



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

12 February 2024

Dear Steve,

Re: Removing Teddington DRA from Thames Water's Water Resources Management Plan

As you will be aware, over the past year, we have been raising the concerns of residents about Thames Water's highly controversial plans to pump treated sewage into the river above Teddington Lock as part of its Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP).

We understand that a decision on whether to approve the WRMP is imminent. As Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the decision is in your hands. We are therefore writing to reiterate our request, on behalf of our constituents, that the Teddington Direct River Abstraction (DRA) proposal be taken off the table once and for all by being removed from the WRMP.

Last November, we met with Water Minister Robbie Moore to ensure he and other Defra officials were fully briefed on the impact of the Teddington DRA on our local community. This followed the debate Munira held in Parliament last September, and the petition Munira presented in Parliament signed by over 700 residents (in addition to the more than 30,000 people who have signed a Change.org petition opposing the proposals).

No one is questioning the need to have robust drought resilience plans to face the climate crisis, and there is undoubtedly a need to future-proof our water supply.

However, we contend that Thames Water have so far failed to make the case that the Teddington proposal is the **right** proposal to achieve the stated objective of ensuring drought resilience. This is particularly true given that more viable alternative proposals are available; that the environmental, construction and social impacts have yet to be fully assessed; and that "best value" has yet to be defined.

Unanswered questions about environmental, construction and social impacts

Our constituents are extremely worried about the environmental impact of these proposals, including on water quality, human health, biodiversity and wildlife.

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Meanwhile, Moormead Park and Ham Lands conservation area are among the precious local green spaces that would be turned from nature sites to construction sites if the scheme is approved.

This is not to mention the social impacts of the proposals. On any given day, our stretch of the River Thames is alive with people swimming, rowing, kayaking and paddle boarding – whether individually, as a family, or with sporting clubs and youth groups. Ham Lands is a beloved nature site, and Moormead Park is a vital hub for play, sport and recreation – including youth cricket and football – for local families and schools.

Time and time again, we and campaign groups like Save Our Lands and River (SOLAR) have asked for environmental assessments on human health and biodiversity. With the Environment Agency itself having said that Thames Water have so far failed to show that the Teddington scheme is “feasible or environmentally acceptable”, this alone would be a compelling reason to stop the proposals in their tracks.

Failure to define “best value”

Thames Water contend that the Teddington DRA represents the “best value” option. Yet, despite repeated calls from us and local campaigners to define best value, we still do not have a clear answer.

The truth is that the Teddington scheme is only “necessary” because of decades of underinvestment in water resources, and Thames Water’s own documents have referred to a “short-term planning problem”. There is also a fundamental issue around trust, with water companies continuing to breach sewage regulations whilst losing millions of litres of water to leaks every day, and with rising debts translating into higher bills for customers.

On top of this, the Teddington DRA would only save one tenth of the 630 million litres of water that Thames Water loses every day through leaks. This leaves residents rightly asking why they should pay the price for Thames Water’s lack of investment – especially when the scheme would cost hundreds of millions of pounds of customers’ money, but gain very little in terms of resilience.

This is particularly true when there are other, more viable options that could be pursued, including the River Severn transfer option combined with the Cotswolds canals upgrade, which received broad public support. Residents also want to know why other options are not being considered, including the re-use of water systems at Beckton and Mogden Lane plants; osmosis plants at Kempton and Beckton; the re-opening the de-salination plant at Beckton; and using spare capacity from the Queen Mary Reservoir.

As campaign group SOLAR have asked in regard to defining “best value”, *how can any reasonable judgement be made when the public have not been given any further detail setting out the basis for this calculation?*

Ensuring transparency and accountability

Ever since the proposals were first announced, residents have been left feeling that their views have been completely disregarded. This feeling has only intensified since your decision to allow Thames Water go down the national planning route for approval, thereby bypassing scrutiny at the local planning level. We and residents were very disappointed by this outcome, as the decision flies in the face of the transparency and accountability that we have been calling for.

Combined with the lack of transparency about the environmental, construction and social impacts of the proposals, alongside the failure to define and clarify “best value”, we believe there are too many unanswered questions to justify these proposals.

We are therefore writing to request that the Teddington DRA be removed from the WRMP once and for all.

Kind regards,

MUNIRA WILSON MP

Member of Parliament for Twickenham

SARAH OLNEY MP

Member of Parliament for Richmond Park