

Public Meeting

Public Meeting: Thames Water – Issues with sewage works and consequent tankering through village.

Date: 27th March 2026, 10am

Location: Woolhampton Village Hall

Attendees:

- Chair of Meeting: Cllr Malcolm Large
- Secretary of Meeting: District Councillor Chris Read (CR)
- Thames Water: Denise Kinsella, Customer and Stakeholder Manager (DK)
- Thames Water: Stuart Burnley, Area Manager (SB)
- Thames Water: Louis Pape, Site Manager (LP)
- West Berkshire Council: Rosalynd Gater, Public Protection (RG)

Actions:

1. Residents requested Thames Water tankers keep to a 10mph max speed until full road repairs completed to lessen vibrations.
2. Thames Water management requested to actively check tanker tachos that they keep to speed limit.
3. Thames Water will check records of runs as residents challenge figures given by SB
4. Thames Water to state weight of 32 tonne tankers when loaded (note at 20,000 litre capacity and at 40l/s reported a tanker will fill in 8.33 minutes.
5. Thames Water to instruct drivers to switch off engines when stationary (at level crossing or parked up).
6. Thames Water to instruct drivers not to block driveways when stationary.
7. West Berkshire Council to respond to appropriate re-engineering of road where tankers causing vibration as walked with Public Protection.
8. West Berkshire Council to look at position of “engine off” signage.
9. West Berkshire to liaise with Network Rail on resurfacing at Level Crossing in poor condition again now.
10. West Berkshire Council and Parish Council to look at a speed indicator device for both end of Station Road to remind tanker drivers to slow down.
11. Thames Water to inform resident when new pumping station generator to be installed.
12. Thames Water to look at hose incident 24th February 2026 at 5:57am – picture provided with date and time.

Minutes:

Chair opened the meeting at 10:00

- Introduced himself, Parish Councillors and District Councillor present (Cllr Cherly Springer, Cllr Laurence Harwood, Cllr Sean Garden, Cllr Chris Read).
- Chair walked through a timeline of the issues presented by the works at the Woolhampton sewage works on Station Road and consequent tankering and sewage egress behind Pound Cottages. During this summary it was raised there was excessive vibration caused by the tankers often passing down Station Road every 20 minutes day and night. It was also raised a public meeting chaired by Cllr Sean Garden in February 2025 resulted in Thames Water stating works would be completed in 6 weeks. The chair concluded that it was extremely disappointing to see this on going disruption to residents and it was clearly not acceptable.

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SB of Thames Water walked through the issues at the sewage works.

- August 2024 a structural survey on the plant identified the a major structural integrity issue resulting in an asset being immediately taken out of service for safety reasons.
- This resulted in no treatment capacity with all flows being tankering to Reading and Newbury (Lower Way, Thatcham) whilst new plant was being built. Plant takes on average 16 litres/second (l/s) flow with peak 40 l/s. Storms cause an issue as there is no storm holding capacity at Woolhampton, though there was some usable tanks to use for local holding in between tankers loading.
- The solution devised was a brand new sewage plant with 2 new aeration tanks that could take 30 l/s capacity. Work on first tank completed January 2025 and a requirement needed to let the microbiology to set.
- Mid-February 2025 tankering was reduced (15 l/s capacity with first tank)
- Second tank completed mid-March 2025 with 3-4 weeks to settle microbiology.
- Post-March there were 2-3 tankers per day for the back-wash process to remove dirty water and sludge.
- Raised this sewage works will always need a minimum tankering to take solids to Newbury Retention Centre. Also there will be increase in tankering during infrequent storms that exceed “blind tank” capacity (30-40 l/s)
- Raised that many of the households have surface water going into sewage network (used to be standard approach until new policy and regulation came in that surface water should go into a separate routed network under sustainable drainage.)
- End of January 2026 one of the aeration units failed and was taken offline for repairs. This resulted in more tankering through the village. 18 runs per day.
- Thames Water are looking to install a third aeration tank but nothing certain yet. Capacity calculations are based on population forecast. An additional tank would require an additional concrete slab laid, tanks and pumps installed – which would be before 2030 as future proofing works.
- Thames Water have given money to West Berkshire Highways Authority for road repairs and did meet with engineer Phil Sloan on this topic. More money can be provided on request.

West Berkshire Council, Rosalynd Gater (RG)

- Raised environmental laws do not cover noise from vehicles but vibration issues will be taken back to Highways.
- Noted there is a 7.5 tonnes restriction of the road and the bridge on the canal was upgraded to 28 tonnes capacity, but that waste vehicles don't apply.

Residents Questions and Answers:

- Raised why action not taken against tanker drivers speeding above the agreed 10mph down Station Road residential area. TW: Drivers reported breaching this have been reported. High value contract so contractors will follow this. This was disputed by residents who stated they have video of continued speeding by drivers.

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- Raised there are significantly more than 18 tanker runs per day, stating recorded 21 runs made during a 7 hour period over one night. Thames Water stated they would check records of runs.
- Raised at the pumping station behind Pound Cottages, is there a capacity issue. TW: it is a ground water issue that floods. Needs a new generator (4 years waiting). The pressurised riser main broke in November 2026 and tankers were required whilst repairs completed.
- Raised pothole repairs do not last long by WBC Highways. Resulting on more damage to road and vibration. CR – will raise again with council that road re-engineering scheduled in April needs to account for more road surface. (took RG to roads sites after meeting to explain issues for housing and pumping station).
- Raised question why does it have to be Woolhampton to take the tankers through. There are other routes to the south. TW: Hortest route to the A4 and safest route to get to destinations.
- Resident requested a speed camera on Station Road, or at least a speed indicator devise to encourage tankers to drive at 10mph agreed.
- Resident raised one of the tankers had its hose still connected to the rear of the vehicle driving down Station Road. If it had struck a pedestrian or cyclist it could have been fatal (this occurred on 24th February 2026 at 5:57am). What are Thames Water doing about health and safety breaches?
- Resident raised 3 times last month 6ft water in pumping station contrary to TW statement just given.
- Resident asked for analysis of water flooding out of pumping station, which is never cleaned.
- Resident asked about sewage works capacity for 16 new properties on New Road Hill, Woolhampton and the 2,500 new homes in NE Thatcham. TW: Current Woolhampton capacity will cope with 16 new homes. £50million investment at Lower Way Thatcham sewage works before residents move in.
- Resident raised what compensation will Thames Water provide for cracking in housing caused by the excessive tankering speeds and vibration. TW: raise with your insurer or place a substantiated claim against Thames Water.
- Resident raised tanker drivers are not turning off engines when parked up in village (e.g. at level crossing). TW: will take away and instruct drivers again.