

The Rt Hon Steve Reed
Secretary of State for Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs

Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council

Bethia.Thomas@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Via email
steve.reed.mp@parliament.uk

Tel: 01235 422422
Abbey House
Abbey Close
Abingdon
OX14 3JE

25 July 2024

Dear Mr Reed,

Congratulations on your new role. You have inherited some significant challenges.

I wrote to your predecessor on 14 February expressing this council's many concerns about Thames Water, receiving a rather disappointing response some two months later from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State.

The matters I raised then have not gone away and I am now writing specifically to request a meeting with you to discuss the Thames Water proposals for a huge reservoir - approximately the size of Gatwick Airport - on prime farmland in our district.

Of course we recognise the need to secure the supply of clean water for future generations. However, we do not consider that this reservoir (the South East Strategic Reservoir Option or SESRO) is the most appropriate response.

Thames Water's draft Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP24) is awaiting your approval and we urge you to pause the RAPID process so that other options can be properly examined by whatever appropriate means are at your disposal.

In particular we would urge that serious consideration should be given to the longer term benefits and national resilience offered by schemes such as the Severn to Thames Transfer, building towards what would in effect be a national grid for water in which clean water can be moved efficiently from areas of excess rainfall to areas of greater demand. I enclose a two page briefing note on this subject from our Water Champion, Cllr Andy Cooke.

Would you be willing to meet with me and the MPs whose constituents are directly affected by the SESRO proposal? We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the serious concerns held by many of our residents.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council