



# Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

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Dear Bethia,

Thank you for your letter of 12 November to the Secretary of State highlighting the costs and value of the White Horse Reservoir (formerly SESRO). We have been asked to reply and we apologise for the delay in responding.

We recognise that costs have substantially increased since the 2024 WRMP was published. Changes in costs and the value of water resources options will need to be assessed as part of the Annual Review WRMP process, and in future revisions of WRMPs. We have raised concerns with Thames Water about the substantial cost increases and requested that the impacts of this are re-assessed to understand whether there are changes to the preferred plan. The joint regulator letter sent to Thames Water can be read [here](#).

You have highlighted ongoing concerns about environmental risk associated with the reservoir. Thames Water are currently updating the scheme design taking account of the responses they received in their Statutory Consultation. The final scheme design will be subject to Environmental Impact Assessments that we expect to consider and address many of the topics you have raised concerns about. These assessments will be part of Thames Water's Development Consent Order (DCO) submission. The Environment Agency is a statutory consultee of the DCO process and will review these submissions.

As part of the DCO process a Flood Risk Assessment must be carried out, and as part of the wider scheme requirements any White Horse Reservoir taken forward must be safely constructed to comply with the Reservoirs Act. Documentation to support these processes may contain sensitive information that will need to be managed in accordance with established Government Security Classification protocols, and this is likely to mean access to some information may be restricted.

There are further opportunities to engage during the examination of the DCO. To do this, you will need to register as an interest party on the PINS website to receive updates and contribute: [Get updates | White Horse Reservoir \(previously known as South East Strategic Reservoir Option\)](#).

Yours sincerely,

Ministerial Contact Unit