

12 June 2024

Our Ref: EIR-24-25-050

## Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) Request

Dear Ms Hannawin,

Thank you for your e-mail dated 15 April 2024 addressed to my colleague Paul Hampton which has been passed to me to respond to. Thames Water have considered your request under the Environmental Information Regulations (2004) (EIR). Please see our response below to this aspect of your request.

### Your Request/Our Response

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

Thames Water has reviewed your request against our internal records. Thames Water do not record the reason for each individual discharge therefore section 12 4(a) of the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) applies where the public authority does not hold the records requested.

We do not consider this is a satisfactory answer. We were not asking for reasons for individual discharges. In our report (section 8 on page 8) there is a graph that shows the daily Effluent Discharge Volume (EDV) in 2022 along with periods of storm discharge. At no time in 2022 did the EDV reach the Flow to Full Treatment value but there were storm discharges. Your Environment Agency return for 2022 reported 1641.82 hours of spill and a count of 84 spills. Our question was why were discharges consistently taking place when FFT had not been reached. There must be a reason or reasons for this. Even if you are not required to record reasons for each individual discharge, surely it is in the interests of good effluent management to understand why untreated effluent is being discharged into watercourses, especially when FFT has not been reached.

Therefore, please explain why discharges were consistently taking place when FFT had not been reached.

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

At present, it is not clear what information in recorded form you are trying to access or what is meant by the term "normal discharges" and the question is too vague for us to be able to respond to.

By 'normal' we meant the routine discharges of treated effluent that continuously occur. To be completely clear and to supplement our original question we would like to follow this up with detailed questions:

It is our understanding that Water Companies are required to be able to treat flows up to a minimum of 3 Dry Weather Flow DWF. Is the treatment works at Mortimer capable of doing this as it would appear, possibly not?

What do Thames Water consider to be the current estimate of DWF?

How much storage (volume) is available to hold back untreated effluent when the FFT has been exceeded?

How are discharges of treated effluent currently measured?

When was the last MCERTS inspection and what were the main conclusions?

### **3. Why do the storm discharges last so long?**

We are unable to comment specifically on the definition of “so long” however in our 2023 annual return we stated that the high spill frequency was due to asset configuration.

We thought the term ‘so long’ should be clear in the context of our report, eg; on page 2 there are discharges of 35 days and 42 days in 2022/23 and on page 3 discharges of 59 and 67 days in 2019/20.

It appears to us that ‘asset configuration’ is a choice from dropdown boxes in the Environmental Agency spreadsheet annual report column headed ‘High Spill Frequency Operational Review’. You have given the same answer in the 2021, 2022 and 2023 reports. Would you please be more specific and provide drawings and/or schematic diagrams to explain how the works are configured?

In addition, the next column ‘High Spill Frequency Action Taken’ in 2021 reported ‘Under Investigation’ and in 2022 and 2023 reported ‘Scheduled’. Would you please clarify when this work is likely to be completed?

I believe you have outlined the scope of these works under our question 7 below and will request confirmation and clarification under that question.

### **4. What is the capacity of the current storm discharge pump?**

There are no storm discharge pumps that discharge to the watercourse. Storm discharges occur automatically as they are hydraulically controlled.

You make reference to a pump elsewhere in your response (see question 7 below). Is the function of the pump to transfer untreated effluent from overspill tank to treatment?

Would you please explain how the hydraulic controls are configured.

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

We do not regularly use the mean daily flow as part of our regulatory data and therefore we do not hold this information and the exception at 12(4)(a) applies.

Thames Water may not use mean daily flow as part of your regulatory data, but you do maintain the flow records (which you have provided to us) and as such the mean daily flows can be estimated as in the table on page 10 of our report. It would suggest that less effluent is being treated in recent years. What is the reason for this?

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

Yes.

Thank you, we are satisfied with this response.

7. **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.**

#### Summary – Site Scope of Works for Stratfield Mortimer STW

The items outlined below only includes scoped upgrades which relate to reducing storm discharges and does not include the full scope of all the upgrades we are conducting at this site.

- Replace the duty/standby storm return pumps with variable speed driven pumps sized for a flowrate range of 6 - 14 l/s. This upgrade will allow the storm tanks to be emptied sooner.

Pumps are mentioned here but earlier you say they do not have them. Are these pumps to pump from overflow storage back to treatment? Are they currently functioning?

- Provide a new PLC/HMI based control system for control of the storm return pumps.
- Refurbish the EDM monitor and relocate it to the storm tank outfall Copasac feed chamber to detect flow from the storm tank to the storm outfall. This upgrade will offer more accurate storm discharge data.

Where is the current EDM monitor located? What sort of sensor is it (make and model). Where are the data logged?

As per "AMP7 Years 2-5 EDM and Flow Monitoring Design Sheet - Mortimer STW 5205631\_DES\_541\_2.0", the following scope items are added:

- Remove and replace the existing FFT flume.
- Potential inclusion of an automated penstock to enable adequate flow control without significant alteration of the storm weir length.
- An MCERTS complaint level sensor will be installed.

Please provide us with drawings of flumes, both current and proposed.

Where will the MCERTS level sensor be installed and does this replace any current sensor?

The works will have a capacity of its current FFT value which is 35l/s

At the start of this section, you state that the items below 'only includes scoped upgrades which relate to reducing storm discharges and does not include the full scope of all the upgrades we are conducting at this site'.

Two questions arise from this:

Is your answer of capacity at current FFT Value relevant to that upgrade? Or is a simple statement that that is what FFT should be?

Therefore, what is the full scope of the upgrades you are conducting at this site? You have not provided more details as requested.

**8. 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?**

We do not hold an estimate to provide. The scope of upgrades detailed below demonstrate several constraints being addressed to help reduce the frequency of storm discharges at this site. Therefore, the exception at 12(4)(a) of the Environmental Information Regulations applies where a public authority may refuse to respond to a request on the basis that it does not hold the records requested.

We fail to understand why you are unable to provide an estimate of the perceived benefits of the proposed upgrades. We would have thought that the justification for the upgrades would be based on a quantification of the upgrade benefits. We have reiterated what we would like clarified below.

In addition, you have not answered other points in our submission. Further down in our submission we ask:

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 has been completely ignored in your response. There is no comment on 'the ability to treat volumes of incoming sewage.' Neither is there any comment on targets. Therefore, would 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.

Our submission also included the statement 'The Council also resolved to invite a representative of Thames Water along to a Council meeting to address the concerns raised.!. It is appreciated that this is not an EIR request, but no response has been received.

We suggest that it would be valuable if key representatives from SMPC be invited to visit the sewage works with a key Thames Water representative to understand the problems. Please would you arrange for this to happen by 15 September 2024

This concludes our response to your request.

We do our best to provide you with the information you have requested. If you feel we have omitted any data or misunderstood your request in any way, then please let us know. If you expand your request this will be dealt with as a new enquiry.

**Disclaimer**

The information provided with this letter is taken from the information we hold on our records as at the date indicated. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of this information and it should not be relied on for any purpose.

### **Retention**

Please note that we will retain a record of your request to allow us to evidence our compliance with the law relating to EIR.

### **Internal Review**

If you are not satisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review where the response will be re-examined. Please include a reason for why you are dissatisfied with the response. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of receipt of this response and emailed to [EIR.Requests@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:EIR.Requests@thameswater.co.uk)

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you can apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO), who will consider whether Thames Water has complied with its obligations under the EIR. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already exhausted our internal review procedure.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: *The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Wycliffe Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK6 5AF*. More information can be found on their website: [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#). There is no charge for making an appeal.

Yours sincerely,

EIR Team