

## **VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THAMES WATER**

### **Recommendation:**

Wallingford Town Council has no confidence in Thames Water's competence as a sewerage undertaker

### **1 Executive summary**

Thames Water has provided water and sewage treatment to Wallingford since 1989 as part of the wider privatization of the water provision in the UK. Since this time there have been repeated instances of Thames Water illegally pumping sewage into the Thames in Oxfordshire and Beyond.

### **2 Background**

- In 2023, Wallingford received **over 2700** hours of sewage discharge, including plants upstream, severely impacting water quality and local ecosystems.
- The increase in bills is currently proposed as 23% from Ofwat for Thames Water, "Ofwat has categorised the business plan as 'inadequate,' with the regulator also considering the appointment of an Independent Monitor to report on the water company's progress." on line - [Thames Water responds to Ofwat's categorisation of their business plan as 'inadequate' - Water Magazine](#)

### **3 Issue**

The recent granting of bathing water status, currently trending at an excellent grading, underscores the exceptional environmental quality of the River Thames and its tributaries in our region (Fig 1). This status, while a positive indicator, requires proactive measures to ensure its continued preservation. It is crucial to protect this designation, not only for the benefit of those directly impacted but also as a responsibility to safeguard the broader ecological balance of the river. Furthermore, neglecting the environmental concerns related to storm discharge and illegal sewage discharges poses a significant risk to the overall health and well-being of our community. By taking action to address these issues, we can uphold the integrity of the river, protect the designated bathing water status, and ensure a sustainable and healthy environment for current and future generations.

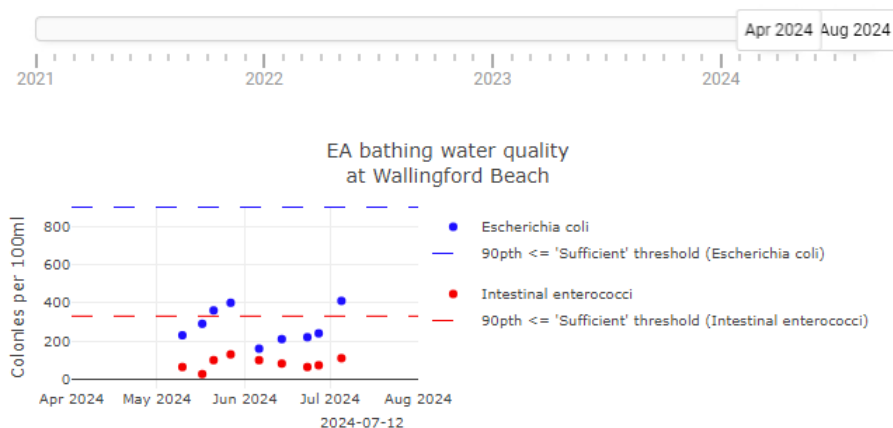


Fig 1

## 4 Options

I feel there is only one option of a vote of no confidence

## 5 Proposal

Wallingford Town Council proposes that a letter should be sent by the Chair and Town Clerk of the Council to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, urging His Majesty's Government to place full regulatory and administrative limits on Thames Water, suspending bonuses, bringing criminal charges to individuals responsible where found, and to evaluate the pros and cons of the renationalisation of Thames Water.

## 6 Supporting evidence/rationale for proposal

Wallingford Town Council to note that:

- Thames Water has been releasing untreated sewage into our rivers for 20 years. In Wallingford, the Sewage Treatment Works (STW) and the Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) systems have been regularly discharging untreated sewage from the Benson and North Moreton sewage works, significantly impacting our local waterways, contributing to pollution and environmental degradation.
- Records show that illegal spills date back to 2004 or beyond.
- Every time it rains, the poor repair of Thames Water's infrastructure, including the Benson and North Moreton sewage works, allows infiltration. The inadequate capacity of the Sewage Treatment Plant, coupled with management decisions, leads to days of overflow. The last three Christmases are well-documented, but it happens all year round:
  - The spill from Christmas Day 2021 ran until 9 January 2022.
  - The spill from 28 December 2022, which was reported in the Guardian, lasted 607 hours and was still ongoing on 18 January 2023.

- The spill from 30 December 2023 ran well into January 2024. Last Christmas, the CSO action was accompanied by Wallingford residents having sewage back up into their homes.
- The sewage spill map frequently shows discharges at times of rainfall that then turn to illegal dry spills.
- A baby born today will be 16-21 before sewage overflows are "compliant". Whole childhoods are being spent knowing nothing but hazardous water and mismanagement of resources.
- The UK is one of two nations to have privatised water, with the other being Chile. This privatisation has been shown to be a likely cause of Thames Water's financial issues and is clearly non-standard.
  - [Thames Water hit with £39m of penalties after missing regulatory targets | Thames Water | The Guardian](#)
- Thames Water is requesting a bill rise of 44% over the 2025-2030 period.
- Henley Town Council passed a motion of no confidence in Thames Water on 4 June 2024 and also a motion calling for renationalisation.
- Witney Town Council passed in June 2024 has unanimously passed a motion of no confidence in Thames Water and described the decision as a "cry for help".

#### Bathing Water Status:

- With Wallingford recently granted bathing water status:

Wallingford Beach was officially designated as a bathing water site by the UK government on 15 May 2024. This status means that the Environment Agency will regularly monitor the water quality during the bathing season, ensuring that the river is safe for swimming and other recreational activities. This designation comes as part of broader efforts to tackle sewage pollution. The Environment Agency's monitoring and the government's legally binding targets to reduce sewage dumping will help improve water quality in the area. Thames Water is also required to spend significant funds to address sewage issues, although their infrastructure remains a concern.

- Thames Water's sewerage service is beyond inadequate. With illnesses on the rise, bringing serious risk of death, administrative change is needed.
- The privatisation of Thames Water is a root cause behind the inadequacy of service.
- Thames Water is not sustainable without direct intervention and renationalisation.

- Thames Water's request for an increase in consumer bills of 44% over the next five years is extortion and is a clear show of poor business management and decades of collecting payments from residents without using them to maintain the network.

Councillor Steve Holder,  
12 July 2024