

The Rt. Hon Steve Reed OBE, M.P.
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and
Rural Affairs
Department for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council

Bethia.Thomas@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

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

21 January 2025

Dear Mr Reed,

I wrote to you on 14 January 2025 on the subject of flooding in the Vale of White Horse district, and particularly the termination of the hoped-for Thames Valley Flood Scheme.

I am now writing on the subject of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS), which has been more than ten years in the planning and has yet to achieve even a start on site. I attended a meeting last week of the Sponsoring Group where I learned that the status of the project has been moved to “red”, meaning that that there is a severe risk to successful delivery.

One of the reasons given by the Environment Agency for this position is that there has still been no outcome from the CPO Inquiry which concluded in January 2024.

In your recent (9 January) speech to the Oxford Farming Conference you said:

“We’re investing £2.4 billion pounds to build and maintain flood defences, with a further £50 million pounds for internal drainage boards; our Floods Resilience Taskforce will ensure better coordination between government and frontline agencies; and we’re reviewing the existing flood funding formula to speed up new flood schemes and make sure funding goes where it’s most needed.”

It is hard to reconcile these encouraging words with the delayed outcome to the OFAS CPO Inquiry. All the time that the scheme is delayed, the costs increase.

Could you please let me know when we might expect to receive your decision?

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council