

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council

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Dear Mr Barclay,

I am writing on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council, representing our residents, to raise our strong concerns about the proposal by Thames Water (TW) to develop the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO). This massive construction would have significant and permanent negative effects in our district.

We do not consider that the need for this reservoir has been established conclusively. TW has an atrocious record on leaks, by its own figures losing some 24 per cent of its water supply. Alternative less costly and less damaging options which could meet projected future water supply demand have been rejected or shelved, and there remains a suspicion that TW is simply looking to create value for its shareholders rather than its customers.

We believe that if SESRO was to proceed, we would have very significant concerns about the safety of the scheme. A banded reservoir on this scale is largely untried and untested, and our residents are understandably fearful of the consequences in the event of a failure of embankments which would loom up to 25 metres above their homes. There will be a loss of productive farmland and an enormous environmental impact. To date, the flood risk consequences do not appear to have been adequately modelled, and Abingdon residents have been reminded very recently of the genuine threat to property when the River Ock bursts its banks.

Local concerns have been articulated in exhaustive detail by this council, Oxfordshire County Council, campaign groups such as the Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD) and residents at every stage of consultation, and yet the juggernaut continues. We now call upon you to do the following:

- meet with us and other local groups so that we can explain the seriousness of our concerns and convey the level of public anger towards this proposal

- pause the RAPID evaluation process so that concerns can be addressed and other viable options such as the Severn to Thames Transfer can be brought back into consideration
- tackle the persistent and systemic failures of TW (including leaks, sewage discharge, finance and governance) by transforming it into a public benefit company.

Thames Water has lost all credibility and the situation cannot be allowed to continue. I urge you to take action now.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council

CC: Richard Thompson, Deputy Director, Water Management and Investment,
Environment Agency

Simon Adams, Programme Director - Strategic Resource Options, Thames
Water