

# 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

Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023  
Ref: bl/RAC/tw

Dear Ms Bentley,

As you will be aware, I wrote to you as recently as the end of November to raise concerns about regular sewage releases being conducted from Witney STW. Since then, these releases have continued across the Christmas period, constituting over two months of frequent, unacceptable discharges.

It is, frankly, not anywhere near good enough. I have always emphasised that these sewage releases, can in **no circumstances**, become a matter of routine. I am extremely concerned that, with the regularity of these spills, this is now becoming the case. Strong action must be taken to significantly reduce these discharges and end environmental harm from sewage overflows.

I raised this precise matter with you last January, after Thames Water similarly conducted regular sewage releases over the Christmas period. It is unacceptable that there have not been any significant improvements since, finding ourselves in the exact same situation 12 months later.

I welcome your admission that these repeated discharges have been '*unacceptable*'. This is a good signifier of the progress that has been made since I began campaigning on this in 2017. The more transparent the conversations, the quicker the necessary progress can be achieved. However, it is actions, not words, that matter most in these circumstances.

I therefore very much welcome your recent confirmation that expansion works to increase capacity at the Witney STW by 50 per cent will begin **next month**. These works are long overdue, and I am hopeful that this will finally make a substantial difference in tackling sewage spills in Witney, reducing the need for storm overflows significantly. Once completed, I would like to seek assurances that you plan to cease all sewage releases from Witney STW?

I understand that these works are due to be completed in March 2023. However, while these works are undertaken, I remain concerned that sewage releases will continue in the interim. **I would therefore be grateful for an update on your plans to better handle periods of heavy rainfall throughout this period.**

I have repeatedly called for much needed infrastructure upgrades across towns and villages in West Oxfordshire, to resolve long-standing issues that residents have too-long dealt with. I therefore welcome the confirmation of investment to STW's across West Oxfordshire, including **Bampton, Chipping Norton, Church Hanborough, Enstone, Finstock, Middle Barton, Milton-Under-Wychwood, South Leigh and Stanton Harcourt.**

However, I am particularly concerned that areas such as **Brize Norton** have not been included in your plans. Despite assurances from Thames Water across the last 2 years to resolve issues in the village,

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



Brize Norton are still facing regular flooding events of foul water due to insufficient, outdated infrastructure. This is completely unacceptable, and I urge you to immediately include Brize Norton in the infrastructure upgrade plans to ensure this is finally resolved.

I will be closely monitoring the implementation and progress of these upgrades across West Oxfordshire this year to ensure that residents begin to see both improvements in our water quality and clean and healthy waterways.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Robert Courts*

**Robert Courts MP**