

David Black,
Chief Executive,
Ofwat

Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council

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Dear Mr Black,

I am writing on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council (the Council), representing our residents, to raise our strong concerns about the proposal by Thames Water Limited to increase household water bills by an average of £735 by 2030, a massive increase of some 60%.

This matter was subject to discussion and a unanimous motion at a recent meeting of the Council on 21 February 2024 - the full text of the motion is attached.

Members present, expressed their deep concerns with this proposed increase in bills, a sentiment which I share.

Part of our opposition to this increase, is based on Thames Water's atrocious record on leaks, by its own figures losing some 24 per cent of its water supply. We would argue that this has been caused by the real, and continuing lack of investment in infrastructure something that was a part of the rationale for privatisation of this industry in the 1980s.

We strongly reject proposals to levy such an increase at a time when so many of our residents are struggling financially. Many of our residents, and council members, are comparing this with the dividends paid to Thames Water's shareholders and the remuneration packages paid to its senior officers.

Considering the above I would ask that you look very closely at this proposal to increase the water bills of our residents.

I look forward to receiving your response to this correspondence.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council

Vale of White Horse District Council Council Motion 21 February 2024

Council notes:

Thames Water Limited's proposal to increase household water bills to an average of £735 by 2030, an increase of 60% in cash terms.

That amongst the main arguments for privatising the water companies in 1989 were:

- The private sector would be more efficient and make better use of investment funds.
- The private sector would not be held back by government limits on investment levels.
- The water regulator, OFWAT would prevent the new private monopolies from abusing their market power.

In the 35 years since privatisation, investment in infrastructure has stagnated while the debt held by water companies has increased significantly.

Thames Water has failed to deal with leaks and the amount of sewage being pumped into local rivers has rocketed.

Across the network, Thames Water spilled sewage for 6,500 hours in the last nine months of 2023. This pollutes our waterways, damages the natural environment, and poses serious health risks to wildlife, pets and humans.

Thames Water has continued to pay out huge dividends to shareholders, last year paying a £37.5m dividend to a parent company as the company's debts rose to £14.7bn in the same period.

Thames Water has continued to pay out huge pay and benefits packages to senior executives, including a total of £1.6m paid to the Chief Executive in the 2022-23 financial year.

Council believes:

Thames Water has had 35 years to draw up and implement plans to provide the necessary infrastructure to run its business properly.

That it is for Thames Water Limited to fund and manage the infrastructure investment urgently needed to stop the leaks and reduce sewage outflows, in line with the basis upon which the water industry was privatised in 1989.

That the cost of this much needed infrastructure should not fall on consumers who have been paying Thames Water bills on the basis that it delivers on its responsibilities.