



Monica Harding
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Chris Weston,
CEO of Thames Water,
Clearwater Court,
Vastern Road,
Reading,
RG1 8DB

27th February 2025,

Dear Chris,

I am writing regarding your Esher sewage treatment works in my constituency of Esher and Walton, and my concerns with the excessive odour emanating therefrom.

There is a large residential area next door to the treatment works and I have been told that excessive, pervasive, and stinking odours have been a problem for decades, with few solutions offered from Thames Water and little political engagement. Residents told me that their complaints were never listened to by Thames Water and that the only interaction they had with Thames Water were the vans driven at high speed through the community into the sewage works.

I am told there is a constant residual smell, which often worsens so as to become intolerable, and sometimes forces residents to cancel events, like BBQs and Christmases, out of embarrassment. Needless to say, residents shouldn't have to put up with these odours at any point.

In early January you took a group of local Councillors into the treatment works for a tour. One of the Councillors for the area has followed up with questions to which they are struggling to get answers. He has described communication as one-way traffic, with numerous emails and calls and no response and so has reached out to me.

I am now taking up this issue. I visited Lower Green last Friday to meet with residents and the stench from the works was pervasive and awful. It hung around the children's play area, recreation ground and the community café. I am told this is usual. This is not good enough.

I would appreciate a meeting with you to understand what steps you are undertaking to investigate the cause of the problem and how you will mitigate it. I am aware you have plans to upgrade the treatment works in 2027 – I would also be keen to understand what that looks like and whether that will deal with the problem, and if it does, what are your plans in the interim to protect my residents from these foul smells which are blighting their enjoyment of their homes.

Initially I would like you also to respond to Councillors questions which I have laid out here:

- What are your odour control measures, your compliance with the regulations and the monitoring systems you have in place to track odour levels?
- Councillors tell me that it is not clear there is an automated system of monitoring odours, that it is down to human smell, and that often the site management is not aware from where the odours are coming.



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- Is there a notification system to alert residents to planned work or activities that might cause odour disruption. If so when is it used? If there is not, why not?
- I am told that one possible cause of the smell may be rag waste. Could you please inform me what mitigation you have in place to ensure that your treatment of this is not causing unpleasant smells to residents. I am told that rag waste may cause odours when it is rainy and when it is hot. Since that will include over half of the weather in our country, this does not seem a reasonable justification for the smell without mitigation in place.
- I am also told that a possible solution could be covers for the rag waste storage. Could you please tell me if this is a potential solution and if so when will this be implemented?
- Another conjecture is that the smell could be due to pumps stopping working. Again – if this is the case, why is this the case and what mitigation is in place?
- What is the purpose of the sludge tanks – I am told that some are badly corroded and may not be in working order – is that a part of the problem?

I would be grateful to meet with you and your team regarding this. You will of course understand that this has been an issue for too long in Esher and Walton and it needs to be solved. I appreciate your timely attention to this matter and my questions.

I am copying this letter to Esther Sharples, Chief Operating Officer of Thames Water, Councillor Simon Leifer, Councillor Richard Williams, Deputy Leader of the Council Simon Waugh, and Leader of the Council, Mike Rollings.

Yours sincerely,

Monica Harding MP
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