

Oxfordshire County Council statement December 2023
Item 17 Motion regarding SESRO (Abingdon Reservoir)

Barry Gooch, local resident

Thank you for permitting me to address you on this matter.

I wish to strongly support Councillor Sally Povolotsky's Motion which builds upon the expert work of GARD in countering Thames Water's highly self-interested project.

This issue has gone on for too long without resolution causing anxiety and uncertainty for local populations. The fact that the case for SESRO appears to be built on disputable data and debatable logic is bad enough. However, the current concerns about Thames Water's debt laden, highly geared, trajectory mean there now must be serious doubts about its ability to manage such a huge infrastructure project.

Thames Water has failed in its existing duties of fixing leaks and implementing measures to prevent raw sewage entering our rivers. The reasons given for developing SESRO and its proposed size has changed repeatedly over the past 20 or so years and they have dismissed out of hand any of the possible alternatives.

How on earth are we supposed to trust that an organisation topping the table of water companies for leaks and near the top for storm overflow discharges can deliver SESRO, and to a novel design?

Of course, the resolutions in this motion regarding a meeting with the Secretary of State and a request to OFWAT to pause SESRO in RAPID must be adopted at least until the questions have been answered and other schemes considered.

The final insult is that Thames Water expects the population of Oxfordshire to put up with:

- the construction of SESRO,
- the disruption to our rail and road services, and
- nuisance that will be caused

Alongside a 40% uplift in water bills so that London, East Anglia, Southern Water, or whomsoever they next choose as justification for SESRO, can enjoy the benefits.

Please carry this motion.