

The Rt. Hon Emma Reynolds, M.P.
Secretary of State for Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and
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Dear Ms Reynolds,

I am writing on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council in relation to Thames Water's Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP) and the South East Strategic Reservoir (SESRO) near Abingdon.

Under these proposals, Thames Water will have an emergency discharge facility in place which will include the ability to empty the reservoir at a rate of 1 metre of height per day, possibly over a period of 3 to 4 weeks. This would result in large volumes of water streaming back into the Thames just to the south of Abingdon, thereby, significantly increasing the flow of the river. The council is gravely concerned that such a discharge could cause havoc along the Thames, endangering lives, homes, businesses, communities and the environment. Under current regulations, Thames Water does not, however, need to have a plan in place for an emergency discharge before they have constructed the proposed reservoir (in fact they only need such a plan once they propose to fill it).

Dealing with the impacts of an incident caused by a discharge from the SESRO will fall to the successor authority/authorities of Oxfordshire. As the local emergency planning authority, they will be responsible for safely managing any potential crisis and will, consequently, have to make difficult decisions regarding which lives, homes, communities and businesses will be prioritised if the worst should happen.

South Oxfordshire are, therefore, asking you to provide clarity regarding how an emergency discharge from the proposed Abingdon reservoir will be managed. We are also requesting that HM Government makes a commitment to providing the resources

necessary to deal with any such discharge before consideration is given to any Development Consent Order.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers
Leader of the Council