

Update from EA issued after the meeting

From: Enquiries_THM

Sent: 30 March 2021 14:07

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works Incident Ref 01891397

Dear Customer,

Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works

We are providing this briefing as we believe you may have an interest in the above works, or we have agreed to notify you of specific incidents.

We are aware of the infrastructure failure at Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works which has caused a reduced treatment capacity at the works. This initially led to intermittent and some sustained discharges of untreated sewage (settled and screened only) from the works to the River Thames. Thames Water have now re-configured the treatment process so the sewage previously discharging in this way receives partial treatment and is blended (diluted) with treated effluent. Thames Water have informed us that the repair will take several weeks. This is of great concern to us and we have requested that Thames Water explore all viable options to minimise the risk to the environment.

We have attended the site several times to assess the impact of these discharges and to assess compliance against the site's Environmental Permit. We will continue to monitor and investigate the situation. We have installed water quality monitors which will provide data which we can access remotely. We will respond to any reports of further discharges on a risk basis.

We would like to emphasise that, while the Environment Agency is aware of the challenging situation that has arisen, we have not authorised or endorsed any discharges of untreated sewage or partially treated (blended) sewage, which amount to permit breaches and alleged offences under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

We will consider our enforcement response to the permit breaches outlined above, and any further or ongoing alleged offences associated with this incident, in light of our investigation and in accordance with our Enforcement and Sanctions Policy.

Our role

The Environment Agency regulates discharges of sewage to rivers and streams by issuing environmental permits for sewage treatment works. If not properly treated, sewage discharges can adversely impact on water quality and cause damage to river wildlife and fish. Sewage pollution can also present human health risks. The permits we issue apply strict controls to ensure the effluent discharged is treated to a standard that ensures the receiving river is adequately protected. We regularly monitor effluent quality at this site and have been investigating a series of incidents where we believe breaches of their permit have occurred.

We are working with Thames Water to ensure that they take every possible action to return the sewage works to normal operation, prevent these issues recurring and to remediate any pollution caused.

Further information

We value reports from members of the public, as without them, we won't always have a timely and clear understanding of what's happening on the ground. Anyone observing pollution should report the incident to the Environment Agency 24/7 pollution hotline: 0800 80 70 60. Any problem with surcharging of sewage and clean up from sewage spills, should also be reported to Thames Water on [0800 316 9800](tel:08003169800).

We have notified Public Health England and Buckinghamshire Council's Environmental Health team. Any concerns on health issues should be raised with the latter.

If you have any questions please contact the Customers and Engagement Team via their email address: enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Customers & Engagement Team - **Thames**



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