

135 Eastern Avenue  
Milton Park  
Milton  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 4SB

Sarah Bentley  
Chief Executive  
Thames Water Utilities Ltd  
Clearwater Court  
Vastern Road  
Reading  
Berkshire  
RG1 8DB

Dear Ms Bentley,

I am writing on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council regarding Controlled Sewage Overflows (CSOs) into the River Thames.

As you are undoubtedly aware – with the growing popularity of activities such as wild swimming and paddle boarding – the number of people utilising the river for recreation and leisure has increased substantially. They expect, and deserve, a Thames which is both clean and healthy.

Furthermore, untarnished waterways have an intrinsic value which goes far beyond the people who use them directly. In addition to encouraging wildlife by creating rich, natural ecosystems, they also provide a setting for our towns, villages and rural landscapes and a backdrop for walks, picnics, cycle rides etc.

Considering the numerous benefits provided by healthy, clean, biodiverse rivers and streams, the council is gravely concerned by the frequency of CSOs from your treatment works. We do not, therefore, believe that it is acceptable that raw sewage was spilled into the upper Thames on more than 1,300 occasions in 2019. Such activities damage this important natural asset, discourage people from utilising the river and retard efforts to restore and improve the environment.

The Vale is, therefore, requesting that Thames Water drafts and implements an action plan for the elimination of CSOs across its sewage network. We would also like for your company to provide accurate, real-time publicly available information about the spillage of raw sewage into both the Thames and its tributaries – this would allow people to make an informed decision about how and when they utilise these waterways and ensure that the general population are fully aware of how many times our rivers are polluted by CSOs.

It is our wish to see a river which is healthy, clean and accessible and we hope that you share this aspiration. I, therefore, look forward to receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Cllr. Emily Smith.