

Sarah Bentley  
Chief Executive  
Thames Water  
PO Box 436  
Swindon  
SN38 1TU

via email:  
[sarah.bentley@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:sarah.bentley@thameswater.co.uk)

**Councillor Emily Smith**  
Leader of the Council

[Emily.Smith@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:Emily.Smith@whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

Tel: 01235 422644  
Abbey House  
Abbey Close  
Abingdon  
OX14 3JE

12 October 2022

Dear Ms Bentley,

As you will recognise the failure of your infrastructure last week at Heyford Hill, Oxford had a significant impact on residents and businesses in Vale of White Horse district, as well as impacting on our own council services. This follows a number of recent leaks impacting highways infrastructure in the Vale in Botley and South Hinksey.

Residents have been significantly impacted in many ways, including inability to get to work, loss of earnings, children missing out on education, schools being closed, and bin collections being disrupted. Damage has also been done to private and public property.

The infrastructure is clearly struggling and needs urgent repair. We are already aware that Thames Water has high leak rates across our network and these major incidents are a further concern. As well as homes being left without water or low pressure, the traffic disruption this causes is unacceptable. There is a desperate need for you to improve your pipes to support existing homes and businesses.

Communication on timeframes for fixing last week's problem was poor and followed a pattern of previous situations where communication has been unclear and unhelpful.

With a hosepipe ban in place this is even more frustrating for residents who are complying, yet directly see the wastage in lack of maintenance of your infrastructure.

I was particularly alarmed this week to find out, by chance, that Thames Water has applied for a Temporary Drought Permit to increase abstraction from the Thames at Farmoor. The council and residents have received no communication on this from Thames Water. The potential impacts on Farmoor and the surrounding area, the river tributaries across the Vale, the biodiversity and natural habitat is of significant concern to the council. Particularly when the documentation highlights that the need

to do this is based on “poor contractor performance” and recognises “it is accepted leakage performance is not as good as it should be”.

I would ask for an urgent meeting so that you can provide me on your plans for Farmoor along with an update on your programme for upgrading pipes (large and small scale) and fixing leaks. I would also be keen to understand what your plans are to cope with additional properties and planned growth on the network.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily Smith', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Emily Smith  
Leader of the Council