

Simon Adams  
Thames Water

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Dear Simon,

Thank you for the briefing which you recently gave to me and Mark Stone in advance of the publication of Thames Water's Statement of Response regarding the consultation on your draft Water Resources Management Plan WRMP24. Since then we have read with interest TW's comments on our response, in your Appendix G2.

When we met you said that you were planning to hold public information events in Oxfordshire during the period October to November 2023. These of course will be welcome but I worry whether you are really serious about taking on board the very strong concerns in the local community.

In your G2 response you say that you "will endeavour to work with communities as the designs and proposals for this scheme progress" and that you "would seek to work with the council in order to minimise the unavoidable disruption during construction and to maximise the benefits post-construction. That is not good enough: we expect that you **will** work with communities and that you **will** work with the council. Could you please provide me with firmer assurance on these points?

If it goes ahead, construction of the reservoir will be enormously disruptive, and not only during the lengthy construction period. There will be a huge permanent structure, raised high above the level of the surrounding landscape. Residents are understandably concerned about the environmental impacts, construction noise, traffic and safety. It is our understanding that such a large bunded structure is largely untested.

We therefore consider that it is incumbent upon Thames Water to engage extensively with local residents and campaign groups and to address their very real concerns. Please explain exactly how and when you propose to do this.

In our response to RAPID dated 11 May 2023 we gave a reminder of our previous comment that a better mitigation offer could help to alleviate some local concerns about the SESRO scheme. By way of further reminder, we have previously suggested the following non-exhaustive list:

- Inclusion of the Abingdon flood alleviation scheme
- Provision of rail infrastructure that could in the future be used to provide a new rail station for Wantage and Grove and allow people to access the reservoir for recreation by sustainable transport means.
- A new alternative route for the reinstatement of the Wilts and Berks Canal
- A detailed plan for construction management and how construction workers need will be met (e.g. access to the site, accommodation) to minimise impact on the community
- A plan to reduce carbon emissions during the construction process and for the operation of the reservoir to be net zero once it is operational
- A plan to achieve biodiversity net gain plus additional mitigation for the impact of the reservoir on the local environment
- Support for water sports and other recreational activity on the site
- Opportunity to provide new country park for our district, with an education and visitor centre
- Replacement of the solar farms that are on the site, which will be lost if the reservoir is constructed
- Provision of active travel routes between the reservoir and adjoining villages and towns (including Didcot and Abingdon) to support sustainable travel to the site
- Replacement highway links and rights of way for those that will be lost and improvements to the rights of way network as mitigation.

We are of course pleased to see that you have given some consideration to these points, but we would urge you to make a clearer commitment and some firm promises. We believe that our communities deserve to see some tangible benefit arising from the (potential) imposition of this massive and unwelcome scheme. I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas  
Leader of the Council