



## **Leader of the Council**

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Ms Sarah Bentley  
Chief Executive  
Thames Water

By email : [sarah.bentley@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:sarah.bentley@thameswater.co.uk)

6 December 2021

Dear Ms Bentley

### **Water Quality in Buckinghamshire**

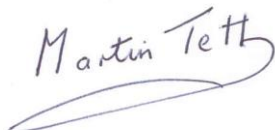
Buckinghamshire Council and the residents of Buckinghamshire have been very concerned for some time about the issue of raw sewage being discharged by water companies into the watercourses within Buckinghamshire. The recent discussion over the measures within the Environment Bill between the House of Lords and Commons has highlighted the high level of concern on this issue. The issue causes impacts within the rivers and tributaries within the Thames catchment and of particular concern is the impact on the highly sensitive chalk streams within South Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns. Recognising that our precious chalk streams are an internationally rare habitat, it is very concerning to note that none of Buckinghamshire's chalk streams reach good status under the Water Framework Directive in relation to water quality or ecology.

As a Council, we want to do everything we can to maintain the water quality and ecology contained within those areas alongside protecting public health. Recently at a Full Council meeting of Buckinghamshire Council, a notice of Motion was passed in relation to this issue. The agreed notice of motion noted that Government voted for more moderate measures in the Environment Bill than those proposed by the House of Lords which would have restricted the discharge of raw sewage into our water courses and place a legal duty on water companies to invest in the necessary infrastructure to protect and improve our waterways.

The motion agreed that I should write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and to all Buckinghamshire Members of Parliament, making known the concerns of this Council and emphasising the importance of the Government bringing forward a clear strategy for ceasing this environmentally damaging practice as a matter of priority. The motion also agreed that I should write to yourself as one of the Chief Executives of a Water Company with sewage treatment works discharging raw sewage into the Thames, Ouse, Wye and other waterways across Buckinghamshire.

We are working with you on the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans and on the Smarter Water Catchments within the Chess catchment and we are pleased to be able to partner with you in this way and identify areas and options for improving ecological habitat and reducing pollution. However, I am writing to you to today to seek specific assurance that you will pursue a programme of capital investment that will demonstrate improvements in the sewerage system and deliver progressive reductions in the harm caused by untreated sewage discharges as per the Lords' Amendment. If you could detail ways in which you are pursuing such a programme of investment, highlighting the particular areas within Buckinghamshire where this investment is being or going to be focussed, that would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Tett". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Martin Tett  
Leader  
Buckinghamshire Council