

Title	County Council Report
Authors	OCC Cllr S Povolotsky
Meeting	Western Valley Parish Council Meeting – 11 th January 2024

Firstly a Happy New Year and secondly its not a full report this month – as December was mostly meetings and OCC has despatched the letters as a result of the 2 Water Motions I took to Council in November and December.

I have also sent you a copy of the letter I send to David Johnston and his reply / email correspondence since, and the flooding at Mellors.

Going Independent

Some of you may have seen I resigned the Party Whip at both OCC and VOWHDC in early December – Why – because no one is listening. Our division has the biggest growth and yet the lowest investment in infrastructure. I fought hard for parents and children's voices in 2022/23 and when the SEND cabinet role came up I asked the group and yet the feedback was I am not compliant enough for the role. I didn't come into politics to comply with some 'way of working' which politicians set, I comply with the standards and procedures set out for me as a councillor, but my role is to be YOUR voice. How can you be a strong voice with clipped wings, or walls of silence despite raising critical issues. I was left out of consultation responses at Vale on SESRO – twice, and that's unacceptable given the impacts on Steventon and Hanneys (and further afield like East Hendred), and my fight for SEND left me out in the cold, the truth isn't clearly what politicians want to hear. What I was never prepared for was the politics inside politics and I now sit as an Independent, on the back benches. Whilst I have lost my seat on People Scrutiny I have gained a seat on the new Education and Young Peoples Scrutiny committee which I have supported the last 12 months. I am afraid some things are more important than Party politics, and given the weight of our issues, it means more to me to be an unfiltered open and honest voice that's pushing for change, I hope you can all understand, plus it gives me back some time, which is a relief (so I can focus on more consultations)

River levels in Oxfordshire

Many watercourses in Oxfordshire continue to be at a higher level than usual. We're continuing to keep our [flood advice page](#) updated with the latest advice for residents. On that subject I did 'wade' into the issue at Mellors Garage, supporting some of the district councillors with the lack of action by OCC, with rather a long email of concern, and have been pushing again today on action needed urgently as this is effecting our residents too with the Faringdon Bus service and I am concerned about when schools resume next week, as we have children at Faringdon schools!

GWP Healthcare

I have been speaking with the Clerk at Western Vale, as I know several parishes are concerned about knock on impacts of the overly subscribed services, and we hope to request a formal meeting of Parish Clerks and Chairs, NHS commissioning officers, Vale and County officers and cabinet leads, as well as district / county councillors. We need answers, as the timeline is taking too long, the BOB ICB need to explain what the delays are, as do Woodlands who have taken on the contract, who will also be invited, more info soon.

SEND

Priority action plan published to improve SEND services

In December, OCC published the local area partnership priority action plan to improve services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The plan responds to Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission's inspection report of SEND partnership services in July. Read our news article for more [information](#).

You will see from my letter to the CEO, I am far from impressed, nor do I think the administration are taking this seriously enough at any level, despite there now being a 'SEND Cabinet Lead', who should really be setting a tone of collaborative working and restorative practice.

SESRO

See attached letters which my motion called for...and I am aware GARD has called for a Public Enquiry too.

Please can you share the below with your residents....

Help Oxfordshire stand out from the crowd

We want Oxfordshire to stand out as a place to live, work, visit and do business.

Together with partners, we've commissioned thinking place to help tell Oxfordshire's story. Residents can get involved by completing the short online survey, which is open until 31 December. You can also join one of our 90 minutes online workshops on the following dates:

Tuesday 9 January 2024, 9.30am - 11am

Thursday 11 January 2024, 12pm - 1.30pm

Wednesday 17 January 2024, 5.30pm - 7pm.

Register your attendance [online](#) and you'll be sent full details.

Live consultations

We're currently running three major resident consultations:

- budget themselves using [our new simulator tool](#).
- can have their say until 26 January 2024.
- consultationforadmissions@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

For a full list of all resident consultations, [visit Let's talk Oxfordshire](#). Please contact

consultations@oxfordshire.gov.uk with any queries.

E-mails To / From D Johnson

Dear David

Thanks for your reply, although I am not sure what action YOU are taking on behalf of constituents right NOW?

Your residents / constituents would like a public meeting, as per my letter, can we arrange this ASAP? I am sure the Clerk of Steventon Parish Council can assist us, and if the hall is booked, the other surrounding parishes would help accommodate? We need a constructive game plan, together, of everyone at all levels of local government, and national, to make a plan on how voices can be heard and proper scrutiny of the plans are carried out.

Given the past tense on PMQ then we are now a whole year into a new PM and its all very quiet, despite the consultations and push increasing week by week. It was very clear from the recent Thames Water 'engagement' that Thames Water (TW) plan to go for DCO, and yet I am outraged that no consultation to date has ever mentioned the actual size they now publicise and the open questions councils, councillors and the public / groups have on the table.

Flying over the size of the reservoir isn't sitting down at a public meeting with residents who want to know how we can all work together to get something done / to be truly listened too. I don't know where your surgeries are, but maybe its time for some on the doorstep of the site in East Hanney and Steventon, in fact latest designs have shifted the concern even more so to East Hanney.

From your bullet point list, there's very little on there we haven't ALL done / tried / been a part of, except you have the chamber of the house, the cabinet and the Prime Minister at your network level, we don't, and I am making a plea, as per my letter, on behalf of my residents for a meeting with the new Environment Minister, a round table of constructive points around WRSE / TWMP and unanswered questions. The OFWAT RAPID next gate should not be opened to SESRO until questions are answered.

This week there are motions at both OCC and VOWHDC on SESRO, and once again we will hear the main sticking points, and we need you to help David, please.

Can we please get a meeting in the diary?

Sally

Cllr Sally Povolotsky FRSA (She / Her)

County Councillor for Hendreds & Harwell Division

From: JOHNSTON, David <david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk>

Sent: Friday, December 8, 2023 11:11 AM

To: Cllr Sally Povolotsky <Sally.Povolotsky@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: SESRO - Official Letter Cllr Povolotsky

Dear Cllr Povolotsky,

Thank you for your letter.

I have already raised these points and registered the issues of public concern with the Secretary of State, Water Minister, Environment Agency, and Thames Water. Indeed, I have been liaising closely with GARD throughout my time as an MP regarding this, meeting with them several occasions to hear their concerns and have assisted them with virtually all of their requests including raising their concerns with Ministers, Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Ofwat as well as securing meetings for them to raise these concerns directly. I have also met with Thames Water on several occasions this year to discuss it, as well as the Chair of the WRSE.

I always listen to residents' concerns and have replied to over 250 emails on this subject in the past year alone – and have put these concerns to Thames Water, DEFRA, and the Environment Agency as a result. I also engage with constituents on this across various surgery appointments and visits and have visited the site of the proposed reservoir with constituents on several occasions to hear local concerns, including just the other month where I literally got a birds-eye view by flying in a plane over the site. If anyone would like to discuss this with me, they need only email - and they do.

I will continue to represent my constituents and have written to the Secretary of State regarding the date of the decision.

For reference as you have seemed confused on this point, I have written below a list of some of the actions that I have taken to represent my constituents on this:

- Raised constituent concerns in the House of Commons with the then Prime Minister in Prime Ministers Questions
- Raised constituent concerns in the House of Commons with the Environment Minister – criticising Thames Water, Ofwat and RAPID
- Wrote to the Environment Secretary to raise constituent concerns with them about the Draft Water Resources Management Plan and issues GARD had raised
- Wrote to the Water Minister to raise constituent concerns with them

- Met with GARD on several occasions to hear their concerns and assisted them with virtually all of their requests including raising their concerns with Ministers, Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Ofwat as well as securing meetings for them to raise these concerns directly
- Pressed Thames Water and WRSE on transparency issues around their consultations which successfully resolved them, from their consultations not being as accessible as they could be to redacted figures being used in them – also writing to the Water Minister about this
- Secured GARD a meeting with the Environment Agency and requested another for them with their Reservoir Safety team
- Met with senior management at Thames Water on several occasions to raise issues with them, including with their Water Resources Engagement Lead and Director for the Strategic Water Resource Options – and met with them again in October to discuss the Draft Water Resources Management Plan
- Met with WRSE to raise issues with them, including meeting with the Chair of the WRSE
- Wrote to the Environment Agency to raise constituent concerns with them
- Wrote to Ofwat to raise constituent concerns with them
- Responded to all the consultations run by Thames Water and WRSE on behalf of constituents
- Consistently pushed for alternative measures to be considered including the Severn to Thames transfer across various consultations and correspondence
- Replied to over 250 emails from constituents on this just this year - engaging with them and raising their concerns
- Engaged with constituents on this across various surgery appointments and visits - as well as visiting the site of the proposed reservoir with constituents on several occasions to hear local concerns, including just the other month

Yours,

David

If you are a constituent, sign up for my newsletter [here](#)

David Johnston OBE MP

Member of Parliament for Wantage and Didcot

From: Cllr Sally Povolotsky <Sally.Povolotsky@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Sent: 28 November 2023 19:44

To: JOHNSTON, David <david.johnston.mp@parliament.uk>

Cc: steventonpc@tiscali.co.uk; Derek Stork <gard.chair@gmail.com>; director@cpreoxon.org.uk; parishclerk@hendred.org; clerk@harwellparish.co.uk; Cooke, Andy <Andy.Cooke@whitehorsedc.gov.uk>; Robert.Clegg@whitehorsedc.gov.uk; Jill.Rayner@whitehorsedc.gov.uk; Cllr Pete Sudbury <Pete.Sudbury@Oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Subject: SESRO - Official Letter Cllr Povolotsky

Importance: High

Dear David

Please find attached the letter I am writing on behalf of my Division and I have copied in those who have asked me to write to you / are aware of my writing officially.

I wont be publishing this to social media, and respect your response to a difficult situation.

I do hope we can hear from you soon, the clock is ticking

Kind regards

Sally

Cllr Sally Povolotsky FRSA (She / Her)

County Councillor for Hendreds & Harwell Division

Sent by email 19.12.23

Bill Cotton

Director of Highways

Oxfordshire County Council

Subject: Ongoing Disruption and Lack of Action at Challow by Mellors Garage

Photographs attached from 19th December circa 6pm with Earline Truck and 2pm day time image (sent to me by local residents)

Dear Bill,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the ongoing disruption at Challow by Mellors Garage and the lack of action taken to address this issue. The impact on surrounding villages, market towns, and public transport disruption has reached a critical level, affecting thousands of residents on an hourly basis, furthermore impacting surrounding villages like Childrey which are not able to cope with redirected traffic, especially heavy goods, around narrow village lanes and streets. The locality has all areas impacted from my division to Wantage and leading to and from Faringdon.

It is disheartening to note that this issue, which has been known for years, has been allowed to worsen without any remedy in sight or planned works / maintenance of the ditches. Local residents have been patiently waiting for a quick resolution, but the sudden change in messaging in the last 24 hours from "it will get sorted" to "it needs to wait until January" has left everyone feeling frustrated and neglected. I was alerted to the issue last Tuesday and spoke to a fair few officers, finally Matthew Timms called me on Thursday and said the road was being closed and immediate plans afoot, but here I am 5 days later penning this note, and nothing has changed.

The unsafe and unmanned / controlled road closures have not only caused inconvenience but also pose a significant risk to public safety. The lack of suitable alternative routes and proper traffic management has led to chaotic situations, making it difficult for residents to commute and for businesses to operate smoothly. This disruption has not only impacted the residents of Challow but has also had a ripple effect on the surrounding villages and market towns.

Moreover, the public transport disruption caused by the ongoing roadworks has further exacerbated the situation. Many individuals rely on public transportation for their daily commute, and the disruption has left them stranded and unable to reach their destinations or places of employment on time, this also impacted children and school buses. This not only affects their personal lives but also has a negative impact on the local economy. This is further exasperated by the local businesses in the locality of the incident, including a physiotherapist centre, who have been adversely and continually affected as has the Petrol station, many of whom I know have been in touch with officers, this has now been going on for well over a week this time (which of course isn't the first time).

We all understand that infrastructure projects and repairs take time, but the lack of transparency and effective communication from the authority has only added to frustrations. Residents deserve answers, but more importantly, they deserve swift and decisive action to alleviate the ongoing disruption and ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out as soon as possible, delays are no longer acceptable and there must be a way around any issues with contractors, like finding other contractors who can do something - now. My other concern is locals taking actions into their own hands, and any resulting issues caused by that, which the growing facebook group, merely a week or so old, now has over 2000 users and an increasing undertone of 'we just sort this ourselves'. Its been covered on TV and local newspapers in the last few days.

I kindly request that this matter in Challow is of utmost priority and immediate action is put into place to rectify the situation, especially the road closure which is being ignored and lives / vehicles / safety at risk, as well as keeping all the local councillors in the loop. I urge you to provide regular updates to the affected communities, and a pop up public meeting with the parish, explaining the reasons for the delay and outlining a concrete plan to resolve the ongoing disruption, I have copied in the local district councillor as it comes under Cllr Constance's division (who is still in hospital I believe), Cllr Snowdon has asked to be kept in the loop.

I trust that you will take the necessary steps to resolve this matter at the earliest opportunity as every minute risks someone's safety especially in the dark.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I, and I am sure those cc'd in, look forward to receiving a prompt response detailing the actions that will be taken to address the ongoing safety concerns, disruption and provide relief to the affected communities to all of us in the locality group.

Yours sincerely,

Sally

Cllr Sally Povolotsky FRSA (She / Her)

Chair of Faringdon and Wantage Locality Group

County Councillor for Hendreds & Harwell Division

Further pdf's appended.

- 22122023 Letter from Cllr Leffman Leader of Oxfordshire County Council re SESRO
- 22122023 Letter to the Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Letter MReeves191223SENDPAP
- Letter to EA from OCC Nov 2023
- OCC Letter (Cllr Povolotsky) NOV 2023 to DJ MP