



Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

2nd November 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

TEDDINGTON DIRECT RIVER ABSTRACTION PROJECT – SECTION 35 PLANNING ACT 2008 DIRECTION REQUEST

Thames Water supplies around 2,600 million litres of water to around 10 million people and 220,000 businesses each day in London and across the Thames Valley. However, the current pressures on water resources from climate change, a growing population and increasing drought risk, as well as protecting the environment, means it is essential that new water resources are delivered across its region.

Thames Water set out the solutions needed to ensure a resilient water supply for future generations in its revised draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (WRMP), which was submitted to the Secretary of State on 31 August 2023. The WRMP includes a new water abstraction project supported by water recycling on the River Thames close to Teddington Weir in London, this is called The Teddington Direct River Abstraction Project (the Project).

The Project is the preferred configuration of the London Water Recycling Strategic Resource Option, which is one of several 'Strategic Resource Options' that are being developed by Thames Water to help secure future water supplies. It will provide up to 75 million litres per day as a drought resilience project by abstracting water from the river that will be transferred via an existing underground tunnel to the Lee Valley reservoirs. Highly treated recycled water would then be conveyed in a new pipeline from Mogden sewage treatment works to compensate for the additional water taken from the river to protect the environment and wildlife.

The Project will deliver much needed water resources to the London Water Resource Zone and so it is crucial that the Project is delivered at the earliest opportunity in order to avoid a significant deficit of water supply for many of London's residents in a drought. This is necessary to ensure ongoing compliance with Thames Water's statutory water supply obligations, as the Project is identified in Thames Water's revised draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024, and to ensure sufficient water resources to support economic growth and development across the region.

The Development Consent Order (DCO) process provides the most effective consenting route for securing the earliest delivery of the Project in the early 2030s. It would provide the most efficient mechanism for securing the extensive range of statutory powers, permissions, consents and licences needed to deliver this significant and complex project. The alternative town and country planning route, coupled with a multitude of other separate licences, power and consents, carries a risk of substantial delay to the delivery of this critical infrastructure.

Water recycling is not one of the categories of water resources infrastructure that can automatically qualify as a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008, therefore a Direction from the Secretary of State is required to bring a water recycling scheme into the DCO process. Water transfer infrastructure can automatically qualify as a NSIP to be determined under the DCO process. However, the Project does not meet the criteria and threshold set out in the Planning Act 2008, even though in overall terms the Project is of significant size and scale, and its purpose of providing a constant and reliable supply of water during droughts to the economically critical London region is inherently nationally significant. Therefore, the Project requires a Direction from the Secretary of State that it is a project of national significance that should be consented through the DCO process.

To provide certainty to Thames Water's programme for delivery of the Project in the early 2030s, it is essential that a section 35 Direction is given for the Project at the earliest date practicable. This in turn will then enable Thames Water to fulfil its pre-application obligations under the DCO process and submit an application for development consent in 2026.

Thames Water therefore requests that the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs gives a Direction under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended)¹ for the 'principal'² elements of the Project to be treated as development for which development consent is required.

This letter is accompanied by a 'qualifying request' under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008 for the Project, which is being made in writing and to specify the development to which it relates.

The information within the qualifying request explains why the conditions in section 35(2)(a) and (b) of the Planning Act 2008 are met in relation to the Project, and why it is considered to be a project of national significance. The qualifying request therefore meets the requirements within the meaning of section 35ZA(11) of the Planning Act 2008 to enable the Secretary of State to give a Direction for the Project under section 35(1).

Throughout our consideration of the application, we have been working closely with colleagues at DEFRA. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Muncaster', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Nevil Muncaster

Strategic Partnerships Director

¹ Planning Act 2008, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents>

² Defined within section 3 of this request