**From:** AreaDirectorThames
**Sent:** 04 February 2025 14:59
**To:** Bethia Thomas; ExecutiveSupportSAV
**Subject:** FAO Chief Executive - Letter from Vale of White Horse District Council - Our reference: THMCU24992\_CT28787

**\*\*EXTERNAL\*\***

Dear Councillor Thomas,

Thank you for your letter of 14 January 2025 to our Chief Executive Philip Duffy, who has read your letter regarding repeated incidences of flooding in the Vale of White Horse and asked me to respond on his behalf.  Mr Duffy will receive a copy of this letter.

I understand how challenging the flooding this winter has been, particularly for those communities who have been impacted on several occasions.

We understand your disappointment that we are currently not able to proceed with the Thames Valley Flood Scheme (TVFS). The prime objective of this scheme was to develop large scale flood storage areas within the Thames catchment that could reduce flood risk downstream. Although we have found that large scale flood storage does have the potential to help reduce flood risk, the benefits in reducing flood risk would not currently be enough to gain funding and approvals. If economic rules change, or climate change has bigger impacts than expected, then the project may be re-evaluated.

Within the Vale of White Horse, one of the flood storage locations we were considering as part of TVFS is on the River Ock. This location is near the area being investigated by Thames Water for the Southeast Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) and we are assessing this site to see if there are any opportunities alongside this intervention to reduce flood risk.

If SESRO gains the approvals required to go ahead, it offers an opportunity to use the proposed access road that will be constructed across the Ock floodplain as a flood embankment. Whilst there is no guarantee that this will be possible, we will certainly be exploring it. I should stress, however, that our regulatory role in relation to SESRO is first and foremost to ensure that any potential impacts on the environment and local area are assessed and mitigated, including the impacts from flooding.

Whilst we do not currently have any other active flood schemes across the Vale of White Horse, we have previously investigated potential schemes in several locations across the District. Following this winter’s flooding, we are working with Oxfordshire

County Council and Vale of White Horse colleagues on many of the flood investigation reports (also known as Section 19 reports) where there has been main river flooding. We will work together to consider the recommendations once these reports are published. I hope this provides some assurance that we continue to work towards finding solutions to reduce the risk of flooding in those areas.

Thank you for your feedback regarding the accuracy of our modelling and mapping in relation to spatial planning. This is very timely as we have been developing new national risk information for flooding and coastal erosion, which we are in the process of publishing.

On 28 January 2025, we published new ‘Risk of flooding from rivers and sea’ and ‘Risk of flooding from surface water’ data on the ‘Check your long-term flood risk’ service available on the data.gov.uk website.  Of particular relevance for spatial planning, in Spring 2025 we will be publishing new ‘Flood zone’ data on the ‘Flood map for planning’ service available on data.gov.uk. Further information can be found at [Updates to national flood and coastal erosion risk information - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/updates-to-national-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-information) and [Defra Data Services Platform](https://environment.data.gov.uk/support/announcements/569147407/568393733)

Please be assured that we will be working closely with your colleagues in the Vale of White Horse District Council over the next few months to ensure that you are ready, as a Local Planning Authority, for the publication of the new Flood Map for Planning. For example, together with the Town and Country Planning Association we will be holding a webinar for local authority officers which will focus on; the implications of the new flood risk and coastal erosion data on development planning, and how to use the new data when it’s published. For further information and to sign, see [Webinar: Updates to NAFRA2 and NCERM - information for planners - Town and Country Planning Association](https://www.tcpa.org.uk/event/webinar-updates-to-nafra2-and-ncerm-information-for-planners/). Please share this with relevant colleagues.

If there is anything in my response that you would like to discuss further, Maddy Adams, Thames Area Flood Risk Manager would be happy to talk with you. You can contact Maddy via email at Madeleine.Adams@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Anna Burns

Area Director – Thames

Environment Agency