

# **Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council**

**Full Council 13/06/2024**

**Foudry Brook**

## **Agenda item 24/030 9:**

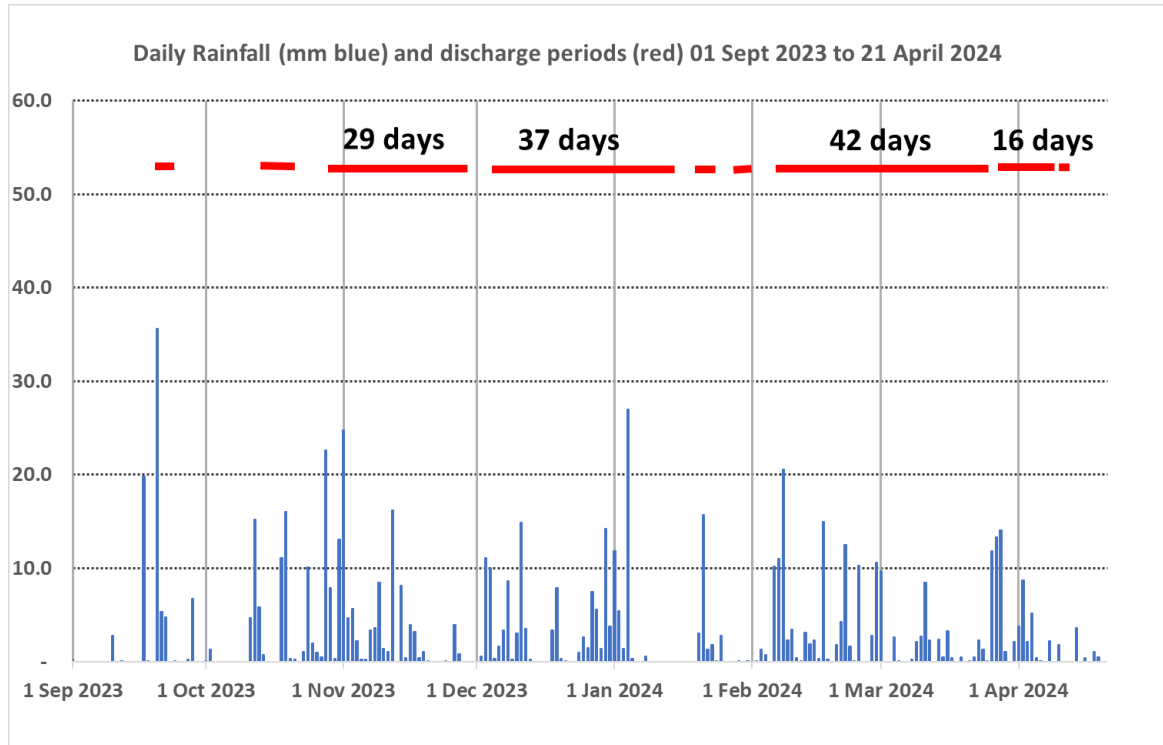
- a. To receive an update report and consider the response received from Thames Water.**
- b. To resolve a further response to Thames Water as required with copies to The Environment Agency, West Berkshire Council and our MP**

## **BACKGROUND**

Storm discharges into Foudry Brook were last discussed at the full Council meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The minutes state that the Council should write to Thames Water, The Environment Agency, West Berkshire Council and Sir John Redwood MP enclosing a copy of the report (23-089 10.1) considered at that meeting. Thames Water should also be invited to a meeting of the Council.

As Foudry Brook was discharging at that time, The Clerk and Cllr Dennett thought it sensible to monitor that discharge to include current information in the letters. However, the discharges continued throughout most of the winter. In addition, The Environmental Agency published data from all water companies in "Event Duration Modelling- Storm Overflows-2023". This showed that for the second year running Stratfield Mortimer had the second greatest discharge hours out of about 700 discharge points in the whole Thames Water region. The extra information enabled even stronger letters to be sent on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024

## Extra Evidence



From 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to 13 April 2024, discharge duration from the EDM totalled 200,505 minutes. That is equivalent to 139 days and is 83 % of the time period.

## Environment Agency EDM Storm Overflow Report for Calendar Year 2023 for Thames Water

Rank by hours (700 sites)	Site	Received by	Hours	Spills
1	FAIRFORD STW	RIVER COLN	3391.00	162
2	MORTIMER (STRATFIELD MORTIMER) W	Foudry Brook	3304.25	150
3	STEWKLEY WASTEWATER TREATMENT	HARDWICK BROOK	3166.25	162
4	CLANFIELD WWTW	HALFACRE BROOK	3156.00	150
5	CIRENCESTER WWTW	SHORNCOTE DITCH	2870.75	165
6	BURGHFIELD WWTW	CLAY HILL BROOK	2861.00	132
26	SILCHESTER WWTW	SILCHESTER BROOK	2067.00	112
153	READING SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS	FOUDRY BROOK	289.75	24

3304 hours is equivalent to 137.7 days.

The same for 2022

Rank by hours (700 sites)	Site	Received by	Hours	Spills
1	STEWKLEY WASTEWATER TREATME	HARDWICK BROOK	1931.44	107
2	MORTIMER (STRATFIELD MORTIMER)	Foudry Brook	1641.82	84
3	SOUTH LEIGH WWTW	Limb Brook	1482.69	74
4	WINGRAVE WASTEWATER TREATME	TRIBUTARY OF ROWSHAM BRO	1433.53	89
5	SILCHESTER WWTW	SICHESTER BROOK	1239.36	74
10	BURGHFIELD WWTW	Clay Hill Brook	1130.91	56
161	READING SEWAGE TREATMENT WOR	FOUDRY BROOK	81.55	10

The graph and tables above were included in a presentation at the Annual Parish meeting at the end of April but are included here so that the Full Council are aware of the detail.

## The Letters and replies

The letters sent and replies are given below. The letter to Thames Water and the November report were also included in the letters to the other recipients. In summary (but please read the replies for full detail):

Thames Water replied on 14<sup>th</sup> May stating “*we deem your request to be complex and therefore need to extend the deadline a further 20 working days... This means that we will respond to your request no later than 12 June 2024.* It should be noted that our letter does request considerable technical information.

The Environment Agency replied on 14<sup>th</sup> May. The first two paragraphs suggest that are prepared to investigate breaches of permits when analysis of data has been completed.

The third paragraph :

- Confirms that the defective equipment has been replaced
- The local Land & Water Environment Officer intends to carry out further inspections at the site in 2024 to gather further information on the state of the site and will then use our regulatory powers to require the remediation of any breaches of permit
- The local Land & Water Officer also intends to work with Thames Water during 2024 to locate significant sources of groundwater

This is I think the first time that groundwater infiltration has been specifically mentioned.

No specific reply has been received from West Berkshire Council but they did issue a public statement on 15<sup>th</sup> May – see later under the correspondence.

Apart from an automatic acknowledgement, no reply was received from Sir John Redwood.

## Correspondence with Thames Water sent 15th April 2024 and reply received 14th May 2024.

Dear Ms Hannawin

Thank you for your e-mail dated 15 April 2024 addressed to my colleague Paul Hampton. This is reproduced below for ease.

*Dear Paul,*

*We last communicated by email in late September 2023 when you gave an update on the plans to upgrade Mortimer STW.*

*The Council considered a report -copy attached - on Storm Discharges into Foudry Brook at its meeting last November. The report (attached) was written by a councillor with input from Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP).*

*The meeting decided that it would write to Sir John Redwood MP, West Berkshire Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water, with a copy of the report. At the time of the meeting discharge was occurring and it seemed sensible to monitor that situation before writing.*

*That discharge, which started on 28<sup>th</sup> October lasted 670 hours (27.9 days). Subsequent lengthy discharges included 349 hours (14.5) days starting on 4<sup>th</sup> December and 939 hours (39 days) from 8<sup>th</sup> February. We have not included other shorter discharges in this period. It is appreciated that this winter had above average rainfall , but the duration of discharges is unacceptable.*

*In addition, in the recent” Event Duration Modelling- Storm Overflows-2023” (published by the Environment Agency) Stratfield Mortimer STW had 3304.25 hours of discharge. This is the second longest duration in the Thames Water area , just less than Fairford STW with 3391 hours. In 2022, Mortimer also had the second longest duration and in 2020 the fifth longest. In 2021 it was the 21<sup>st</sup> worst.*

*In the report, Section 9 Conclusions has six questions we would like Thames Water to answer. (Note from MDD: For ease of reference these questions and the information requested about the upgrade in the next paragraph are given in the Appendix at the end of this paper).*

*There is also a request for more information on the proposed upgrade and we would appreciate the latest update on the time scale, which I believe has recently been given by a spokesperson as the end of 2024.*

*The Council also resolved to invite a representative of Thames Water along to a Council meeting to address the concerns raised. The Council meets every second Thursday of each month, apart from August and December, and attendance can be arranged by emailing the Council office at [the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk](mailto:the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk).*

*Your website “Investment plans for storm discharges sites” [Investment plans for storm discharge sites | Thames Water](#) states” An upgrade is planned for Mortimer STW. This will improve its ability to treat the volumes of incoming sewage, reducing the need for untreated discharges in wet weather. The scheme is due to complete in 2024. We expect this location to meet all government targets for storm overflows by 2030.”*

*Your spreadsheet ”storm-overflow-action-plan” available at [Investing in river health | Thames Water](#) lists the dates for meeting aspects such as rainfall target and new screen as 2030. Could you please clarify whether the work to be done in 2024 will meet the targets for 2030 or whether the 2024 work is an interim measure with more work to be done later?*

*This email and the report will be sent to Sir John Redwood MP, West Berkshire Council, and the Environment Agency. We can supply you with copies of the email to those parties, once sent, if desired.*

***We look forward to hearing from you with regards to answers to the six questions, an update on the proposed upgrade and time scale, and possible dates for when a Thames Water representative can attend one of the Council meetings on the second Thursday of the month.***

After an initial review and starting to collate the information you have requested, we deem your request to be complex and therefore need to extend the deadline a further 20 working days by applying Part 2, Section 7(1) under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 “where a request is particularly voluminous or complex, the public authority may extend the time for compliance for making the information available from 20 working days to 40 working days.”

This means that we will respond to your request no later than 12 June 2024.

I trust this clarifies the situation.

Regards.

**Paul Bridgens**

Data Protection Advisor

Walnut Court, Kembrey Park, Swindon SN38 6TW

**Correspondence with The Environment Agency sent 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024, reply received 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council has been investigating storm discharges into Foudry Brook and has examined data from 2019 onwards. A report was discussed at the council meeting last November with a resolution passed that the paper and accompanying letters be sent to Sir John Redwood MP, the Environment Agency, West Berkshire Council and Thames Water.

We thought it sensible to continue to monitor the discharge that was happening before sending the letters but in reality discharges continued throughout the winter as detailed in the attached letter sent to Thames Water. In addition, writing now has enabled us to include information from “Event Duration Modelling- Storm Overflows-2023” published by the Environment Agency at the end of March. This confirms that Stratfield Mortimer STW had 3304.25 hours of discharge in 2023. This is the second longest duration in the Thames Water area as indeed it was in 2023.

We point out that the report shows several occasions when it appears that Thames Water are breaking the conditions of their licences. Please confirm if you are proposing any further action against Thames Water at this moment in time.

In addition, section four of our report details an inspection carried out by yourselves in March 2023. Would you please confirm that Thames Water have carried out the improvement work required.

Thames Water originally promised an upgrade to the sewage works by December 2023. This has now been put back until December 2024. Links and information on Thames Water upgrade plans are given towards the end of our letter to Thames Water.

The council would like to know what actions you are taking to ensure that Thames Water proceed with an upgrade of sufficient quality to meet the targets as soon as possible. As you will be aware

Foudry Brook is a chalk stream and Thames Water in their action plan spreadsheet confirm it is a site of high ecological significance.

We attach the report and a copy of our letter to Thames Water.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to our queries above.

With kind regards,

Lynn Hannawin

### **Reply from The Environment Agency 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Dear Lynn,

#### **Our reference: THM357145**

Thank you for your email of 15 April 2024. We respond to requests for recorded information that we hold under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the associated Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). Your enquiry was forwarded to our Land & Water South Team and they have provided the information below.

Thank you for sharing your report and letter regarding Mortimer Sewage Treatment Works.

Mortimer Sewage Works along with many sites for all water companies across England are presently under investigation regarding potential breaches of discharge permit conditions relating to storm discharges and flow rates. As is normal for all government agencies engaged in active investigations relating to breaches of the law, I'm afraid I am unable to provide any further comment. A general summary of the investigation is available at this link to the GOV.UK website <https://environmentagency.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/16/environment-agency-investigation-into-sewage-treatment-works/>

Regarding the spill and flow data for the works, the 2023 data is currently being analysed by the EA at a national level and a statement will be released as to any further action that will be taken once the analysis is complete. The local Land & Water Team (who carry out the regulation of all public and private discharge permits and investigations of pollution incidents in EA Thames Area) are prepared to investigate any site that the data indicates is in breach of its permit and the data will be used to target our officers at specific sites.

Regarding the Inspection and associated Compliance Assessment Report Form that was carried out by EA Officers on the 17 March 2023, I can confirm that the short-term repairs of failed or defective equipment on site were carried out by Thames Water some time ago. As mentioned in your message, Thames Water have plans to carry out improvements at the site, but these have been delayed and we do not believe that any work has been done on them yet. The local Land & Water Environment Officer intends to carry out further inspections at the site in 2024 to gather further information on the state of the site and will then use our regulatory powers to require the remediation of any breaches of permit. Additionally, Mortimer sewage works is in a groundwater impacted area, meaning that the foul sewers within the catchment are receiving excessive amounts of groundwater infiltration that arrives at the sewage works unnecessarily. The local Land & Water Officer also intends to work with Thames Water during 2024 to locate significant sources of groundwater. These may be defects in the Thames Water sewer network that require repair and

relining or potentially sources of water ingress from flooded private land or groundwater from private domestic sewers that are not the property of Thames Water.

I hope that we have correctly interpreted your request. Please refer to our Open Government Licence for the permitted use of the supplied data: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/>

Please get in touch if you have any further queries or contact us within two months if you'd like us to review the information we have sent.

Kind regards,

Thames Customers & Engagement Team

**Correspondence with West Berkshire Council sent 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024, no specific reply received but they did issue a public statement on 15<sup>th</sup> May**

Dear Mr Lynn,

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (SMPC) has been investigating storm discharges into Foudry Brook and has examined data from 2019 onwards. A report was discussed at the council meeting last November with a resolution passed that the paper and accompanying letters be sent to Sir John Redwood MP, the Environment Agency, West Berkshire Council and Thames Water.

We thought it sensible to continue to monitor the discharge that was happening before sending the letters, but discharges continued throughout the winter as detailed in the attached letter sent to Thames Water. In addition, writing now has enabled us to include information from "Event Duration Modelling- Storm Overflows-2023" published by the Environment Agency at the end of March. This confirms that Stratfield Mortimer STW had 3304.25 hours of discharge in 2023. This is the second longest duration in the Thames Water area as indeed it was in 2023. Thames Water originally promised an upgrade to the sewage works by December 2023. This has now been put back until December 2024. Links and information on Thames Water upgrade plans are given towards the end of our letter to Thames Water.

SMPC would very much appreciate your support in ensuring that Thames Water proceed with an upgrade of sufficient quality to meet the targets as soon as possible. As you will be aware Foudry Brook is a chalk stream and Thames Water in their action plan spreadsheet confirm it is a site of high ecological significance.

We attach the report and a copy of our email to Thames Water, and we would appreciate to hear your thoughts on this matter and the actions you are able to take to ensure that Thames Water proceed as stated above.

With kind regards,

Lynn Hannawin  
Parish Clerk  
Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council  
0118 933 1955

No specific reply has been received from West Berkshire Council but they did issue a public statement on 15<sup>th</sup> May. An extract is given below:

## **Council calls on Thames Water to do better for residents**

West Berkshire Council is continuing to address residents concerns about sewage and foul water in public spaces - and is calling on Thames Water to do the same.

It follows correspondence and concerns from residents in relation to contents of sewers overflowing into rivers, streets and private properties.

The Leader of West Berkshire Council, Councillor Jeff Brooks, and Chief Executive Nigel Lynn have written to Thames Water on behalf of residents who have had to "*endure months of misery and polluted waterways due to continued lack of investment in sewage infrastructure in West Berkshire.*"

The letter goes on to say:

*Our residents are rightly angry about the volume of sewage going into our waterways and the impact of sewer flooding on communities. We expect you to act with greater urgency to stop this from happening.*

*The Council therefore asks Thames Water for the following:*

- 1. To provide details of investment in sewage infrastructure since the floods in 2014.*
- 2. That an action plan be put in place across West Berkshire to urgently resolve the sewage flooding and overflows into our waterways.*
- 3. That regular meetings be arranged between senior leaders at West Berkshire Council and Thames Water to monitor the delivery the action plan.*

Similar letters highlighting a lack of Government action in ensuring water companies are held to account for their actions have been sent this week to local MPs and the Rt Hon Steve Barclay, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The full statement can be seen at:

[Council calls on Thames Water to do better for residents - West Berkshire Council](#)



## **Correspondence with Sir John Redwood sent 15th April 2024, no reply received.**

Dear Sir John,

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council has been investigating storm discharges into Foudry Brook and has examined data from 2019 onwards. A report was discussed at the council meeting last November with a resolution passed that the paper and accompanying letters be sent to yourself, the Environment Agency, West Berkshire Council and Thames Water.

We thought it sensible to continue to monitor the discharge that was happening before sending the letters but in reality discharges continued throughout the winter as detailed in the attached letter sent to Thames Water. In addition, writing now has enabled us to include information from "Event Duration Modelling- Storm Overflows-2023" published by the Environment Agency at the end of March. This confirms that Stratfield Mortimer STW had 3304.25 hours of discharge in 2023. This is the second longest duration in the Thames Water area as indeed it was in 2023.

Thames Water originally promised an upgrade to the sewage works by December 2023. This has now been put back until December 2024. Links and information on Thames Water upgrade plans are given towards the end of our letter to Thames Water.

The council would very much appreciate your support in ensuring that Thames Water proceed with an upgrade of sufficient quality to meet the targets as soon as possible. As you will be aware Foudry Brook is a chalk stream and Thames Water in their action plan spreadsheet confirm it is a site of high ecological significance.

We attach the report and a copy of our email to Thames Water, and we would appreciate to hear your thoughts on this matter and the actions you are able to take to ensure that Thames Water proceed as stated above.

With kind regards,

Lynn Hannawin  
Parish Clerk  
Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council  
27 Victoria Road, Mortimer, Reading RG7 3SH  
Tel: 0118 933 1955

## **Appendix: The conclusions of the paper considered by the Council in November**

This gives the six questions we have asked Thames Water to answer and the information requested re the upgrade works

### **CONCLUSIONS**

It is suggested that the Council write to Thames Water requesting information on the following points:

Why have discharges occurred in 2021, 2022 (and probably in 2023) when FFT has not been reached?

Is the system currently capable of normal discharges at the FFT rate?

Why do the storm discharges last so long?

What is the capacity of the current storm discharge pump?

Can you explain the decreases in mean daily flow in 2021 and 2022 compared to earlier years?

Has the maintenance work required by the Environment Agency following their inspection in March been carried out?

With regard to the planned upgrade, could you please provide more details, such as the capacity that the works will be able to process, the effect of changing weir heights on storage capacity and the rate at which the proposed storm discharge pump can operate.

We appreciate that such an upgrade cannot eliminate storm discharges, but what is your estimate of the effect of your upgrade on frequency and intensity of discharges?

Finally, in your announcement in January 2023, Mortimer was identified as one of eight works scheduled for an upgrade and it had a relatively early completion date. We trust you will honour this commitment. Discharges into Foudry Brook not only affect our Parish but potentially the health of the Brook and the Kennet in Reading.

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