reason the adjacent lands flooded to such an extent was by TW's need to discharge 1100l/s for three months. Vendors are responsible for declaring any aspects which may affect their property and its boundaries. Solely due to TW actions, residents selling houses will have to declare the open sewer ... would you purchase a house here knowing TW have every intention of repeating this practice? As your representative admitted this week, residents would be surprised by how often TW discharge into the stream!!

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 the future?** I'm sure you can appreciate, it's hard to confirm precisely what will be learned from this incident as there is still a lot to be considered after our meeting. I've been advised that applications are not required, our sewage works are designed to work in the manner they did and have done exactly what we would've expected them to do. It's just unfortunate that owing to the wet weather, it was in such an extreme form

Let me re-cap. TW initially lied about the date the discharge started. However, Jim Jenkins admitted on 19/3 it commenced in early December. TW did not advise any agencies/local authorities. The EA admit to investigating from 19/1 following receipt of complaints from residents (EA were actually investigating early January as their inspector was seen at 06.30 one morning). The EA informed Public Health England and SBDC on 6/2. Neither TW or the EA advised RBWM, ETC or residents and landowners. Again, at the DPC meeting, Hilary Murgatroyd confirmed she was losing her voice due to the number of meetings she was required to attend to explain TW failures. Hilary commented the overriding criticism was based on TW's failure to communicate effectively and speedily. Can we expect the same monumental failure during the next period of high rainfall. You fail to see how a simple procedure to alert local authorities and residents is necessary. How dare you be so flippant and show such disrespect for residents well being.

#### Long term

**What rights to residents have and what action can they take to prohibit the discharge?** I've been made aware that residents don't have any powers or rights to restrict the discharge from happening. I would recommend you take this matter up with the EA as they provide us with the consent to discharge. They maybe able to provide you with any further information.

That's very silly statement to make. I can assure you the local bodies, agencies, representative and residents will investigate the matter and their rights thoroughly.

**What criteria needs to be met before EA allow TW to discharge storm tanks?** The criteria we need to meet is we must pass three times dry weather flows through the sewage treatment process prior to spilling into the storm tanks. This means that the effluent is treated three times before discharging. We achieved this throughout December to the present, which has never been achieved prior to this event. We met all of our discharge quality criteria during this incident.

I think you have misunderstood the information you received to answer this query. I can understand STW must exceed three times the dry weather limits before storming. But the effluent is not treated three times. TW representatives including Richard Aylard have confirmed the contents of the stream were untreated. The exact rules and regulations will be investigated and, as we are fully aware TW are discharging more frequently, TW will be asked to submit records for recent years for investigation.

**What are the alternative options to avoid discharge?** Regrettably, the only alternative option we have to avoid discharge would be to flood the local area with raw sewage. I'm sure you can appreciate, this isn't an option that we can realistically take as the discharge is treated sewage rather than raw.

Again, a silly statement to make. TW flooded the local area with sewage ... would you like photographs. We'll add you answer to the previous flippant remark from TW on BBC News website ... "we had to discharge sewage into stream to avoid sewage backing up in Slough homes."

**What investment is TW making to ensure sewer system can cope with additional planned homes for Slough and climate change?** In many areas, floodwater had entered the sewer system and in some cases, overloaded our pipes and pumping stations. Although

these are designed to take wastewater from homes and businesses, they're not built to take storm or river water. This is what has put our sewer network under considerable strain. Every flooding incident is recorded and monitored to determine whether this would be an ongoing issue, or a one off event. At this time, there are no plans to increase the size of our sewers. With regard to the development of new homes, I'm afraid the law doesn't require consultation with us as we're not a statutory consultee. However, it's in the public interest that consultations take place whenever possible. We do maintain regular consultation and liaison with all local authorities.

It is quite clear our climate is changing and the number of times TW now admit to discharging should be ample reason to study and make recommendations. A further 900 homes are planned for Slough with sewage directed through STW; I would have thought such a dramatic increase would be cause for concern and investment. Being in the highly regulated construction industry, I find it very hard to believe utility companies are not consulted and not aware of planning proposals. If this is the case, I doubt you have been made aware of the major increase in Slough homes over the last ten years. Yet more evidence as to why Eton Wick is being subjected to discharges now and in the future.

**What can be done to strictly monitor water quality?** There is no obligation for us to monitor the quality of storm water as this is not contaminated to the level raw sewage would be. My understanding is that the EA do have some monitoring equipment, but I'm unsure whether this is in place permanently. You may wish to discuss this with the EA direct.

How reassuring. Perhaps if you monitored and viewed effects and recorded the results TW would understand the impact STW is having on our villages.,

**Can the natural waste water element, removed during the construction of the Jubilee River, be re-instated with cost carried out by TW?** I'm very sorry, but I don't understand this question and am unable to answer this for you. If you could clarify precisely what it is you're requesting, I'll be happy to look into this further.

Prior to the construction of the Jubilee River, our village streams had a natural water element. Following investigations we can confirm the natural water element was removed in the 1990's during construction of the Jubilee River and the stream is now 100% treated water from STW. In line with removing TW's ability to discharge, we are also questioning whether the natural water element can be re-introduced.

**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 the EA generally. Stuart has 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 the residents would not be represented there he was unaware we were represented but the RBWM and ETC.** I'm sorry, I was unaware that you were advised residents wouldn't be represented at the meeting. I've been advised that the meeting went ahead on 25/3 and we met with roughly 50 residents, Councillors and ad MP to discuss the outcome of the event.

Incorrect. The meeting on 25/3 was a closed meeting at RBWM. TW's CEO was invited to attend to meet lead members and answer questions relating to TW's actions throughout the Borough during recent months, including the release of sewerage into Roundmoor and Boveney. TW and the EA were called to account for their actions at the Dorney Parish Council meeting on 19/3. This was attended by many residents including three invited from Eton Wick. Jim Jenkins and Hilary Murgatroyd attended and are well aware of my embarrassing questions they were called to answer.

TW are still missing the point. The village of Eton Wick was contaminated without notice and TW are yet to be called to account and answer our questions. A public meeting is being arranged for early April.

I'm very sorry for the events as they've occurred and that you've had to write to highlight your dissatisfaction. I hope that the above information is of assistance to you and is helpful. If you'd like to discuss this matter further, please call me on **08456 410038, extension 61435**.

It is obvious you have not been fully briefed on TW actions or the impact on our villages by your colleagues. The above may seem harsh but your responses are not adequate to questions we have been asking for many weeks.

I highly recommend you relay the answers to your colleagues.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Teal

Customer Resolution