

Robert Courts MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Sarah Bentley
Chief Executive Officer
Thames Water
Clearwater Court
Reading RG1 8BD

Wednesday, 30th November 2022
Ref: bl/RAC/tw

Dear Ms Bentley,

As usual, I have been closely monitoring the performance of Thames Water across Witney and West Oxfordshire. It has been reported that across the previous two weeks, Thames Water have been conducting sewage releases from Witney STW on a very regular basis. There is no indication that these sewage releases will be ending in the immediate future.

This is extremely concerning. This volume of sewage being discharged into our waters is unacceptable and will be causing significant harm. While I appreciate that there has been heavy rainfall of late, and sewage releases are permitted when there are exceptional rainfall events, these sewage releases **cannot** be used as a matter of routine. It is evident that Thames Water need to urgently invest in the infrastructure upgrades our area needs to reduce storm overflows.

I welcome your previous commitment to a major expansion at Witney Sewage Treatment Works, which will increase capacity by over 50 per cent. Currently, this is to be delivered by early 2024. In light of these regular releases, it is clear that these improvements need to be brought forward as soon as possible.

Consequently, I am requesting an urgent update on the timeline of these improvements, alongside an explanation of how Thames Water will better handle spouts of heavy rainfall in the interim.

As you know, the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan ensures that water companies provide the required investment to stop unacceptable sewage spills, providing our rivers and coast lines with greater protection than ever before. It is paramount that further investment opportunities are pursued throughout West Oxfordshire, with Brize Norton, Clanfield and Standlake also in need of urgent upgrades to their infrastructure. **I would therefore also appreciate an update on the current plans in place to expand infrastructure upgrades across the entirety of West Oxfordshire.**

The people of West Oxfordshire are clear in their expectation of clean and healthy waterways.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Robert Courts

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*From the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Witney in West Oxfordshire
including Bampton, Burford, Carterton, Charlbury, Chipping Norton, Eynsham, Witney and Woodstock.*