

Mr William Dax
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Our ref: THM317060
Date: 18/12/2023

Dear Mr Dax,

RE: Request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)/ Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

Thank you for your request (dated 27/11/23) requesting the following:

Please provide details of all inspections, data collected and conclusions reached carried out by yourselves and others at this site regarding flooding of Lake End Common, Dorney, Bucks for the periods:

- 1 January 2000 - 30 March 2003: Before the Dorney Water Treatment Works was operating

We do not hold any data on this as it is outside our retention period.

How we have considered your request

We have considered your request under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 / Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). The Act requires that we respond to requests by advising you whether or not information is held, and if so by providing you with that information. EIR Regulation 3(2) states that information is held if it is in our possession and has been produced or received by us, or it is held by another person on our behalf at the time the request is received.

Information not held

In this case, the information you have requested is not held by the Environment Agency, and we are therefore refusing your request on the grounds that there is no information we can provide.

Where a request is for environmental information, the Regulations allow us to refuse to disclose it if the exception at EIR Regulation 12(4)(a) applies. The regulation states that a public authority may refuse to disclose environmental information to the extent that it does not hold that information when an applicant's request is received.

It is not possible for us to conduct a public interest balancing test because the reason for non-disclosure is that the information is not held.

- 31 March 2003 to date: After the Dorney WTW started operating.

2014

In 2014 the EA received funds to clear the Roundmoor Ditch on Dorney Common as it was heavily silted and vegetated following an inspection that year. Clearance work was carried out by a contractor in September 2014 To remove 130m of reed bank to a width of 70% across the Roundmoor Ditch, Dorney Common. To include the removal of silt and reed root systems. This work was to allow for higher flows expected over the winter period.

2019

Following a complaint from an Eton Wick resident in September 2019 regarding an increase in weed growth on the Roundmoor Ditch, the EA responded saying

‘Weed growth may have been exacerbated by the 2013/14 pollution event, however the subsequent hot and dry summers combined with a lack of watercourse maintenance is more likely to have contributed to the current weed growth situation. We have no regulatory authority to require Thames Water Utilities Limited (TWUL) to undertake weed clearance, following a pollution event or otherwise.

Watercourse maintenance is the responsibility of riparian owners and we have made the relevant owners in this area aware of this position.

We have permissive power to undertake maintenance to reduce the risk of flooding to people and property. We are not legally required to maintain watercourses. We have funding allocated to us for our asset maintenance programme which is available to view online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/river-and-coastal-maintenance-programme>

The programme shows future maintenance needs that we have identified and which we consider and prioritise for funding on an annual basis. The allocation of funding for maintenance takes into account the cost to benefit ratio of the work and any other considerations such as a legal obligation. We are committed to maintain working with the Eton Wick Waterways Group, providing advice and guidance on watercourse management and property protection.

In 2018, we undertook channel management work along the Colenorton Brook (an outlet of the Roundmoor ditch) to fulfil an earlier commitment on the basis that this responsibility was handed back to the riparian owners on completion of the work.

In 2018, TWUL provided additional funding to Thames 21 to carry out some weed clearance as a one off event. TWUL also provided funding for habitat reinstatement and improvements carried out on the Roundmoor Ditch, the project was run by Thames 21 with volunteers from the local community.

A site walkover was carried out in June 2019 by a member of our Asset Performance team. The aim was to identify what actions were needed and could be undertaken in the short term to improve flow within the channel.

In 2019 significant weed clearance has been carried out by Eton College and Thames Valley Angling Association following our guidance. We have also carried out weed spraying along a section of the ditch.

The discharge of sewage effluent made from Slough STW is regulated under an environmental permit issued by the Environment Agency. This places standards on the quality that the effluent must meet before being discharged and limitations on the amount of effluent that can be discharged. TWUL have engaged with us to discuss potential changes to the environmental permit at Slough STW due to forecast population growth in the catchment. The physical capacity of the Roundmoor and Boveney Ditches to accept the flow and provide adequate dilution will be assessed as part of any permit application and as such the potential relocation of the effluent discharge to an alternative watercourse is being considered. We would expect Thames Water to engage with local interest groups before a change of this nature is made.

We will continue to work with TWUL through the planning and regulation of environmental permits. We will also continue to work with TWUL as part of EWWG to advise, influence and find solutions going forward.

We remain committed to working with the EWWG and other relevant organisations to seek a long term plan that meets the needs of all parties.

2020

In March 2020 the EA wrote to riparian owners in the Dorney/Eton Wick area to remind them of Following a report of high flows in June 2020 our Field Team visited the site and found a pond on Dorney Common approx. 30 cm deep, but found no channel blockages, and found that vegetation cover was the expected amount for the time of year.

2023

In 2023 we received reports of flooding of a footpath south of Wood Lane Bridge, an inspection was carried out, and it was found that clearance of the watercourses in the area were required by the landowners. The EA wrote to all landowners with Riparian Owner responsibilities in requesting that they carry out maintenance as soon as possible.

The EA own some land to the south of the Jubilee river alongside the Roundmoor Ditch, and clearance of this section was carried out in September 2023.

The Environment Agency sets limits on the quality and quantity of treated effluent from Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) so that WWTW do not cause an unacceptable impact on the environment. The flow that may be discharged in dry weather is one of these limits. Dry weather flow (DWF) is the average daily flow to a WWTW during a period without rain.

Slough Sewage Treatment Works (STW) has a dry weather flow limit of 52,609 m³/day. Due to the amount of weed growth some local landowners were suggesting this was because Thames Water had increased their discharge into the Roundmoor Ditch.

Our data showed that over the last 5 years, DWF in Slough STW has ranged from 50,625 in 2022 to 60,497 in 2018. We have not received the flow data for 2023 yet as it is submitted in February of the following year. The fluctuation in annual DWF may be linked to the amount of rain received in a year, particularly, summer rain. There have also been a number of storm sewage discharges which have been monitored since 2020 and range 7 to 16 spills per year.

- Also, any specific information regarding the clearance of the Roundmoor Ditch culvert under Lake End

Road by yourselves or others during the above periods. (31MAR2003 to date)

The culvert under Lake End Road is owned by the Local Authority, and we do not hold any data showing it had been cleared by EA staff in the time period 2003 to date. An inspection by our consultants on 21st June 2023 showed the culvert to be in Fair condition with the Downstream headwall slightly overgrown with ivy but in good condition.

Concrete has minor spalling but no concern. CCTV required of internal elements. Upstream headwall very overgrown and cannot be seen. The council may have carried out an inspection on their asset, and we suggest contacting them too.

It is worth noting the weeds cannot be cleared during the closed fishing season (15 March to 15 June) because of the impact to spawning fish. During this period the weeds grow a significant amount.

We respond to requests for information that we hold under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

Standard data	I enclose [description of the information to be provided]. Please refer to the <u>Open Government Licence</u> which explains the permitted use of this information.
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If you are not satisfied you can contact us within 2 calendar months to ask for our decision to be reviewed.

Yours sincerely,

Customers & Engagement Team - **Thames**

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