



2 Royal Parade, Tilford Road, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6TD

FAO

Alastair Cochran CEO Thames Water
Cathryn Ross - CEO Thames Water

10th November 2023

Dear Alastair and Cathryn

I write to you following this week's major incident which meant that many thousands of my constituents were left without water - in most cases for 4/5 days.

As I write, some residents in the Bramley area have only just had water restored - 6 days after their supply stopped. My parliamentary inbox is full of messages from frustrated constituents who have been forced to confront very tough issues this week.

I would like to thank you for the way you stayed closely in touch with me over the weekend. The information you gave me was extremely helpful in being able to pass on to constituents. But it is clear many people are angry and reeling from their experience this week; they feel they have been let down by Thames Water. I set out below our main concerns:

What caused this?

We were informed turbidity (cloudiness) was detected at Shalford Water treatment works and the facility was therefore shut down. It was claimed these problems were as a result of Storm Ciaran but the exact reasons why have not been confirmed to us.

Many are wondering what happened which meant that the closure of this treatment works stopped water supply for between 12-18,000 people for such a long period of time. Why was there no back-up supply plan for an area of this scale? Once the turbidity issues had been resolved I would like to understand why it took so long to get the system working again?

I understand the Shalford treatment works is due for an upgrade and investment - would earlier implementation of this upgrade have meant we avoided these hard last few days? What lessons and improvements will Thames Water be making following this incident?

Customer Safety and Service

A large number of people have contacted me to describe how the elderly / vulnerable did not receive promised bottled water deliveries with relatives and



neighbours having to step in to ensure they were safe. Of course, no water meant no central heating for many in these cold and wet November conditions. The experience relayed to me of local people dealing with unwell family members and little ones with sickness bugs all with no running water stick with me.

As you are well aware, many Surrey school children lost one or two school days of their school this week and parents were consequently also unable to attend work themselves. Numerous local businesses have been in touch to relay they have been unable to trade for multiple days - employees have lost income, stock has been spoiled - they have lost many £ thousands.

Thames Water has already confirmed customers will be automatically credited as a result of the disruption. I confirm on behalf of my residents that circumvention or avoidance of the stated customer guarantee route will not be acceptable to those affected.

Communication

Even as it became clear the Shalford closure was developing into a major incident the Thames Water remained with a website chat BOT, and customers report being held on the line for very long periods. Has Thames Water undertaken any stress testing of their communication capability for situations like this in order to ensure it was sufficient?

Many constituents reported what they found frustrating - more than anything else - was the poor information and reporting they received. Although most accept that the information evolves as a situation develops, the infrequent and often conflicting nature of the information and updates received was frustrating and distressing to people. On Tuesday night Thames Water reported on their website that the situation had been resolved, sending the 1,300 plus households still with no water into a blind spin - deeply concerned they had been forgotten.

Bottled Water Stations and interaction with Local Authorities

Long car queues are to some extent to be expected but Crown Court Car Park water supply station was closed on Saturday night, despite Waverley BC and Thames Water being aware many thousands of local people had no water supply. Was it really necessary to close this overnight and until 9am the following morning?

The third Sainsbury's water station only opened on Monday - was it not possible to get it up and running on Sunday at the very least? Local Bramley residents and Councillors repeatedly requested a water station to cover the Bramley and villages area, which was without supply for the longest period, but this did not happen.

I confirm I will also follow up with Waverley Borough Council as many feel they should have recognised these serious logistical issues and been more responsive to residents needs this last week. I am aware there have also been issues with



Waverley's dissemination of information to all, not helpful to residents in their time of need.

Finally, I would like to offer my thanks for agreeing to my request to come to South West Surrey and meet with residents via a public meeting in the near future. However ahead of that I would be extremely grateful if you could address the issues raised above.

Best wishes.

Jeremy Uch

Jeremy