

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

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Briefing Paper on Consultation from 29 May to 23 July 2024 on Hampshire (Southern Water) Water Treatment & Water Recycling (WT&WR) Project

This consultation is about the WT&WR Project, involving plans to build:

- A Water Treatment Plant (WTP) at Broadmarsh in Havant,
- Pipelines to and from Portsmouth Water (PW) infrastructure,
- A 40km pipeline to the Otterbourne Water Treatment Works (WTW).

The consultation seeks views on the various proposals to progress this whole project. The on-line response form is focussed on seeking comments on the scheme to assist its progression.

Parish Council's key points:

This is a very expensive project to take forward, both in terms of costs to the consumers over many years and also in terms of increased environmental impact, both locally in the Solent area and through the consumption of large amounts of energy. There are cheaper options to improve the availability of water for a growing population and in times of drought, through the education of customers, much greater attention to and reduction of leaks, the use of some natural aquifers and some new reservoirs that will only need large amounts of energy for building them. Moving the abstraction points downstream and stopping the regular discharge of sewage into waterways is the best way of helping the chalk streams to thrive thus dealing with the argument that the WR&WT Project is the best way to improve the river quality.

This project could become another HS2, addressing a need to deal with potential water shortages through the most expensive way possible instead of looking at more affordable solutions that cumulatively improve the availability and sustainability of water supplies.

Details:

From the consultation it appears that only Southern Water (SW) customers will be impacted with all the recycled water going from the Havant Thicket Reservoir (HTR) to Otterbourne WTW for final treatment. This is not the case as PW customers will also receive the mixed recycled and spring-derived water from the reservoir in a drought or an emergency (undefined at present but could include maintenance periods), when the Bedhampton Springs cannot supply sufficient water for PW to distribute.

All of us in Rowlands Castle Parish are likely to receive some of this mixed spring-derived and recycled water in future years.

The Parish Council acknowledges that water will be a scarcer commodity in the future and thus remains supportive of the original PW reservoir project to capture surplus spring water in the winter months for distribution in times of drought. However, the Council is strongly opposed to the whole WT&WR scheme on a number of grounds, as laid out below. The Council will be deciding its response to the Consultation at its next meeting on 15th July.

Residents are encouraged to give the Project proper consideration and to make their views known directly to SW, not by using the on-line proforma, that is primarily about the infrastructure proposals, but by email or in writing.

Concerns to think about and consider re the WR&WT Project:

1. **Wasting Rainwater** We get plenty of rain in winter and, with a warming maritime climate, this is likely to be the case for much of the year in the future. Southern Water (and other water companies) should, as a priority, be developing solutions which store that free natural water for

use in dry summers. Greener and cheaper solutions such as using some aquifers and also more reservoirs have not been properly investigated and brought forward. Additionally, demand can be reduced through the education of customers in how to use water as a scarcer resource responsibly and also leakage repairs should be increased in number and speed of completion.

2. **Financial Costs** The project is a very expensive solution both in terms of construction costs and, importantly, through-life running costs. Initially, all SW customers will pay more but, in the long-term, it is likely that PW customers may also have to pay more because the water in the reservoir will have to be used by them as well. Many customers are not supportive of the scheme and the costs continue to increase steadily from an estimated £550-£900 million in June 2023 to over £1.2 billion as of June 2024.

3. **Environmental Costs** Apart from the long-term economic costs to consumers, there are also environmental costs of using a variety of chemicals and expensive membranes that will be needed to recycle the water obtained from Budds Farm Sewage Treatment Works. There will be a high-energy demand associated with pumping some 30 megalitres per day, 365 days a year, to Otterbourne along the 40 km pipeline, regardless of whether there is regular rainfall or not. There will also be significant impacts from the discharged reject waste water from the WTP at Broadmarsh, which will flow into the Solent through the existing Long Sea Outfall from Budds Farm Treatment Works. This concentrated 'reject water' from the Broadmarsh WTP will be at its most 'poisonous' to the environment at a time of drought when it is not being diluted by the normal Budds Farm discharge to reduce its impact in the sea.

4. **Impact on Langstone Harbour** There is significant risk to Langstone Harbour from developing the effluent recycling plant and associated deep tunnel shafts needed on the contaminated landfill site at Broadmarsh (Site 72), west of the current Hampshire Waste Recycling Centre. The landfill site dates from the 1960s-80s and is not sealed, just surrounded by chalk. The deep piling, required to support infrastructure on a landfill site containing all sorts of rubbish, will need to go down to the chalk substrate and thus facilitate more leachate to go from the landfill contents to Langstone Harbour. There is also the issue of gas emission from the landfill contents. There are alternative sites that could and should be used to obviate the building of infrastructure on a landfill site. The old IBM site, currently under demolition, could be used and is the preferred option for many if the Project had to go ahead.

5. **Abstraction v Sewage Release** The issue of reducing damage to the valuable chalk streams such as the Itchen and the Test by abstraction is put forward as a key reason for this project so that abstraction can be reduced or even stopped. While it is correct that abstraction needs to be reduced greatly, an even bigger problem is that caused by the release of sewage in vast quantities into our rivers. The first priority for available money is to tackle the sewage release crisis; that will have a big improvement effect on the quality of the rivers. Secondly, moving abstraction points downstream to just above the point to where high tides push salt water will reduce the impact of water loss in the upper and middle reaches of the rivers, which is currently a major part of the abstraction problem.

6. **Visual Impact** The adverse visual impact of the new WTP will supposedly be dealt with by using a screen of new planted trees and hedges. In reality, once the roots of these new trees and hedges reaches down to the landfill contents they will start to die off as they will not be able to obtain the necessary nutrients that they would from soil and poisons in the landfill will also impact the vegetation. SW will only provide maintenance for 5 years for this planting so their obligation will cease just as the trees start to die off as their roots grow into the landfill.

7. **No Design Commitment** Within the consultation documents are many 'illustrative designs' for various infrastructure elements, to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). There is no commitment to the designs or layouts shown and it will be for the Design & Build Contractor to decide how the solutions should be developed once the Development Consent Order has been approved. They can do what they like as long as the impact in any form does not exceed the 'worst case' parameters used in the EIA. Thus any reassurances given by SW in respect of any designs are effectively meaningless.

8. **Intensive Energy Use** Energy security is already a significant concern for the UK so developing and using energy intensive solutions over many years makes things worse for energy security and the climate. The construction of new reservoirs or the provision of infrastructure to use natural aquifers only requires a lot of energy for the period of construction and much less energy for the provision of water to customers subsequently. They do not require the additional chemical and high-quality membranes used to produce recycled water, just the normal processes required to produce drinking water from groundwater supplies or reservoirs.
9. **Lack of Consultation on Alternative Options** There has been a totally inadequate public consultation on the alternative options and consumer acceptability. You could build 3 reservoirs to store winter rainfall for the cost of this effluent recycling scheme.
10. **Effect on Tap Water Consumption** It is recognised that the water produced through the recycling process will be fit to drink, provided the system is run effectively, but the project risks turning large numbers of people away from tap water due to the complete lack of trust in the water companies. No-one can be forced to drink tap water and, with many consumers saying that they will not do so if this scheme is taken forward, this will create a new, used-plastic-water-bottle mountain, especially as mixed reservoir water will taste different to spring water.
11. **Loss of Biodiversity** There is also the loss of a unique biodiversity opportunity to create a chalk spring-fed reservoir, the first of its kind in the UK. Also, the impacts on reservoir water quality and biodiversity from introducing recycled water in large amounts are still unknown.
12. **Lack of Independent Monitoring** No independent monitoring of the discharge from the into the reservoir is planned, the information will be provided by Southern Water so they will be self-regulating. Given the company's history with sewage management, this is very concerning.

Next Steps

If you are concerned, please respond to the consultation by email or in writing. You do not have to complete the online questionnaire. **The closing date is 23 July 2024 at 23:59**

If you consider the above comments useful, add your thoughts to show individuality in your response; please don't just cut and paste the comments above.

Note that the approval process will be different to that of the reservoir project itself and that you will not have an opportunity to comment when the application goes to the Government for a Development Consent Order. It is at this present stage of the project that any concerns must be aired and the project stopped, if you think that appropriate.

Email: FeedbackHWTWRP@southernwater.co.uk

Write to: FREEPOST, HAMPSHIRE WTRP CONSULTATION.

More Information

The Consultation documents are available in local libraries, or online at:
<https://www.hampshirewtrp.co.uk/>

The documents library containing the proposals and plans is at:
<https://stantec2.app.box.com/s/nt6e3dzcb1ir22renj4omguh8lrqhbds>

Havant Matters <https://havantmatters.org/water/> is the website for a group of organisations to post information re the Havant Area in general and in particular this Scheme:

For the list of **key concerns:** <https://havantmatters.org/key-concerns/>

For more information and Frequently Asked Questions: <https://havantmatters.org/water/faqs/>

For alternatives: <https://havantmatters.org/alternatives/>

For environmental concerns: <https://havantmatters.org/water/environmental-concerns/>