



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Robbie Moore MP
**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
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Cllr Bethia Thomas
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11 April 2024

Dear Cllr Thomas,

Thank you for your letter of 14 February to the Secretary of State about your concerns regarding the South East Strategic Reservoir Option. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

You raise the issue of the need for this reservoir. We are currently considering the draft water resources management plans with advice from the water regulators, and the Secretary of State will decide on the next steps for the plans in due course.

This is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and is in the pre-application stage. As you know, the planning process requires applicants to carry out public consultation and to take account of the issues raised. For the reservoir to proceed, the scheme would need to obtain environmental permits and development consent. A decision on development consent would be informed by an Environmental Impact Assessment and a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The Environment Agency reviews FRAs to ensure they are robust.

Regarding the performance of Thames Water, the Government and regulators do not take water company underperformance lightly. As a result of failing to meet its performance commitments, Ofwat has directed Thames Water to return over £73 million to customers in the 2024-25 financial year. This is additional to the £51 million returned in the 2022-23 financial year. Ofwat has also directed Thames Water to produce clear Service Commitment Plans. These will require Thames Water to commit publicly to a plan for how it will start to turn its performance around.

You also raised concerns about the safety of the reservoir structure. England maintains an excellent record on reservoir safety. There have been no dam breaches resulting in the loss of life since reservoir safety legislation was first introduced in 1930. The Reservoirs Act 1975 sets out requirements to ensure reservoirs are properly constructed and well managed and maintained. Reservoir engineers are appointed to panels on the recommendation of the Institution of Civil Engineers. Owners of large reservoirs must employ engineers from the relevant panels to oversee the building of large reservoirs and to supervise them when they are in operation. Inspection must occur at least every ten years by engineers from the most senior panel. Owners must act on any “measures in the interests of safety” identified in an engineer’s inspection report. There is also a legal requirement for all owners of large, raised reservoirs to produce and maintain emergency flood plans.

As the reservoir in question is not yet registered there is no requirement to produce a flood map yet, but one will have to be produced in due course.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to raise these important issues but unfortunately, due to diary constraints of the Ministers we will have to decline a meeting at this time.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



ROBBIE MOORE MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs