

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Member of Parliament for The Cotswolds

Our ref: JB/THMCU12930_CT15811

Date: 22 February 2022

Sent via email

Dear Sir Geoffrey

Alleged Illegal Sewage Spills - Thames Water - THMCU12930_CT15811

Thank you for your email of 24 January 2022 regarding Professor Hammond's report on Thames Water sewage treatment works (STW). You asked whether the Environment Agency (EA) can investigate the allegations made in the report regarding illegal discharges of untreated sewage, whether we can provide details on our STW investigations, and when we can expect to have the findings.

First, I am sorry that I did not respond to your initial letter sent last year jointly with Robert Courts MP. My Correspondence Team aim to get correspondence to the right colleagues in the EA who have the best knowledge of the area and issue. In this instance your letter was prematurely commissioned to our Thames Area Director who often replies to MPs on my behalf and has my full support.

The Environment Agency is taking Professor Hammond's report extremely seriously. Our local Thames Area team regulate most of the discharges from STWs for both the Witney and West Oxfordshire, and The Cotswolds constituencies, and are already carrying out compliance assessments of many of the STWs included in Professor Hammond's report. We have identified breaches of permit conditions at Witney STW and at Bourton-on-the-Water combined sewer overflow and have issued compliance assessment reports to Thames Water. Witney STW is also currently the subject of an investigation.

Whether we will be investigating all the allegations made in Professor Hammond's report depends on the outcome of our current assessments and the amount of resource we have available to progress them. We will always do the best we can with the resources we have, but we must prioritise the STWs that we suspect are causing the most serious harm to the environment.

You will be aware that the Environment Agency and Ofwat have recently announced a wider national investigation into STWs. This investigation has been driven by the additional monitoring at STWs that we have required water companies to carry out, by concerns raised through campaign groups, and by Professor Hammond. This national investigation is looking at all STWs (over 2,200) that have flow to full treatment thresholds and storm outlets.

You asked for further details and when our STW investigations will be concluded. We recently issued a blog that outlines what we have done since the investigation was announced: [Environment Agency investigation into sewage treatment works - Creating a better place \(blog.gov.uk\)](#). At this stage, we cannot comment on specific STWs other than those mentioned above, or the allegations of illegal discharges, as this could prejudice our

ongoing investigations. However, we will continue to provide updates as the investigation progresses to the extent that we can, and we plan to set out next steps later this spring.

While I fully understand your concern about this issue, because of the number of the sites and the complexity of the issue I cannot give a definitive answer on when this work will be completed. I can assure you that we will do it as quickly and as well as we can. I will also ensure that you are updated by the local Area team as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J.D. Bevan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

Sir James Bevan
Chief Executive