



Angling Trust  
Eastwood House  
6 Rainbow Street  
Leominster  
Herefordshire HR6 8DQ

t: 0844 770 0616  
e: [admin@anglingtrust.net](mailto:admin@anglingtrust.net)  
w: [www.anglingtrust.net](http://www.anglingtrust.net)

Reg Address: Angling Trust Ltd  
Eastwood House  
6 Rainbow Street Leominster  
Herefordshire HR6 8DQ  
Reg No: 05320350  
VAT No: 948411215

David Black  
CEO - OFWAT  
Centre City House  
7 Hill Street  
Birmingham  
B5 4UA

Via email

29<sup>th</sup> April 2024

**From - Angling Trust & Action for the River Kennet**

**Re - Thames Water Sewage Pollution in the Kennet and Pang catchments.**

Dear Mr Black,

We are writing to you ahead of the initial determination of the Thames Water business plan proposals for 2025-30 to express our deep concern over the levels of sewage pollution occurring in the SSSI chalk streams that comprise the Kennet and Pang catchments. In particular, we wish to draw your attention to the lack of immediate proposals in these plans to deal with the totally unacceptable levels of damaging pollution which is threatening these rare, precious and fragile ecosystems.

### **Background**

The Environment Agency storm overflow data from water companies in England for 2023 reveals that the worst offender is Thames Water who had the longest duration of discharges, averaging 12 hours per spill.

The data for 2023 for the Thames Water area shows 16,990 spills lasting 196,414 hours - that's equivalent to 8,184 days of sewage going straight into our rivers and chalk streams.

### **Lambourn**

The River Lambourn, a major tributary of the Kennet, has been experiencing months of sewage pollution from groundwater ingress into Thames Water's crumbling network of sewers. By April 20<sup>th</sup> this year, a staggering 864 hours of continuous sewage spills had been entering the Winterbourne and straight on down to the Lambourn. For the past three months local residents in the villages of Lambourn, Eastbury and Upper Lambourn have been living with raw sewage flowing down their streets and into the river. Phosphate readings for the Lambourn, a SSSI chalk stream, are now 53 times that which is deemed acceptable. The plight of the Lambourn has featured in the national media over recent months.

### **Kennet**

The total figures for 2023-24 show 1,301 sewage spills totaling 20,971 hours across the whole Kennet catchment in 2023. More specifically:

Marlborough STWs spilled untreated sewage into the Kennet 172 times for a total of 2,383 hours.

Kingsclere STWs spilled untreated sewage 134 times for a total of 2,562 hours into Kingsclere Brook

Mortimer (Stratfield Mortimer) STWs spilled untreated sewage 150 times for a total of 3,304 hours into the Foudry Brook

The award-winning Stonebridge Wild River Reserve has suffered from over 300 hours of untreated sewage already in 2024 from just one single unmonitored manhole cascading directly into the river Kennet.

### **Pang**

The River Pang rises in the Berkshire chalk hills and enters the Thames at Pangbourne. This renowned and delightful chalk stream has been badly polluted with sewage discharges arising from the inadequate capacity at local STWs and groundwater ingress into Thames Water's failing infrastructure.

In 2023 Hampstead Norreys STWs spilled untreated sewage 83 times for a total of 1,295 hours into the Pang

So far in 2024, we have already seen over 4200 hours of sewage spills from the six WWTWs in the Pang catchment. Chapel Row alone has been spilling for over 1500 hours, with Compton not far behind at just under 1000 hours.

This has led to horrendous scenes in the villages of East Illsley, Hampstead Norreys, and Compton where raw sewage has been running through the streets for months.

### **Public Reaction**

Local feeling is running high on this issue and a recent protest rally organised by ourselves and local river keepers in Newbury drew a crowd of over 250 people who heard speeches from Baroness Jenny Jones, Green; Laura Farris – Conservative MP for Newbury, Lee Dillon – Head of West Berkshire Council, LibDem; and Olivia Bailey – candidate for Reading West & Mid Berkshire, Labour and ourselves. There was cross party unity that Thames Water is no longer fit for purpose as a credible water company and that their plans lacked any urgency to tackle these problems.

### **What we are asking for**

We believe that the following actions must be taken now by OFWAT, The Environment Agency and the Government:

- A government intervention. Thames Water is no longer fit for purpose and must be taken into special measure immediately to protect consumers and the environment. Unless action is taken, we have no confidence that even the limited measures in their current AMP 8 proposals will actually be funded given the near bankrupt status of the company.
- An urgent investigation is needed by both industry regulators - OFWAT and the EA - into Thames Water's operations and plans in West Berkshire and Wiltshire. The lack of oversight by the regulators has allowed Thames Water to operate with hopelessly inadequate infrastructure in an area of housing growth and to pollute local rivers and chalk streams with impunity.
- Urgent upgrades are needed to Marlborough WWTW now. The planned works are not currently due to be completed until the end of 2026 – a deadline that will be missed as the work has not even been designed yet. The current plans indicate that Marlborough will not meet targets for storm overflows until 2030/35. This is too long and the business plan needs revising accordingly.

- Thames Water must bring forward plans to tackle groundwater ingress (which is not a legally permitted reason to dispose of sewage in a waterway). They must bring forward ground water pipe sealing in the upper catchment into AMP 8 as currently these works are not scheduled for completion until 2045, and the limited work carried out to date has, according to the Environment Agency, resulted in '*not much improvement*'.

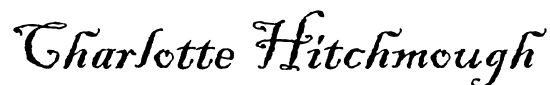
Local communities have suffered for too long, and these precious rivers will be irreparably damaged if these levels of pollution are allowed to continue for another 20 years.

We are calling on you to reject Thames Water's wholly inadequate proposals and insist that long overdue investment is made to their failing wastewater infrastructures in these locations.

Yours sincerely,



Jamie Cook  
CEO - Angling Trust



Charlotte Hitchmough  
CEO ARK

CC:

Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP, Secretary of State, DEFRA  
Philip Duffy – CEO, Environment Agency