

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC REALM**

**FLASH FLOODING 20 JULY 2007**

**QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM RESIDENTS AND ANSWERS  
PROVIDED BY THAMES WATER AND THE COUNCIL**

This report lists the questions received from residents and the answers provided by Thames Water and the Council. They are numbered 1 to 79 in the order received - the earliest first. Owing to the number received, priority questions were selected and ordered by subject for answer at the public meeting held on 30 January. These priority questions are highlighted in italics - they were chosen as being representative of a number of concerns. The original numbers have been kept so the list is not sequential.

**QUESTIONS TO THE MEETING OF 30 JANUARY 2008**

Questions in *italics* were asked and answered at the meeting.

## Thames Water

### **Sewers**

1. Following the flooding which has occurred in 2004, 2005 and 2007 (in all cases due to sudden heavy rainfall), and Thames Water's undertaking in 2005 to the W14 flood forum to do significant upgrade work to the capacity of the main drainage system to cope with such events, what work have TW done to date to upgrade the main drain, and what work will be done by when to prevent a recurrence?

*P. K. Elsham Rd, W14*

Thames Water has plans to undertake major capital investment to alleviate flooding from a number of properties that have experienced repeat flooding. This investment, subject to local agreements and planning approval, will commence in spring this year. Such solutions are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems. We are also undertaking a wider strategic investigation into the whole of the Counters Creek Drainage area. This will take a number of years to develop and, where approved, build. We will be looking in our next Asset Management Period to have provision for these wider strategic solutions.

3. What has been done in the sewers' drains to ensure water doesn't rise up and flood again? Have they been enlarged/ unblocked/ dredged?

*E. K. Upper Addison Gardens, W14*

The majority of all our sewers, including those in the Holland Park area, are free flowing with very little incidence of blockages. The flooding of July 20 2007 was a result of extreme weather and it is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day.

4. When is the Holland Road storm drain capacity going to be increased to allow for the new shopping complex in Shepherd's Bush's waste as well as frequent inclement weather?

*G. E. Elsham Terrace, W14*

There are no plans to increase the capacity of the sewer to allow for the new shopping complex in Shepherds Bush. Discussions have happened with the developer and it appears that they are proposing massive storage tanks on site to allow for the controlled discharge of surface water into the public sewer.

- 11. *Who is responsible for regular maintenance of Thames Water drains and storm tanks? How regular should this maintenance be?***

***J. and R. F. Stoneleigh Street, W11***

Thames Water is responsible for the maintenance of the public sewers and storm tanks. In general the network of sewers needs little or no maintenance and continues to function as designed. However, when problems are identified, such as collapses or blockages, we rectify the problem as soon as we can. The use of the sewers to discharge inappropriate material, such as fats, oils and grease, is the main cause of blockages within the network of sewers. The schedule of any maintenance and inspection for the network differs for each area. Where there is no history of problems, there is no requirement for regular maintenance. It is where there is a history of problems that we carry out a structured programme of inspection and /or cleaning.

12. When are you going to put in extra sewer capacity, in view of the new water mains, with increased capacity, surely a Victorian sewer cannot take this increase in water supply and therefore the sewer should have been replaced at the same time or before?

*S. M. (Holland Park West Residents Association) Elsham Road, W14*

The network of water supply pipes and the network of sewers are two completely separate systems. The replacement of the water supply pipes is generally on a like for like basis with some rationalisation to reduce duplication in pipes in certain roads and streets. We are planning to start a major capital scheme in the Holland Park area that will alleviate sewer flooding for a number of properties in the Holland Park area. We are also undertaking a wider more strategic study of the Counters Creek drainage area that will take a number of years to develop and its implementation will depend on a change in the funding arrangements for sewer flooding. We will be discussing this with our regulator, Ofwat.

- 14a. What steps are Thames Water taking to improve the sewerage systems in the affected areas so as to prevent such flooding occurring in future, and when will this work be undertaken?

*C. J. St. Ann's Road, W11*

Thames Water is planning to start major capital investment to alleviate a number of properties in the Holland Road area, subject to local agreement and planning approval, in the spring of this year. Such schemes are obviously of benefit but a more strategic, catchment wide solution is preferable. This will take a number of years to develop and will require significant funding. We will be submitting the case for the funding of a strategic scheme in our next Asset Management Period (2010 to 2015).

- 36. *By far the greatest number of properties reporting flood damage as a result of 20 July 07 are in the mid west side of the Royal Borough, north west of Holland Park south to Kensington High Street. Piecemeal solutions for small areas are inappropriate: i.e. Addison Avenue, Napier Road are now too local.***

***A radical solution is now required for the whole of this area to renovate water drainage and sewage backflow. What is Thames Water's detailed plan to achieve this, including how it will be financed?***

***D. E.-S. St James's Gardens, W11***

Much of the flooding that occurred on the 20 July 2007 was due to extreme weather and the intensity of the rainfall. We are planning to start major capital investment to alleviate properties on a localised basis in the spring of this year. A wider more strategic

scheme is preferable and we will be submitting the case for funding such a scheme in our next Asset Management Period (2010 – 2015).

37. Will the repair and upgrading of sewers, outlined in a map issued by Westminster Council which does not include the very nearby area of Portobello and the Colville area which suffered greatly on July 20 last year which no 23A Lonsdale endured, affect this area? Is there a plan for this area?

I suffered a further flood in November and my basement flat was afloat. Both took several weeks to dry out. Does this affect my health - in particular my arthritis? There is still mildew around in this privately rented property. Is this healthy? My landlord has spent considerable amounts of money on drains and repairs.

*D. A. -H Lonsdale Road, W11*

The capital investment scheme to alleviate flooding in the Westbourne Grove area does not include the Portobello and Colville area. This scheme covers properties in Westbourne Grove that drains into a different part of the network. There are no specific plans for this area but we do urge all customers who have suffered flooding to contact us each and every time flooding occurs.

- 42.b What is TW doing to upgrade the archaic sewer system in the W14 area which is clearly not fit to cope with extreme weather conditions? It is unacceptable to be flooded almost on an annual basis.

*P. and P. B. Addison Road, W14*

The rainfall experienced on the 20 July 2007 was extreme with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day.

Thames Water is planning to start major capital investment to alleviate flooding in the Holland Road area for a number of properties. We do believe that a wider more strategic study of the sewers is required and this will take a number of years to develop. We will be making the case to fund this strategic scheme in our next Asset Management Period (2010 – 2015).

45. When will the drains be overhauled to prevent the kind of flooding we experienced last summer?

*Mr A. Apollo Place*

We are starting a scheme to alleviate sewer flooding from a number of properties in the Holland Road area. We do recognise that although such schemes do provide a solution to some properties a wider strategic scheme is required. This will take a number of years

to develop. We will making the case to fund this strategic scheme in our next Asset Management Period (2010 – 2015).

51. What is Thames Water's timetable for remedial work on the sewers and what criteria will be used to judge whether works have been successful and how will TW ensure that the results are carefully monitored and further remedial action taken if necessary?

*Councillor W. L.*

*There are two basic causes to flooding from sewers – operational or hydraulic capacity. Operational can include blockages, collapses etc. and we would respond to such causes immediately. Where the cause is the hydraulic capacity in the sewer we would prioritise on the basis of severity and frequency of flooding within the current funding criteria. We would develop schemes and build solution to these criteria. The monitor of their success is the level of protection that is provided when storms occur up the rainfall level that the scheme was designed to provide protection. Details of schemes, flooding reports (including all repeat floodings) are submitted to the regulator, Ofwat.*

54. As stated by Thames Water it is acceptable that a flood occurs every 10 years due to adverse weather conditions. I would firstly like to point out that my property has been flooded twice in the past 6 years, once during September 2004 (not sure if this year is correct but it was definitely after 2002 and in the month of September) and last in July 2007. This means that Thames Water is not providing an adequate service and I am interested in what explanation is available. Also, because adverse weather is not so adverse any more with heavy rains becoming more frequent with global warming etc. what is Thames Water doing to tackle this serious problem?

Surely it would be recommended to start enlarging the drainage pipes so that they could cope with heavy rains in the future?

Some background information to the cause of the floods - because of the torrential downpour that occurs in a very short time the drainage pipes could not cope with the amount of water and contaminated floodwater flows back through foul sewers causing flooding inside the property.

*R. F.*

Rainfall is measured in terms of the probability of the intensity of rainfall repeating on subsequent years. Therefore, a one in ten years storm means that there is a statistical expectation that a storm of that intensity would only happen once in every ten years. Within our current funding criteria we would not find it acceptable that a customer is flooded as a result of a one in ten year storm. In such cases we would have that customer's details on our flooding database and prioritise solutions on the agreed basis of severity and frequency.

58. When is it intended to construct defences to ensure the sewers do not overflow into the homes here in Queensdale Place?

*D.S. Queensdale Place, W11*

Although we do have proposals to alleviate flooding from properties in the Holland Road area this scheme does not include Queensdale Place. We are carrying out a wider, more strategic, study that will take a number of years to develop and, if our case for funding is successful, a number of years to construct.

68. *(also asked of the Council)* On July 20, the basements of all ten houses comprising Alma Terrace were flooded with 'clean' water. Inkerman Terrace immediately opposite remained dry. This suggests that the flooding of Alma Terrace was due to broken drains and/or blocked gulleys. In spite of correspondence and conversations with Thames Water representatives and with the Council's Planning Dept. and the Transport, Environment and Leisure Services (Tot Brill) both Thames Water and the Council have 'no plans' to carry out either an inspection or investigation of our drains and gulleys.

The question is WHY? How can either body justify their position?

*L and L M. Alma Terrace, Allen Street, W8*

The rainfall experienced on the 20 July 2007 was extreme and it is unlikely that any drainage system system – either highway drains and gullies or the public network of sewers – would be able to cope with the intensity of rain that day. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is responsible for the maintenance and clearing of road drains and gullies.

### **Non- Return Valves**

- 2.a. As a result of the 20 July 07 flash floods, the basement area of Palace Place Mansions was subjected to a back flow of sewage which stagnated in the building for some ten days before clearance was effected at the cost of the freehold company, Palace Place Mansions (Kensington) Ltd.

What steps can be/have been taken to prevent a recurrence of the situation, e.g. installation of non-return valves?

*J. .B D. Kensington Court, W8*

Where appropriate, and in agreement with the property owner, we propose to offer the installation of a non-return (flap) valve within the public sewer. This will involve a technician entering the public sewer, crawling along the pipe and manually installing the unit at the junction of the private drain from your property and the public sewer. In order to achieve this the pipe/sewer has to be a certain

size for health and safety reasons and allow physical entry into the pipe. The device will help reduce the risk of flooding from the public sewer by temporarily preventing sewage from the public sewer entering into your private drain during times when the public sewer is overwhelmed.

- 5.a. Will Thames Water pay for non-return valves at the properties affected?

*C.A. St James's Gardens, W11*

Where it is appropriate to install a Non Return Valve at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer, Thames Water will pay for the installation costs.

- 14.b Can non-return valves or similar anti-flooding devices be installed in the meantime to protect homes? Will Thames Water be arranging for these to be fitted to affected homes, and when? I have heard that non-return valves can cause problems because sometimes they close when they are not supposed to, hence causing a back up of sewage. Is this correct and, if so, how common is this problem?

*C.J. St. Ann's Road, W11*

The non-return valve can be installed at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer. Thames Water has to seek agreement from the property owner to undertake such works. Where we have a reported flooding on our Sewer Flooding History Database and at the property owner's request we will determine if it is appropriate to install such a device.

Installation will require a technician to enter the public sewer, crawl along the pipe and manually install the unit at the junction of the private drain from your property and the public sewer. In order to achieve this the pipe/sewer has to be a certain size for health and safety reasons and allow physical entry into the pipe. There is a risk of self-flooding when the public sewer is surcharged and the non-return valve is shut. On other occasions the valve can become blocked by inappropriate disposal into the sewerage system.

- 16.b Can Thames Water fit "no return" valves to the drains in those homes that have been flooded twice in two years?

*J.C. Elsham Road, W14*

See answer to 14 b above.

22. Is there a possibility of installing one-way valves to prevent liquid flowing into the waste water system - namely the toilets?

*F.G.C. Queensdale Road, W11*

See answer to 14 b above.

**26.b As a short-term measure, will Thames Water install back-flow valves in all properties flooded on July 20/07?  
H.B. Lower Addison Gardens, W14**

We will install Non Return Valves, where appropriate to properties that have reported flooding and are registered on our Sewer Flooding History Database and request from the property owner that they would like to be considered for a Non Return Valve.

The non-return valve can be installed at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer. Thames Water has to seek agreement from the property owner to undertake such works.

Installation will require a technician to enter the public sewer, crawl along the pipe and manually install the unit at the junction of the private drain from your property and the public sewer. In order to achieve this the pipe/sewer has to be a certain size for health and safety reasons and allow physical entry into the pipe.

27. What is Thames Water's attitude to the fitting of non-return valves at the sewer entry point of a domestic property? Will Thames Water cover or contribute to the cost of this?  
C.R. Addison Road, W14

Where appropriate and in agreement to the property owner we propose on this occasion to offer the installation of a non-return (flap) valves within the public sewer.

There is a risk of self-flooding when the public sewer is surcharged and the non-return valve is shut. On other occasions the valve can become blocked by inappropriate disposal into the sewerage system.

Installation will require a technician to enter the public sewer, crawl along the pipe and manually install the unit at the junction of the private drain from your property and the public sewer. In order to achieve this the pipe/sewer has to be a certain size for health and safety reasons and allow physical entry into the pipe.

Where it is appropriate to install a Non Return Valve at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer Thames Water will pay for the installation costs.



32. We live in a basement flat. Flooding here is due to the inability of the main drainage system to take excess rainwater. This excess causes a back flooding, entering the flat through the toilet and bath. The only way to prevent this is to fit back flooding valves. This is urgent. How soon can you begin this work? We have now suffered 3 floods in separate years. It will continue!  
*J.W. Kensington Square, W8*

See answer to previous question.

44. Did those properties with existing non-return valves flood on 20th July? If so what else will Thames Water do to protect our homes and what do they recommend we do internally?  
*C.G.S. Elsham Road, W14*

Some of the properties that have existing non-return valves at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer did self-flood on the 20 July 2007. As we have always stated, there is a risk of self-flooding. Isolating the rainwater from the private drainage system will help alleviate the risk of self-flooding.

- 55.a Following the heavy rainfall that caused flooding in 2005 non-returnable valves were fitted in spring 2006. Many of these devices did not work during the heavy rain on 20th July 2007 when many properties, including our own, were flooded for the second time in less than two years (and more seriously this time). We still are waiting to receive feedback from Thames Water regarding why the device didn't work and what assurances can be provided that when we next experience very heavy rain the non-returnable valve will function correctly?  
*A.H. and C.L. Holland Road, W14*

See answer to previous question.

61. Does Thames Water intend to install non-return valves in drains of flooded areas (or to assist residents to install such valves) to protect residents against the ingress of sewage from the drains?  
*M.J.L. Upper Addison Gardens, W14*

See answer to 27 above.

- 62.a The flood of last July clearly demonstrated Thames Water's insufficient systems, especially with regard to the drainage systems that did not prevent backflow of water from drains, and resulted in flooded basements in all our street.

I found an interesting leaflet on Thames Water's website on the day of the flood. It states that active drainage systems that prevent backflow from rain sewers can be arranged for and installed by TW

at no cost to the user. So why is TW refusing now to have any responsibility? and why the interesting brochure cannot be found any more on TW web site?

*A. and G. S. Queensdale Road, W11*

See answer to 27 above.

The event of 20 July 2007 was extreme and the flooding was due to the amount of rainwater that fell in a short space of time. No urban sewerage system could have coped with the volume of rainwater that fell on the 20 July 2007.

Active drainage devices are considered as part of our current funding arrangements for the Asset Management Period 2005 – 2010. These devices are provided for properties that have a high risk of flooding in low to rainfall events. Properties that flooded in July 2007 and September 2005 were due to severe weather.

Active drainage devices are still on the web site but they are under the topic of Mitigation. This is incorrect and we will correct this error. We would consider mitigation as Non Return Valves.

Where it is appropriate to install a Non Return Valve at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer Thames Water will pay for the installation costs.

71. The flash flood incident appears to be judged as a "force majeure" (act of God) unique occurrence and as such reparation has become the responsibility of individual householders' insurance companies.

However a re-occurrence could be averted by the judicious installation of a flap valve or valves which prevent contra surge of water and sewage. If it happens again, say in the next ten years, it might no longer be accepted by insurers as a freak "force majeure" event and would it not be tantamount to council negligence when it owed a duty of care to its residents to expedite a relatively cheap course of action to eliminate this particular risk?

*D.T. St James's Gardens, W11*

See answer to 27 above.

### **Other prevention measures**

- 28.c I want flood guards put in the basement of my house - will Thames Water do this and when?

*Mrs C C. Napier Road, W14*

As part of the current works that we will undertake to reduce the risk of flooding during these extreme weather events we will install,

if appropriate, a Non Return Valve at the junction of the private sewer and the Public sewer.

Installation will require a technician to enter the public sewer, crawl along the pipe and manually install the unit at the junction of the private drain from your property and the public sewer. In order to achieve this the pipe/sewer has to be a certain size for health and safety reasons and allow physical entry into the pipe.

- 55.b Following the flooding to properties in 2005 and 2007 what additional mitigating devices are you planning for Kensington and Chelsea in addition to the non-returnable valve that was fitted and did not protect many of these properties in July? We understand from various sources that you are funding flood doors in other areas of London and wanted to know whether you would be doing the same in Kensington and Chelsea.

*A.H. and C.L. Holland Road, W14*

Some of the properties that have existing non-return valves at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer did self-flood on the 20 July 2007. As we have always stated there is a risk of self-flooding from the rainwater entering your private drainage system. Isolating the rainwater from the private drainage system will help alleviate the risk of self-flooding. We have never installed flood door on properties.

### **Specific areas/streets**

9. Will the new sewer proposed for Queensdale Road run the whole length of the road or only a section of it?

*I.P Queensdale Road, W11*

Although small, localised solutions for affected areas are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems, more strategic, catchment-wide solutions are preferable. These take a number of years to develop and require significant funding. We are currently reviewing such a strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period (2010-2015).

19. What will be done to eliminate the flooding risk in Napier Road? The events of 20 July were devastating and need urgent attention by all parties involved - how will this be arranged?

*R.V. Napier Road, W14*

Although small, localised solutions for affected areas are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems, more strategic, catchment-wide solutions are preferable. These take a number of years to develop and require significant funding. We are currently reviewing such a

strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period (2010-2015). Where appropriate, Thames Water will also agree to install a Non-Returnable Valve on the junction between the public sewer and a private property.

**20. *Having seen the proposals for flood relief works in the Norland area:***

***a) when are these likely to start?***

- Final trial holes at Holland Road are scheduled for March 2008, subject to approval from Transport for London. All other trial holes in Addison Avenue/ Norland Square are completed
- A planning application for a Pumping Station Kiosk will be sought from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea once agreement has been reached with the relevant Church committee (the proposal involves land owned by the Church of England) and following discussions with the Royal Borough's highways department.
- Work is likely to begin in the late spring/early summer of 2008, if planning permission is granted.

***b) how long will they take to complete?***

12 months, to spring/summer 2009.

***c) what local disruption (noise, dirt, traffic diversion and congestion) is anticipated?***

- There will be noise from vehicular movements and excavation of shafts to facilitate tunnelling works. Noise levels and hours of work will be kept within strict legal limits.
- All excavated materials will be fenced off, removed and transported to sites for disposal; the streets will be swept with a mechanical sweeper.
- A traffic management plan will be agreed with the Royal Borough and Transport for London.

***d) what steps will be taken to minimise disruption?***

***I.T. Norland Square, W11***

All works are being carried out in tunnel rather than open cut, thus minimising the working area and volumes of spoil to be moved.

21. We have been advised by the Met Authorities that London should expect two to three storms of similar severity to the July 07 storm. What steps are you taking to prevent water damage through back up of storm drains in the Redcliffe Square area?  
*P.O. Redcliffe Square, SW10*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day. Although small, localised solutions for affected areas are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems, more strategic, catchment-wide solutions are preferable. These take a number of years to develop and require significant funding. We are currently reviewing such a strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period (2010-2015).

25. Given that my property has flooded twice in three years due to the insufficiency of the sewerage system I would like to know how far the scheme proposed by Thames Water (to cut off Norland Square from the main drainage system etc) has progressed since locals were invited to view plans in the autumn. Has planning been granted and when will work commence?

*N.D. Norland Square, W11*

- Final trial holes at Holland Road are scheduled for March 2008, subject to approval from Transport for London. All other trial holes in Addison Avenue/ Norland Square are completed.
- A planning application for a Pumping Station Kiosk will be sought from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea once agreement has been reached with the relevant Church committee (the proposal involves land owned by the Church of England) and following discussions with the Royal Borough's highways department.
- Work is likely to begin in the late spring/early summer of 2008, if planning permission is granted, concluding a year later in spring/early summer 2009.

- 26.a Does Thames Water intend to upgrade the drains in the Holland Park area so that there cannot be a repeat of the 'drain surge' of July 20 2007? When will the renovations begin and how long will the process take?

*H.B Lower Addison Gardens, W14*

See answer to previous question.

- 28.b What is the date for Thames Water to install non-returnable valves in Napier Road as promised?

*Mrs C. C. Napier Road, W14*

Installation of such a device requires a technician to enter the public sewer and manually fix the unit to the existing private sewer at the junction with the public sewer. There are certain risks in this procedure in terms of the level of flows within the sewer and

potential hazardous atmospheric conditions. Therefore we tend to install the units in groups of five locations within a similar area.

Most of the installations are undertaken at night when the flows in the sewer are at their lowest and the risks to personnel are somewhat reduced. Delays to the installation of these units can also be experienced, as we have to obtain licences to "open the road" through the Highways Authority. Once we have installed the unit we will write to the customers advising of the works undertaken.

- 30. *How soon will Thames Water start work in Upper Addison Gardens on "renewing your Victorian sewers/water mains"? They have already completed the work north of Holland Park Avenue, namely in Addison Avenue, St James's Gardens, Penzance Place. In view of the flash flood of 20<sup>th</sup> July 2007 can they schedule this work in Upper Addison Gardens as soon as possible?***

***Mrs C. J. D. L. Upper Addison Gardens, W14***

At the moment, we do not have a wastewater scheme in the current programme of works that includes Upper Addison Gardens. Victorian Mains Replacement Work in this area was completed in 2003/4, and that is the programme under which we are renewing London's water mains.

- 34. My property was offered a non-return valve installation in 2005 (we signed and return contract to TW) but this was subsequently withdrawn (why?), yet we have since discovered several similar properties in W14 had these devices installed in 2005.**

We are currently being offered a FLIP - mini pumping station - but there are operation problems with this apparently and we cannot be given any information from any current identical installation to reassure us that this would be of any benefit.

Also, in relation to flood mitigation devices, who is responsible for their upkeep, as breakdown of operation seems to create more problems than not having one at all?

Also why is it that the flood mitigation devices illustrated on Thames Water's sheet issued in 2005 with the promise of free installation to every customer are not now available?

***T.W. Colville Road, W11***

We apologise for any confusion that may have been caused. If appropriate we will review the option of installing a Non Return Valve at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer.

- 38. *At a meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2007 Steve Shine (Chief Operating Officer of Thames Water) and Bob Killington***

***(Director of Wastewater Services) committed to me that Thames Water will:***

- 1. Send forms to all the residents of Napier Road giving Thames Water authority to install non-returnable valves;***
- 2. Install by 21<sup>st</sup> April 2008 the non-returnable valves for those Napier Road properties that filled out the forms;***
- 3. Send residents of Napier Road a list of things that they could do to reduce the risk from rainfall entering into the sewers, and the backflow from toilets and other drains, both upstream of the non-returnable valves;***
- 4. Help the Napier Road residents get onto Ofwat's priority register for flooding events at risk more frequently than once in every ten years;***
- 5. Complete by March 2008 Thames Water's plans for the new sewage system for the Counters Creek sewers;***
- 6. In April 2008 explain to residents of Napier Road Thames Water's plans for the Counters Creek sewage systems, and how it is progressing in the application to Ofwat; and***
- 7. Improve Thames Water's Customer Services performance.***

***What similar commitments will you make to the other residents affected who are here today?***

***T.S. Napier Road, W14***

1. This was completed by 17 January 2008.
2. One completed/signed agreement (form) has been returned to Thames Water at time of writing.
3. By 30.1.08 two residents had been booked in for a survey with our contractor WERM on Thursday 31 January. An unsuccessful attempt had been made to contact two other residents on 28 January; those residents were re-contacted on 30 January. 'Contact detail letters' were sent to two households for which contact details were incorrect.
4. Ofwat has written to the Mr S outlining its policy on this.
5. We are currently reviewing a strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period (2010-2015).

6/7. We have undertaken to provide this information regarding the specific issues raised by Mr S, following our December meeting with the residents' group facilitated by him. Our commitments to other areas that are at risk of flooding in the whole of the Thames Water region are subject to the governance of the current wastewater capital programme. Thames Water is engaged in a continuous programme of improvements to its customer service operation and acknowledges the need to do better in this regard.

39. Following the basement flooding with sewage on 20/7/07, the engineer assigned by Thames Water to assess the situation told us, and also wrote a report to TW, that we needed a non-return valve added to the pipes in the overflow system. Now six months on Thames Water contest that flooding will not re-occur and no non return valve will be required - will they please put that in writing to our insurance company as requested - if not, why not?

*C.H. Clareville Grove, SW7*

We apologise for any confusion that may have been caused. If appropriate we will review the option of installing a Non Return Valve at the junction of the private sewer and the public sewer.

- 42.a We understand that there used to be non-return valves on the junction of the private and public sewers, but in many places these have either deteriorated or are missing altogether. Apparently the non return valve outside our property in Addison Road is missing, but we have been told by Thames Water they cannot replace this due to Health and Safety concerns as the sewer is only 0.9m high at that point. As an alternative, is it not possible for TW to dig through the road and gain access that way? We have been flooded three times in four years and want to ensure everything possible is being done to prevent further flooding.

*P.and P. B. Addison Road, W14*

The non-return valve that is sited at the junction where the private sewer joins the public sewer is the responsibility of the property owner. We have offered to replace these units where we can gain safe entry into the public sewer and replace from within the public sewer. Replacing the units resulting from excavation of the road would not be a route that we would consider.

47. On behalf of nearly 200 residents in Norland Ward who were flooded, namely in St James's Gardens, Norland Square, Queensdale Road, St Ann's Villas, Royal Crescent, St Ann's Road, Addison Avenue, Darnley Terrace, Holland Park Avenue, Queensdale Place, Blenheim Crescent, Bramley Road, Clarendon Road, Cornwall Crescent, Ladbroke Grove, Lansdowne Road, Norland Road, Stoneleigh Street



and Vantage Place, can you give the Norland Ward Councillors an undertaking that within three months your senior engineers will –

1. Meet with them, the affected households and/or the street representatives, to report on the specific reasons that caused each street to flood?
2. Having determined the causes of the flooding and where it falls to Thames Water to repair such service failures, undertake that a schedule of works will be put into place immediately and residents affected will be kept informed?

*Norland Ward Councillors and Councillor J. C.*

We are pleased to have accepted Cllr JMs' invitation for senior Thames Water staff to attend a meeting on 13 March with Norland ward councillors and with residents of the ward who have been affected by sewer flooding. We look forward to addressing residents' issues at this meeting and subsequently. Although small, localised solutions for affected areas are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems, more strategic, catchment-wide solutions are preferable. These take a number of years to develop and require significant funding. We are currently reviewing such a strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period (2010-2015).

***50.a At a meeting in this Town Hall with Thames Water in 2005, W14 Flood Forum were told that Ofwat were aware of the problem in this area and have provided funds for a one in 130 year flood event. We were told that there was funding to alleviate the flooding. Given that TW has been aware of the catchment area affected by heavy rainfall and committed themselves to remedial actions in December 2005, we would like to know the results of:***

***i) Their detailed study of the flow monitoring which TW carried out during the period 2005 – 2007;***

The flow monitoring study was undertaken in the Holland Road north area, Elsham Road, Russell Gardens and Road. The results of the study indicated that the properties within these areas showed a risk of flooding in a 1 in 10 year event. These properties were then included as part of the Norland Square/Addison Road project.

***ii) Whether they investigated W14 Flood Forum's enquiry as to whether the pumping station at the bottom of Elsham Road could be re-activated;***

The pumping station at the bottom of Elsham Road, i.e. Russell Road Pumping Station, has always been fully operational.

***iii) What decisions TW has made on additional storage tanks to improve capacity on the Holland Road sewer;***

Additional storage will not to be provided in Holland Road (Shepherds Bush Roundabout to Addison Crescent) but the flows will be diverted and added to the Russell Road Pumping station catchment. The new sewer will consist of 60m of 900mm diameter sewer and the refurbishment of Russell Road Pumping station.

- iv) Where are the regular up-dates that the Forum was promised by Thames Water on the long-term solution;***
- v) And how can the residents of Napier Road who were given similar assurances by TW five weeks ago feel confident that these plans will be carried out?***

After our last meeting with the W14 Flood Forum in 2006 the project moved into an engineering phase. We believed that updates were provided via this route. This has highlighted a "loop hole" in the system, which we will now manage. I apologise for not keeping to our original commitment, and will certainly ensure that we keep to our promises made to the residents of Napier Road.

***Further, we would like to know when TW will have completed implementing the upgrade work to the Holland Road sewer to prevent a recurrence and protect the substantial numbers of properties affected from yet another repeat flooding, which seems to be happening every two years. Given OFWAT's guidelines (sewer guidelines 260307),***

***"The company should contact the customer regularly to update them on the progress towards the completion of a capital scheme",***

***please provide a firm update on work programme and scheduled completion date.***

***Joint W11 W14 Flood Group Forums***

The Holland Road sewer upgrade is part of the Norland Square Flood Alleviation Scheme, on which work is expected to start in spring/early summer 2008, and end in spring/early summer 2009.

- 52.a All the basements in Alma Terrace (on the west side of Allen Street) were flooded on 20 July 2007. In correspondence with Thames Water I have asked them to inspect the drain to see if there is any blockage or other reason - apart from its design capacity - why the flooding occurred. They have given no indication that they will do so. Instead they have repeated that blockage in the gulleys - for which the Council is responsible - could have been a cause.

Why will Thames Water not undertake a simple inspection of the drains?

*D. C. Alma Terrace, Allen Street, W8*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme and it is unlikely that any drainage system – either highway drains or gullies or the public network of sewers – would be able to cope with the intensity of rain that day. While Thames Water is responsible for the sewerage system into which the gulleys feed, maintaining the gutters, gulleys and gully pots (road drains) are the Council's responsibility.

**53.b We are told the proposed underground storage system in Addison Avenue will not benefit Queensdale Place and many others of the roads that were flooded. Will this plan be reviewed?**

***J. and M. F. Queensdale Place, W11***

The scheme to provide flood protection in Addison Avenue is specifically designed to alleviate flooding to properties in a defined catchment. Properties that connect into a different catchment will not benefit from this scheme. According to our records, Queensdale Place has flooded on 20 July 2007 due to the severe weather. We have no history of previous flooding there.

60. Why could the mains rain drain which serves the south side of Cornwall Gardens between no.x and Gloucester Road not carry away the rainwater on 20<sup>th</sup> July?

Our front basement forecourt (patio) backed up nearly to the door of Flat x - clean water, not other kinds of drain contents. The water simply could not escape. Another separate drain in that same patio, which services kitchens on the upper floors of no.x, did not back-up. Only the rain water accumulated and flooded the patio and bin room (under the steps down to the patio) and ran off - but not far enough to prevent flooding of the patio main floor - under the doors into the three ex-coal stores under the pavement above, the floor level of which has been lowered (in recent years) by several inches and left without hard flooring. Any run-off into these coal stores would have easily been absorbed into the turned earth or at least contained in the now lowered area. The flooding stopped when the rain stopped, which indicates the problem was not with the drain of no.x. The water level in the rain drain gully emptied immediately when the rain stopped. I noticed several other front basements between no. x and Gloucester Road had also flooded.

*L S. Cornwall Gardens, SW7*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day. Internal drains, on the customer's side of the boundary, are the responsibility of the householder, not Thames Water.

70. What of the future? What will be done (by the Council and/or Thames Water) to ensure no repeat of the flooding of our basements in Queensdale Place, which took place on 20 July 2007?

After half an hour of heavy rain and the water draining away, the level suddenly started to rise (evidently via the sewers) and flooded my basement from both the garden side and the front area. I watched it happen! At the drop-in session in St James's Church, on 11 September, Thames Water gave some details of the new underground storage sewer planned for Addison Avenue, Norland Square and Queensdale Road, but I was informed by TW staff that this would give no benefit to Queensdale Place (where nearly all the houses have basements). Surely this is not the best course? Can the plan be changed to include Queensdale Place, please? Until proper provision is made, what advice (and/or financial help) is available to deal with (perhaps inevitable) future flooding?

*J. W. P. Queensdale Place, W11*

Although small, localised solutions for affected areas are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems, more strategic, catchment-wide solutions are preferable. These take a number of years to develop and require significant funding. We are currently reviewing such a strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period (2010-2015). The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day. Our contractor Werm can investigate what might be the best, localised mitigation solution for an individual property that has been flooded, if the householder has reported the flooding to Thames Water.

### **General**

7. I have been flooded three times in four years. What is Thames Water able to do so that this does not happen again?

*F. W. Viscount Court, 1 Pembridge Villas, W2*

Pembridge Villas is intended to benefit from a new relief sewer and pumping station, expected to be completed by 31 August 2009.

8. ***What are Thames Water doing to ensure this doesn't happen again?***

***J. L. Queens Gate Gardens, SW7***

See answer to question 70 above.

10. What will Thames Water do to prevent a recurrence of the situation?  
*E. G. P. Royal Crescent, W11*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day.

- 16.a What precisely are Thames Water doing to prevent flooding again in this borough and can they give priority to the areas that have been flooded twice in two years?  
*J.C. Elsham Road, W14*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day. Ofwat requires Thames Water to prioritise sewer flooding according to how many properties are on our database as having been flooded, so it is vital that customers report flooding directly to Thames Water.

- 17.a What has been done to prevent a repetition of the 20th July flood?  
*R M B. Upper Addison Gardens, W14*

See answer to question 70 above.

24. What is being done to ensure that this does not occur again?  
*C.M. Holland Road, W14*

See answer to question 70 above.

31. What is being done to prevent a recurrence?  
*Dr I. M. M.-L. St James's Gardens, W11*

See answer to question 70 above.

33. I do not know why my home was flooded and am worried about the future. What steps can I, the Council and Thames Water take to try and ensure this does not happen again? I am, by the way, in temporary accommodation with drying and rebuilding work barely started and no knowledge of when I may be able to move back in. The anxiety, stress and disruption are huge and ongoing problems.  
*S.R.*

Our contractor Werm can investigate what might be the best, localised mitigation solution for an individual property that has been flooded, if the householder has reported the flooding to Thames Water.

- 35 What was the cause of the flash flood which occurred on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2007? What measures have Thames Water put in place to avoid/reduce the likelihood of a flood in future?  
*F.V. St Ann's Road, W11*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day. Many experts would ascribe this to rainfall to climate change, which could mean that extreme rainfall events occur three times as often by the 2080s. In the medium term, Thames Water aims to enhance our sewerage design standards to increase capacity.

- 43.b Do you have clear answers yet on what caused the flooding? Was it poor maintenance of the sewers, too many properties being connected to the sewers, or just bad luck that so much rain fell that no normal sewage system could cope?**  
***H.S. Wetherby Gardens, SW5 - Editor and Publisher, Garden Square News***

The event of 20 July 2007 was extreme and the flooding was due to the amount of rainwater that fell in such a short space of time. There were no maintenance issues on the day.

46. When will Thames Water take the necessary action to prevent sewage contaminated surcharge and floodwater from entering individual premises in the Borough?  
*R.T. and M.S. Darnley Terrace, W11*

See answer to question 70 above.

- 50.b I understand from the Consumer Council for Water that Thames Water has a statutory duty to "provide an effective public sewerage system throughout their area". Indeed, Thames Water's 'Taking Care of Water' draft 25 year plan describes sewer flooding as "one of the worst service failures" and that Thames Water "shares the view that sewer flooding inside customers homes is unacceptable", (quote unquote), Given the apparent failure to provide this service, what will Thames Water do, and by when, to offer a permanent solution to this, and to offer interim protection?  
*Joint W11 W14 Flood Group Forums*

Although small, localised solutions for affected areas are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems, more strategic, catchment-wide solutions are preferable. These take a number of years to develop and require significant funding. We are currently reviewing such a strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period

(2010-2015). In the medium term, Thames Water aims to enhance our sewerage design standards to increase capacity.

- 53.a Like all houses in Queensdale Place with basements we were flooded for the first time since living in the house for 19 years. The water /waste came up the drains outside and sinks and toilets inside for approximately 30 minutes then stopped as if someone had opened a gate to release or redirect the water. Does Thames Water have any control of the drainage system to ease the pressure during heavy rain?

*J. and M.F. Queensdale Place, W11*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day.

57. We sustained £60,000 worth of damage in the 20<sup>th</sup> July flood. Within 20 minutes a bathroom in the basement had filled with 3ft of sewage (it spewed out of the loo and shower drain). Luckily no one was hurt but we could have had a child there who could conceivably have drowned. One neighbour also said that they had a manhole in their basement blow. Surely you agree that at worst these situations are extremely dangerous, and at best they are vastly unsanitary and needlessly costly? The other three sides of our square seemed to incur very little damage, so clearly there is a weakness in the system on our side of the square as in other damaged streets in London, and these isolated weak points in the sewers need to be addressed. What can the Council and Thames Water do to prevent a repeat or worse happening in the future?

*L.G. Kensington Square, W8*

The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day. Many experts would ascribe this to rainfall to climate change, which could mean that extreme rainfall events occur three times as often by the 2080s. In the medium term, Thames Water aims to enhance our sewerage design standards to increase capacity. Although small, localised solutions for affected areas are useful to alleviate certain capacity problems, more strategic, catchment-wide solutions are preferable. These take a number of years to develop and require significant funding. We are currently reviewing such a strategic option for the Counters Creek sewer, and will submit a case to Ofwat for funding it in our next Asset Management Period (2010-2015).

## Development

- 13. Many households in this area are digging out basements. How concerned is Thames Water about this?  
S.I. (Chairman, Old Church Street Association) Old Church Street, SW3**

Thames Water is concerned at the amount of habitable basement properties that are being connected to the public sewer system. We are not statutory consultees on such matters and therefore cannot influence the connection of basement properties. We can only comment if we are informed of a specific proposal. Protection to basements needs to be provided either by the installation of a pumped system where the risk of flooding is high, or by the installation of a flap valve where the risk to flooding is low. The best option is for the basement to be protected by pumped systems.

- 28.a I have lived at this address for 41 years and at that time leaflets from the Water Board would be put through the letterbox, warning householders of the dangers of flooding, due to the position of the drains and sewers under the surface of the road. However, the first flood did not occur until 1994 - the worst being on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July last year.

Why has nothing been done to remedy the situation during all this time? The extensive building in this area, which has gone on over the last year, has greatly added to the risk of flooding.

*Mrs C. C. Napier Road, W14*

Certainly the increase in so-called "Creep", the phenomenon you describe, has contributed to the sewer network capacity being compromised. However, this is not the sole contributor to the issue; climate change, development and mis-connections to the network have also a role to play.

- 41. Is the present sewer capacity becoming overloaded because of the loss of open unpaved areas which provide water-holding capacity resulting in quicker flow-off - more building and gardens paved over, not helped by "global warming" storms?  
H.B. Selwood Terrace, SW7**

See answer to previous question.

- 48. Will Thames Water give an assurance that the extensive shopping site due to open at Westfield has installed its own independent sewerage and rainwater drain away systems so that it does not put additional pressure on Counters Creek?**



***Will Thames Water give an indication as to whether it is intended that the Westfield developers, and indeed future large developers in this area, will be asked to contribute to the cost of the new sewer which, as Thames Water has indicated, needs to be fitted under the existing Holland Road sewer, and when such funding negotiations will complete and work begin on the installation of the new sewer pipe?  
Councillor J.M.***

Discussions have happened with the developer and it appears they are proposing massive storage tanks on site to allow the controlled discharge of surface water. We have undertaken a network model to understand the impact and have agreed discharge rates and points of connection. We have no powers to prevent connection to our network. The power rests with the planning authority, we make representations regarding development and how it will affect us but it is up to the local planning authority to decide if an application is acceptable.

Where upgrades are required they can be funded in two ways, by the developer or by Thames Water. For Thames to fund them we would have required prior information regarding the site so that we could have sought funding from our regulator OFWAT as part of our five year funding programme called amps. If this was not the case the developer can fund the upgrades via a requisition but without a suitably worded planning condition we cannot force the developer to enter one.

66. In view of recent events, what is Thames Water's position on deep basement excavations which require the use of sump pumps connected to the local authority drainage system?

*C.A. Albert Place, W8*

Thames Water is concerned at the amount of habitable basement properties that are being connected to the public sewer system. We are not statutory consultees on such matters and therefore cannot influence the connection of basement properties. We can only comment if we are informed of a specific proposal. Protection to basements needs to be provided either by the installation of a pumped system where the risk of flooding is high, or by the installation of a flap valve where the risk to flooding is low. The best option is for the basement to be protected by pumped systems.

67. Efficient drainage for all the properties located between Addison Road and Kensington Olympia Railway Station depends on the Holland Road sewer system which under normal circumstances can only just cope. What plans has Thames Water to cope with the extra effluent in this sewer once the White City shopping

development opens and the Warwick Road 'Eco Village' comes into being?

*S.H. Russell Road, W14*

Discussions have happened with the developer and it appears they are proposing massive storage tanks on site to allow the controlled discharge of surface water. We have undertaken a network model to understand the impact and have agreed discharge rates and points of connection. We have no powers to prevent connection to our network. The power rest with the planning authority, we make representations regarding development and how it will affect us but it is up the local planning authority to decided if an application is acceptable.

Where upgrades are required they can be funded in two ways, by the developer or by Thames Water. For Thames to fund them we would have required prior information regarding the site so that we could have sought funding from our regulator OFWAT as part of our five year funding programme called amps. If this was not the case the developer can fund the upgrades via a requisition but without a suitably worded planning condition we cannot force the developer to enter one.

72. I would like to add a point which may not have been addressed, that of the effect of a change in the water table. Over the past few years there has been a considerable increase in subterranean developments. These major excavations are deep and cover a substantial area of the gardens involved and so must be having an effect on the water table as well as reducing the area for the rainwater to be absorbed back into the ground, i.e. increasing the rate of 'run off'.

*L.E.*

Certainly the increase in so-called "Creep", the phenomenon you describe, has contributed to the sewer network capacity being compromised. However, this is not the sole contributor to the issue; climate change, development and mis-connections to the network have also a role to play.

### **Compensation**

- 2.b Are any costs incurred recoverable from the Council or Thames Water?

*J.B.D. Kensington Court, W8*

Our Customer Guarantee Scheme has provision to refund sewerage charges when properties are flooded with sewage. This payment is automatically processed when an incident of flooding inside a property is reported and confirmed by us. The scheme can be

suspended, in accordance with Ofwat's Guaranteed Standards Scheme, when flooding occurs in an Extreme Weather Event. Currently, payments for the 20 July 2007 event have been suspended.

- 5.b Will there be a discount in the water bills for the properties affected? As residents we can expect significant increases in our insurance premiums.**

**C.A St James's Gardens, W11**

See answer to previous question.

- 14.d Will Thames Water be compensating those householders affected by flooding for the inconvenience, upheaval and disruption caused, which in many cases has required people to move out of their homes for extended periods of time to alternative premises whilst repair works are undertaken?**

**Although insured householders who were affected by the flood will have received payments under their insurance policies for damage caused to their homes and their contents, most insurance policies are subject to a "policy excess" which insurance companies do not pay out. Will Thames Water be reimbursing householders the amounts of these "policy excesses"?**

**C.J. St. Ann's Road, W11**

Whilst we are mindful of the disruption caused by the flooding on 20 July 2007, the weather conditions were extreme and we cannot be held responsible for the disruption caused by such an event. We understand that as a result of sewer flooding our customers may incur expense that is not covered by their insurance policy. We do have provision to make ex gratia payments in certain cases. However, this is done so on an individual basis, in writing, through our Customer Centre.

- 15. What help and advice can Thames Water and the Council provide to affected residents in cases where, because of insurance claims made as a result of flash floods, insurers are refusing to continue flood cover or even any building cover at all?**

Through no fault of the residents the effect on their properties, in particular basement flats, is disastrous for all the many obvious practical, legal and financial reasons - not least confusion and argument over who should pay for what in the absence of insurance cover.

**A.J. Addison Road, W14**

See answer to previous question.

**17.b If this (the July flood) affects the resale value of our property, will Thames Water offer compensation?  
R.M.B. Upper Addison Gardens, W14**

The flooding of 20 July 2007, and in general flooding from our sewer network, is due to factors which are not in our control, whether the cause is a blockage in the system or heavy rainfall. Therefore, we are not liable for any loss or damage that is subsequently incurred. This includes any perceived effect on property value.

40. Because of serious floods to the lower ground flat our insurance rates are £7500 + with £10,000 excess. There is now a question whether we can be insured in 2008. Thames can compensate us? Why shouldn't Thames be "out of pocket"?  
*D.C.C. Addison Road, W14*

Whilst we are mindful of the disruption caused by the flooding on 20 July 2007, the weather conditions were extreme and we cannot be held responsible for the disruption caused by such an event. We understand that as a result of sewer flooding our customers may incur expense that is not covered by their insurance policy. We do have provision to make ex gratia payments in certain cases. However, this is done so on an individual basis, in writing, through our Customer Centre.

- 62.b Finally, should not TW be held accountable for all the troubles caused by such backflow of waters from the drains/rain sewage? We were not even offered the reimbursement of the water bills paid to TW!!  
*A and J.S. Queensdale Road, W11*

See answer to previous question.

65. What is the process and timing for obtaining compensation for damage caused by the flash flood and also the earlier incident when a leaking pipe in the middle of Lansdowne Road was left to flood the area for two weeks?  
*Mrs J. K. Lansdowne Road, W11*

See answer to question 40 above.

### **Miscellaneous**

18. In the past six to seven years, Thames Water has been taken over by at least three foreign companies. German utility company RWE - in 2001. Kemble Water Ltd December 2006 a consortium led by Australian bank Macquarie European Infrastructure Funds. The deal included both Thames Water Utilities Ltd, the regulated entity and a number of non-regulated businesses including a 20 per cent stake in

London Underground maintenance company Metronet. Veolia Water UK, August 2007. Veolia Environment. French?

What percentage of the profits are fed back into modernising and repair of the disintegrating structure/system before the "bonuses" and shareholders dividends are creamed off? And is appropriate Corporation Tax paid into the UK or abroad?

*T.S. St Ann's Villas, W11*

In the past seven years, Thames Water has been bought twice: firstly by RWE in 2001 and then by Kemble Water in December 2006. Kemble Water has since sold to Veolia, a part of Thames Water that provides services outside of London and the Thames Valley. Thames Water's share in Metronet was not sold as part of this disposal.

This year (07/08), it is anticipated that Thames Water will invest more than its entire profit in capital expenditure, in maintaining and improving our assets. After meeting all its obligations, including paying dividends to shareholders, Thames Water is left with a gap that is met by borrowing. Thames Water pays corporation tax at the level required by the relevant legislation and regulations.

29. What is the policy of Thames Water with regard to Flood Prevention Safety levels? To explain: at a meeting organised by Thames Water in St James's Church on 11th September one of their representatives explained to me that a flood once in every 10 years was acceptable. In other words, us getting flooded once every 10 years was not only acceptable to them but was a successful implementation of their policy. I would like to point out that this is NOT acceptable to us. After over five months we still have to live in emergency quarters and it will be another two or three months and about £100,000 later before we can move back. Following the flooding no doubt our insurance cost will go up and I bet Thames Water will increase their charges to carry out 'improvements'. We already pay our increased water and sewage charges and I would like to know why Thames Water thinks it does not have to carry out the services we pay for.

*K. and H.M. St. James's Gardens, W11*

Thames Water has a sewer-flooding programme for the investment period 2005 – 2010. This programme has been agreed with our economic regulator Ofwat. The programme provides funding for flood alleviation schemes for properties that are at risk of flooding in a 1 in 10 year event. Such properties are at high risk of flooding in periods of low rainfall.

Properties that have unfortunately flooded from extreme weather events will be seen to have a low risk of flooding in periods of heavy

rainfall. It is evident that areas of West London have experienced frequent incidents of flooding of what would be termed as low risk events. We therefore will establish a way forward with Ofwat as we enter negotiation for our next price review period 2010 – 2015.

- 43.d Lastly, I strongly feel that Thames Water should supply every household with a sewer report for their street. It should spell out the age and condition of the street's sewer, the date it will be upgraded if necessary, and the risk of flooding on that street.  
*H.S. Wetherby Gardens, SW5 - Editor and Publisher, Garden Square News*

Some of our sewers in this area are up to 100 years old, but those that we have checked have generally been in good order. When we suspect that a sewer is not in good working order, we investigate with CCTV; there is an active programme of this across our sewer network.

- 59. Will Thames Water give an assurance that the Lots Road Pumping Station will be properly staffed in future? The station was unmanned until 12 noon on 20 July and pumping did not commence until 12.30pm, by which time both the basements at 46 Lots Road and 19 Ashburnham Road were under eight inches of water.**  
*M.S Lots Road, SW6*

Flooding was reported in this locality in September 2005 and again on 20 July 2007. Lots Road is the receiving pumping station for the Counters Creek sewer. We will always aim to have it operational in severe weather events; as it is listed, it is not a simple matter to make the alterations that would see it become fully automated.

63. The 20 July flooding was not from the River Thames. On 16 January this year the Environment Agency issued nine flood warnings and 61 areas on flood watch. The Met Office stated that ground across large parts of England was already saturated and rainwater would most likely not drain away. Luckily there was no flooding in the Kensington area that day. All nine of the warnings and the 61 watches related specifically to rivers. It appears that all concerns are centred on the rivers and flooding of our sort is not of a priority.  
Is there any coordination between the Environment Agency and Thames Water on non-fluvial flood warnings? And what measures do you have of warning residents and businesses of potential flooding from storm water sewers such as Counters Creek?  
*A.F. Kensington Society*

When heavy rainfall causes sewer flooding, we do not know the severity of the storm until it has passed, so it would not be possible

to give forecasts of the sort that the Environment Agency is able to give for river flooding.

## Royal Borough

### Gullies

6. *I have asked the Council several times when the street drain/gully outside no x St James's Gardens was cleared **PRIOR TO JULY 20<sup>th</sup>** and have not received any response - except to tell me when it was cleared **AFTER July 20<sup>th</sup>**.*

*Is it true, as I have been told by someone working for the Council, that only one or possibly two men are responsible for looking after all the drain hole/gullies in RBKC?  
S.M. St James's Gardens, W11*

I am sorry we have not responded to you as you would wish. I cannot find any record of your having contacted us before your letter of 12 December, and it has taken us some time to track down the contractor's records for gulley cleaning in St James's Gardens. In general we clean gullies twice a year. The St James's Gardens gullies were cleaned on 23 March 2006, 21 January 2007 and again on 7 October 2007.

SITA, who are our contractor for gulley cleaning, use a two man gulley emptying vehicle, and they are satisfied that this is adequate to keep the Royal Borough's gulleys clear.

23. I would like to be assured that steps are being taken to ensure that the flooding of Queensdale Road by surface water on 20/7 will not recur - I have had to move out of my house for 3 months while extensive works have been carried out as a result. What is the likely timing of the works?  
*A.McK. Queensdale Road, W11*

In extreme weather events, like the rain in July that caused the flash flood, gullies and drains are rarely the cause of surface water flooding. With very intensive rain the water does not channel quickly enough along the gutters and into the gulley pots and finds alternative routes into lower lying land. Even if the gutters, gulleys and gulley pots were clear to begin with the debris swept along by the downpour can block them during the storm. Or the drainage system can simply be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of water.

While Thames Water are responsible for the sewerage system into which the gulleys feed, maintaining the gutters, gulleys and gulley pots are the Council's responsibility. SITA, our contractor, clean all the gulley pots regularly, normally twice a year. Gulley pots sit just below the surface of the road and cleaning them out also acts as

their inspection. There is no evidence that the gulleys were blocked at the time of the July flood.

***52.b And will RBKC please confirm to Thames Water that the gulleys (in Alma Terrace) are not and were not blocked so that this red herring can be eliminated?***

***D.C. Alma Terrace, Allen Street, W8***

We have no record of the gulleys in Alma Terrace being blocked in any way. The gully pots are not blocked and the outlets appear to be running freely.

68. On July 20, the basements of all ten houses comprising Alma Terrace were flooded with 'clean' water. Inkerman Terrace immediately opposite remained dry. This suggests that the flooding of Alma Terrace was due to broken drains and/or blocked gulleys. In spite of correspondence and conversations with Thames Water representatives and with the Council's Planning Dept. and the Transport, Environment and Leisure Services (Tot Brill) both Thames Water and the Council have 'no plans' to carry out either an inspection or investigation of our drains and gulleys.

The question is WHY? How can either body justify their position?

*L and L M. Alma Terrace, Allen Street, W8*

SITA clean all the gulley pots regularly, normally twice a year. Gulley pots sit just below the surface of the road and cleaning them out also acts as an inspection.

69. In Royal Avenue we suffered little. However, we would like to know how often the Council cleans out the drains/drain manholes because these do not clear quickly in heavy downpours.

*M.H. F. Royal Avenue, SW3, Chairman Royal Avenue Residents*

SITA clean all the gulley pots regularly, normally twice a year.

## **Development**

64. To what extent does the current increase in underground construction for swimming pools, games rooms, parking etc, where previously there was undisturbed sub soil, limit the ability of the Kensington and Chelsea land area to absorb heavy rain?

*M.Y.*

The Council's Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development considers that basement developments have a negligible effect on the ability of our land to absorb heavy rain.



## Clear Up

- 28.d When I phoned the Council to ask for sewage sodden items to be collected from outside my house I was threatened with Court action for obstructing the pavement!!! I hope this person has been sacked.  
*Mrs C Napier Road, W14*

We apologise that the comment made to Mrs C was both inappropriate and insensitive. It appears to have been an unthinking reflex response from a member of staff using the standard advice given when anyone states that they propose to put waste on the pavement without authority.

However, the standard advice should not have been given in the aftermath of the floods. No one has been sacked for making this mistake. Instead all members of staff dealing with calls have been briefed thoroughly on how to handle distressed callers in such circumstances in future. Staff now know they must offer callers helpful advice about disposing of damaged goods. We have written comprehensive guidance for them, as questions and answers for customer services staff – this guidance is also directly available to the public on the Council's website.

No resident will face enforcement action for putting flood-damaged goods on the pavement. Callers will be advised to hold on to their damaged goods until their insurance company has confirmed that they can be disposed of. The Council will then collect and dispose of flood-damaged goods for free.

## Miscellaneous

- 43.a Will there be a detailed flood map available to the public so that people who want to buy a house in the flood-prone area can see which homes flooded on July 20th? If this map is available, will it be presented at the meeting on Jan. 30th?

Maps were available for inspection at the meeting. The Council is entirely dependent on residents providing information to us about flooding in their homes, so we cannot be responsible for the content or accuracy of the information. It would not be sensible to use them as a basis for making decisions about house purchase.

### **2     *Will home sellers in the flood-hit areas be legally required to disclose what happened to their home on July 20 to potential purchasers?***

A homeowner will be required to prepare a home information pack (HIP) for the buyer. The pack must include a drainage and water search. The HIP has a question about the risk of flooding from

overloaded public sewers. The definitions used mean that if a property was flooded last year, but not otherwise for many years, the seller would probably not have to disclose the flood under this question. A search with the Environment Agency is not compulsory at present. If someone asks you directly if the property was flooded you must answer truthfully. The homeowner cannot withhold the information if asked the question.

- 3 Any local resident looking out the window on the morning of July 20 could see that the Royal Borough was about to have serious problems, yet Emergency Planning officer David Kerry seemed unprepared. Was he out of town that morning? If not, how does he account for his failure to assess the situation more quickly?

Mr Kerry was at work on 20 July. Immediately after the rain it was not apparent that there had been serious flooding throughout the borough, but by 4 pm the Contingency Planning Unit had set up the process to start an Emergency Rest Centre. Calls coming into the authority from affected residents were not logged in a way that could be easily shared between services and there was a lack of shared intelligence about the extent of the flooding across the Council.

Future events will be handled differently. The Contingency Planning Unit will soon be operating from a new Emergency Control Centre and will no longer rely on colleagues to provide information. The Emergency Control Centre will act as a clearing house for information, actively getting in contact with colleagues from across the authority and asking for whatever information might be available. This will enable managers to be briefed about the need for emergency responses, and will enable the whole-authority response to be co-ordinated. We were able to provide this new joined up service to the electricity outage in North Kensington on 19 November 2007 and to the Royal Marsden Hospital Fire on 2 January 2008.

- 4 Could the Council (or Thames Water) please supply a sample diagram showing the difference between "gullies" and "sewers" on a typical street? I cannot picture how the two connect.

*H S, SW5 - Editor and Publisher, Garden Square News*

A diagram is **attached** as an appendix.

49. The Council seems to be making a distinction between fluvial flooding and sewerage flooding. However, is the Council certain and has it taken professional advice that Norland and Holland Wards, in particular, may indeed have been so severely affected due to a

combination of both fluvial flood waters through the canal system at Counters Creek and its tributaries, as well as the inability of the general sewer system to cope with the rainwater run-off from the surrounding areas?

If this is the case, what other measures, e.g. pumping stations or holding reservoirs, ought to be under construction to ensure the risk of flooding, or of actual flooding itself, is brought under control?

*Councillor J M*

Halcrow Group reported that the most probable cause of the flooding was the lack of capacity in the Counters Creek sewer to deal with a storm of the magnitude of that on 20 July 2007. Thames Water do not believe that the former creek is still flowing.

56. Is the Council aware that some insurance companies are now imposing a 5-10% premium on premises in this area to cover the flood risk, despite the steps that Thames Water and the Council are taking or have already taken (e.g. on Lower Sloane Street) to mitigate the flood risk?

*D T Lower Sloane Street, SW1*

The Council is unaware of any automatic percentage increase on flood premiums in the borough. However, it is likely that the response from the insurers to losses sustained in recent years will be to review their underwriting practices and perhaps to postcode 'target' those areas that they consider are potentially at an increased exposure to flooding (pluvial/fluvial).

- 14.c Are there any other measures which the Council or householders can take to minimise the effects of future flooding?

*C J St Ann's Road, W11*

I **attach** our leaflets, which give information about what to do before and after a flood. You can get more information from the Council's website [www.rbkc.gov.uk/flood](http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/flood)

### **For Other Bodies**

- 43.c What have the police done to make sure that their CAD reporting system does not crash in a similar flood in the future?

*H S, SW5 - Editor and Publisher, Garden Square News*

I am not quite sure which CAD failure this refers to but I shall attempt a general reply. Just to set the background, CAD is our Computer Aided Despatch system. Members of the public wanting a police response call us through either the 999 system or by calling a local police station number. In both cases, they will go through to one of our Communications Centres (situated at Hendon, Bow and

Lambeth) where an operator will take their details and create a CAD message. This message is then electronically sent to a dispatcher in a designated 'Kensington and Chelsea' position in the Hendon Centre who will despatch the most appropriate unit.

There is no longer a control room within the borough, although there is an Integrated Borough Operations Room (IBO). Part of their function is to monitor and quality control CAD messages as well as making sure that appropriate resources are recorded and made visible to the Control Centres. They do not receive calls from the public and do not despatch units to calls.

As far as I am aware, the only flooding incident last year involved torrential rain entering the roof of Kensington Police Station and disrupting the work of the IBO. We do have a fallback IBO position at Chelsea Police Station, though in this instance we were able to maintain a skeleton operation at Kensington without the need to move staff to the fallback at Chelsea. Since this time, I have been able to arrange a further fallback position nearby to Kensington Police Station in addition to Chelsea.

I am also aware of two situations where the CAD system failed London wide. This was not due to flooding but was the result of software failures. When this happens, we have a CAD back up system which operates and mimics the 'real' system. However, it can take a short time to recover calls that were waiting despatch on the main system prior to it crashing. I am not totally qualified to speak on behalf of our Department of Information (DOI) but I do understand that work is in progress to make the system more stable in the short term while work goes on to replace it.

Lastly, you may recall that I mentioned three Communication Centres at Hendon, Bow and Lambeth. These have been planned so that in the event of one being lost, the other two can maintain a service to the public.

### **Questions received after the deadline of 16 January 2008**

#### **73. J.G.L St James's Gardens, W11**

The flood on the 20<sup>th</sup> July was the first that I have experienced in the 29 years that I have owned this house, but I have noted minor incursions since. Evidently we are entering a period of climate (not to say climatic) change which we look for the responsible authority to recognise and adjust their procedures to allow for.

Would Thames Water agree that they have a statutory obligation in this respect? Or is it their view that world climate conditions are not changing?

Climate change could cause extreme rainfall events to occur three times as often by the 2080s, although experts differ as to exactly what the impact of climate change will be. In the medium term, we aim to enhance our sewerage design standards to increase capacity for projected additional flows. We are obliged to balance the need to alleviate sewer flooding with the management of how much customers pay in their water bills.

74. CH CM Hereford Square, SW7

When did Thames Water last carry out/when will they complete a routine maintenance survey of the west side of Hereford Square - drains and supply?

Thames Water is responsible for the effective maintenance of public sewers and storm tanks. These systems need little or no maintenance and continue to function as designed. Maintenance of the sewers is by way of sewer cleaning and closed circuit television and this will be allocated on priority basis. When problems are identified and recur, a structured inspection and cleaning regime can be formulated based upon a frequency of inspection from monthly to 12 monthly intervals.

We have a programme of work to undertake Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) of our network of sewers. This work will determine the condition of our network and if needed, rehabilitation work is scheduled.

One of our biggest problems is blockages within the sewers and this is a direct result of inappropriate material such as fat and grease entering the network of sewers. When areas are identified as having particular problems caused by fat and grease in the system, we will undertake to clean the sewer and inform our customers of the problems caused by such behaviour and an alternative means of disposal.

The flood event on the 20 July 2007 was caused by extreme rainfall, which inundated the sewerage system.

75. R R Elgin Crescent, W11

How do Thames Water and the Council view the incremental effects of individual subterranean developments on rising ground water levels and flash flooding in the light of climate change (particularly in the north of the borough)?

Do they see the Ove Arup report as an adequate basis for Environmental Impact Assessments on London Clay in this context?

Thames Water is concerned at the amount of habitable basement properties that are being connected to the public sewer system. We are not statutory consultees on such matters and therefore cannot influence the connection of basement properties. We can only comment if we are informed of a specific proposal. Protection to basements needs to be provided either by the installation of a pumped system where the risk of flooding is high, or by the installation of a flap valve where the risk to flooding is low. The best option is for the basement to be protected by pumped systems. Regarding the Ove Arup report, we take into account many reports of that type and factor them into our thinking.

76. EH, Stoneleigh Street, W11

Are Thames Water and the Council fully aware of the problems/flooding experienced by a number of properties in Stoneleigh Street on 20<sup>th</sup> July? Why was the tank not maintained over the last 20 years (since responsibility was handed over to Thames Water from the Council)? A tank was installed in the road 20 years ago to deal with such events as 20 July.

We will write to each of these addresses with a sewer flooding questionnaire, with which residents can inform us of any flooding that they have experienced. Our contractor Werm can visit customers who report flooding to Thames Water with this questionnaire, and can suggest mitigation measures for individual properties. The rainfall experienced on 20 July 2007 was extreme, with up to four inches of rain falling in the space of a few hours. It is unlikely that many urban drainage systems could have coped with the intense rainfall of that day. CCTV is used to investigate any sewer with which we think there might be a problem. The engineering scheme to which the questioner refers, on this street, would have been installed within the design criteria of that time, i.e. to cope with storms of a one in ten-year frequency.

77. NM St James's Gardens, W11

Can we get Thames Water to reimburse the cost of fitting a one-way valve?

What is the range of probabilities of a similar flash flood occurring in the next 20 years?

Are there plans for a surge holding tank in St James's Gardens as they have planned for Norland Gardens?

Who was responsible for the inadequate drain management – Thames Water, the Council or another contractor?

What action has already been taken to ensure that should such a flood occur again, its impact is likely to be mitigated?

What action is already planned and budgeted for?

What recommendations are there for how one builds in flood resilience into the construction of the lower ground floor of our houses?

Where appropriate and practical, Thames Water can fit a valve at the junction of the private drain/sewer and the public sewer. There are differing forecasts as to the effects of climate change on the weather in the UK. There are currently no such plans, but a strategic solution to the area's sewer flooding problems – which Thames Water is considering for its next Asset Management Period, 2010-15 – would hopefully alleviate the problems suffered by St James's Gardens. It was a severe weather event, which few public drainage systems would ever be able to cope with. Advice on incorporating flood resilience into basement developments is best sought from an architect or a planner.

78. TD St Ann's Villas, W11

As managers of London's drainage system, what action have you now taken to prevent the flooding caused by the heavy rains in July 2007 from happening again?

The event of 20 July 2007 was a severe weather event with which no modern public drainage system could be expected to cope.

Why was this action not taken earlier to prevent the extensive damage caused by those floods?

It is unlikely that any public drainage system could have been prepared for such a severe weather event.

Was the risk of such flooding taken into account in your risk management programme? If so, how were the likelihood and impact rated? If not, why not?

It is unlikely that any public drainage system could have been prepared for such a severe weather event.

What compensation do you now propose to make to residents who have suffered loss as a result of your failure to carry out your statutory duties and to meet your responsibilities under the principles established by the case of *Rylands v. Fletcher*?

Whilst we are mindful of the disruption caused by the flooding on 20 July 2007, the weather conditions were extreme and we cannot be held responsible for the disruption caused by such an event. We understand that as a result of sewer flooding our customers may incur expense that is not covered by their insurance policy. We do have provision to make ex gratia payments in certain

cases. However, this is done so on an individual basis, in writing, through our Customer Centre.

Our Customer Guarantee Scheme has provision to refund sewerage charges when properties are flooded with sewage. This payment is automatically processed when an incident of flooding inside a property is reported and confirmed by us. The scheme can be suspended, in accordance with Ofwat's Guaranteed Standards Scheme, when flooding occurs in an Extreme Weather Event. Currently, payments for the 20 July 2007 event have been suspended.

79. GW, Chairman, Earl's Court Village Residents Association, SW5

Could the Council's planning department consider restrictions on the granting of any new basements in the light of the July 07 flood effects?

We could consider this, but what would be the reason? The July 07 flooding was caused by run-off from the acres of roads, roofs and car parks that make up much of the Royal Borough. The building of new basements will have little or no impact on the amount of run-off. No impact if they are only under the house. Little impact if they extend in to the garden because we require 1m of soil to be placed on top of most garden basements. The only other reason would be if the basements posed a threat to life. Self-contained basements could potentially cause a threat to life in the flood zone close to the Thames. But there is no threat to life from the flooding experienced in July 07.

15 February 2008

Contacts for Thames Water

Email: [customer.feedback@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:customer.feedback@thameswater.co.uk)

Tel: 0845 920 0800

Write to: Mr David Owens

Chief Executive Officer

Third East

Clearwater Court

Vastern Road

Reading

Berks

RG1 8DB

Website: [www.thames-water.com](http://www.thames-water.com)



David Owens, CEO  
[chief.executive@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:chief.executive@thameswater.co.uk)

Mike Tempest, Customer Services Director  
[customer.director@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:customer.director@thameswater.co.uk)

Bob Collington, Wastewater Services Director  
[wastewater.director@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:wastewater.director@thameswater.co.uk)

Ivor Quinn  
Principal Governance Administrator  
Governance Services  
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
T - 020 7361 2306  
E - [committees@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:committees@rbkc.gov.uk)