

Via email only

Enquiries to: Councillor Alex Rennie
Direct line:
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My reference:
Your reference:
Date: 22 March 2023

FOLLOW UP TO RESPONSE REGARDING THE DRAFT WATER RESOURCES

Dear Mr Taylor

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Thank you for consulting Havant Borough Council on your Draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024 which sets out how Portsmouth Water intends to achieve safe drinking water supplies for our residents and businesses. You will note that the Council responded to that consultation.

Thank you also for attending our public meeting, held on 15th February, which enabled the Borough's residents to ask questions directly of yourselves and your colleagues in Southern Water about how water is provided in the future, taking into account the growing need and the pressures of climate change. This includes the proposed Hampshire Water Transfer and Recycling Project, which would use Havant Thicket Reservoir.

I'm sure that you can appreciate that our residents significantly value the history of the Havant springs and how this affects the quality of their drinking water. For much of our history, fresh water has played a vital part in local commerce, from water mills to parchment manufacture to brewing. We are a Borough built on the remarkable natural geography of the Bedhampton Spring.

In considering the proposed water recycling project, I consider it essential that the information which our residents receive is clear and unambiguous. One uncertainty which has emerged is whether Portsmouth Water customers will continue to receive water directly from the Havant Springs or whether water from Havant Thicket Reservoir would also be supplied to them.

Councillors and residents were sold the idea and supported the concept of a fresh water reservoir. However, we are now concerned about shifting positions of our local water companies. Now we understand from our engagement that recycled water will be mixed with our Bedhampton Spring water for Portsmouth Water customers. This has raised great concern amongst the public and members.

I would appreciate a clear position from Portsmouth Water on this matter so that residents can come to their conclusions on the proposals for Havant Thicket Reservoir with the benefit of clear, unambiguous proposals in front of them.

To be clear, Havant Borough Council has supported the Havant Thicket Reservoir, as a winter storage reservoir for spring water, for decades. In more recent times, by granting planning permission for the reservoir, we are demonstrably supporting the use of spring water to ensure that the nation's valued chalk streams at the Rivers Test and Itchen are afforded the high level of protection they need.

We understand how new technology can further assist in reducing the abstraction from such sources, including leakage reduction, bulk transfers and water recycling. However whilst we have an excess of spring water in Havant we cannot support the use of water recycling to provide drinking water in Havant Borough, unless aquifer supply is insufficient to serve Portsmouth Water customers. We understand that this would not be the case for the foreseeable future, even including allowances for climate change.

We are also concerned about how these changes are being communicated to residents in the Borough. At this point, there has not been any external communication which suggests that water supply to Portsmouth Water customers could come from any source other than the Bedhampton Springs, as it always has.

Therefore, I'd be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

1. Can you confirm for the public record that Portsmouth Water is planning to supply recycled water to Portsmouth Water customers?
2. If the answer to 1 is yes, would this be throughout Portsmouth Water's network or in specific areas?
3. If the answer to question 1 is yes, would this be all year round, during summer conditions or at times of drought?
4. If the answer to question 3 is that water from Havant Thicket Reservoir would be regularly supplied to Portsmouth Water customers, do you have any concerns that customers would be more cautious about the safety of the water they are drinking, leading to increases in the use of bottled water?
5. What is the current excess flows from Bedhampton Springs on a daily basis and how does this change throughout the year?
6. Would any additional pipelines need to be constructed (beyond what is proposed by Southern Water) to allow recycled water to reach Portsmouth Water customers?
7. Would Portsmouth Water re-consider any plans to supply recycled water to its customers based upon widespread public opposition?
8. Would the inclusion of recycled water into Havant Thicket Reservoir change the types of leisure activities which can take place, compared to what was set out in the original planning application?

9. What is Portsmouth Water's communication plan moving forwards to ensure your customers are kept up to date with Southern Water's proposals for Havant Thicket and how this might affect them?

As you can appreciate, we are very concerned by the nature of these plans. However, I still look forward to continuing to work with Portsmouth Water as a company engrained within Havant's history and which continues to be a key local employer.

Yours faithfully

Councillor Alex Rennie
Leader of the Council

CC Laurence Gosden – Chief Executive of Southern Water