

Dear Laura,

Thank you for your email and letter of 19 and 23 February 2024, setting out your further concerns about sewer flooding from Thames Water's network in the village of Lambourn. I am very sorry to read about the ongoing sewer flooding and recognise your concerns and those of the local community.

I would like to reassure you that our officers continue to regularly attend Lambourn to assess the ongoing situation and any impact on the river. We have required Thames Water to undertake regular monitoring of the river quality and this assessment, together with that by our officers, continues to show that the environmental impact on the river is low. This is primarily due to the high dilution from the groundwater and the high flows in the River Lambourn.

As previously indicated, our liaison with Thames Water confirms that they consider the cause of the sewer flooding to be the overloading of their network due to the very high rainfall and groundwater levels resulting in infiltration and inundation. We are clear that the frequent discharge of untreated sewage to the River Lambourn due to groundwater infiltration affecting Thames Water's sewer network is unacceptable. We have required Thames Water to produce a Groundwater Impacted Systems Management Plan setting out details of the issue, what they have done to improve the situation, and what more they plan to do. Given the actions that Thames Water have undertaken to improve the situation, it is very concerning that the company have experienced further significant sewer flooding since December. Thames Water now need to respond to the latest events and confirm what additional actions they will take to improve the situation. The current work being led by Ofwat in relation to Thames Water's Business Plan for 2025-2030 is key given that Thames Water have previously stated the need for a substantial increase in investment to tackle the widespread groundwater infiltration challenges that they face.

Regarding your request for us to impose a fine on Thames Water, any enforcement action we take must be proportionate to the environmental damage in line with our Enforcement and Sanctions Policy. As stated above, our current assessment is that the environmental damage continues to be low.

I recognise the significant and ongoing public health concerns related to the sewer flooding and these are a matter for the local authority ([West Berkshire Council](#)) to pursue directly with Thames Water.

Going forward, we will continue to assess the environmental impact of the sewer flooding and we are engaging with Thames Water on their review of this winter's events and the updating of their plans to take additional action.

I trust that this information has been useful in confirming the Environment Agency's role and position and please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Kind regards,

Anna

Anna Burns
Area Director – Thames
Environment Agency

