

Climate change and population growth are putting a serious strain on water resources. Water companies, consumers, government and regulators need to take steps to address the increasing gap between supply and demand.

However, I am concerned that Thames Water's WRMP24 prioritises a large new water resource scheme (SESRO) over more cost-effective schemes with a smaller environmental impact, and fails to adequately address the problem of leakage.

My and my constituent's concerns over SESRO include: extreme disruption throughout the construction period, loss of bio-diversity for over a decade, flooding, and carbon footprint of construction.

I am unconvinced that the proposed Abingdon reservoir is the best solution to meet rising future water demand because:

1. It would take until at least 2040 to build and fill the reservoir.
2. It is a large scheme that can, realistically, only be built in a single stage, so it has no flexibility to cope with needs being less than feared.
3. It would have major and irreversible environmental impacts, for example in its embedded carbon.
4. It brings no "new water" into the dry and heavily populated Thames valley, unlike transfer schemes like the Severn to Thames transfer.
5. It is not resilient against multi-year droughts because there would be virtually no water available for re-filling the reservoir during the winters of such droughts.
6. It is built on the flood plain so would aggravate flooding downstream, particularly in Abingdon.

I am also concerned about the risks to flooding. In the Thames Water WRMP19 submission back-up reports, the reservoirs above 75 Mm<sup>3</sup> size received 'Red' ratings. The Gate 1 report on the Abingdon reservoir claimed that the latest flood modelling showed a reduction in flood risk for Abingdon. However Thames Water still have not released this modelling. I along with other local stakeholders am concerned there remains insufficient flood storage area on the reservoir site to compensate for the loss of floodplain.

Given that the volume of water lost from Thames Water's network every day is greater than the projected output from the reservoir, I believe fixing the existing infrastructure should be prioritised over this incredibly expensive, inflexible, and environmentally destructive scheme.

At this stage in the consultation process, I would urge RAPID not to recommend SESRO proceed to Gate 3 unless there is first a transparent and public presentation of the flooding issues and safety issues relating to the reservoir.