



www.saveourlandsandriver.org.uk

Emma Hardy MP

House of Commons

London

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By email to: emma.hardy.mp@parliament.uk

November 18, 2025

Dear Emma,

Re: The “Thames Sewage Pump” (Teddington Direct River Abstraction – TDRA scheme)

Thank you for your letter of 4 September replying to mine to Steve Reed of 7 August 2025.

I am writing today because the public consultation for the Teddington Direct River Abstraction (TDRA) scheme has generated an unprecedented and overwhelming public rejection of Thames Water's proposal. This new, material development significantly strengthens the case for the scheme to be stopped, and I wish to address this in detail and ask for your direct intervention.

Unprecedented Public Rejection

Since you replied, Thames Water's statutory public consultation for the TDRA scheme has closed. It received an astounding 14,735 responses—a figure well over ten times the public response rate of similar schemes. While Thames Water has not published the "for and against" data—and likely will not—our campaign feedback estimates over 99% of respondents explicitly rejected the scheme in its entirety. This is a clear and unequivocal message that cannot be ignored.

We urge you to reflect on why there was such an enormous public response, particularly after Thames Water spent millions of pounds of customers' money on public engagement. The reality is that the scheme's credibility continues to decline in direct proportion to the details they reveal, precisely because it is so fundamentally and demonstrably flawed as a strategic choice.



From our campaign feedback, here is a summary of why the public is so vehemently against this scheme and favour one of the many credible alternatives:

The Flaws of the TDRA Proposal

1. **Extreme Cost vs. Low Utility:** The proposed £1 billion cost is set against an expected operation of just six weeks per year. The public rightly views an asset sitting idle for the vast majority of the time as a totally unjustified request to increase their water bills.
2. **Substandard Environmental Target:** The proposed standard of treated sewage to be discharged into the river is *not* Quaternary Treatment, which is now the de facto target standard in Europe. The public asks why we are planning to be the “dirty country of Europe” by aiming for a standard lower than the 27 members of the European Union.
3. **Lack of Transparency:** Thames Water claims TDRA came top of their “Best Value” assessment of over 1,400 schemes. Given the deep mistrust in Thames Water’s assertions, the public demands to see the methodology. Their continued refusal to release the details is unacceptable.
4. **Misleading Customer Research:** Thames Water claims customer research as the basis for this scheme, yet buried in the detail is the fact that the public demonstrably prefers demand management schemes over supply infrastructure projects like this.
5. **Small and Inflexible Contribution:** The proposed scheme is small and inflexible. Its overall contribution to London’s supply balance is so minimal it is lost in the rounding errors of any model. Alternatives, such as the proposed SESRO reservoir, will deliver 30 times the volume of water without tipping treated sewage into the Thames.
6. **Threat to Public Health and Amenity:** The London Mayor identified Teddington as one of the best places for a new planned open swim location due to the enormous health and social benefit potential. The public is rightly asking why we would choose to ruin a prime location by increasing the effluent load.
7. **Financial Motivation, Not Resilience:** This scheme misses the mark by a country mile when benchmarked against the Independent Water Commission’s list for improvements to water resilience, environmental protection, and sustainable growth. The public see the real motivation as financial: TDRA allows Thames Water to increase its Regulatory Asset Base (RAB), delivering an ability to borrow more—an option less available with alternative schemes.



The Need for Government Intervention

Emma, our campaign is based around people who are reasonable in the face of evidence-based arguments. We have also built up deep knowledge about the challenges faced by water companies. 2.5 years into reviewing this latest version of the scheme, we are taken aback by the volume and depth of counter points we can amass against it.

This brings us to our challenge regarding the final paragraph of your letter of 4 September 2025. The issue is not about developing TDRA; the scheme in total is flawed, poor value, and environmentally damaging. It is clear that seeking engagement with Thames Water is no longer productive. They are manifestly not interested in listening. As the industry's worst-regarded company, they have developed an art of managing the regulatory regime for their own benefit, and TDRA is a prime example.

Water companies are legally required to review their water plans annually and report to you. As the guardian of overall policy and how it gets enacted, we are asking you to act. We respectfully reiterate the request we made at the start of this correspondence: please visit the site in Teddington to see for yourself why this scheme is so vehemently opposed. We also renew our offer to meet and explain in more detail exactly how this slow-moving car crash can and must be prevented.

Yours sincerely,

Ian McNuff

Founder member, Save Our Lands and River

C.C. Munira Wilson MP, Sarah Olney MP, Ruth Cadbury MP, Ed Davey MP