

Chair of the London Assembly



Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Member for North East London
Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest

City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA
Telephone: 020 7983 4000
Web: www.london.gov.uk

Sir James Bevan
Chief Executive
Environment Agency

27 June 2019

Dear Sir James

London Assembly (Plenary) – 6 June 2019

At its Plenary meeting on 6 June 2019, the London Assembly agreed the following motion:

“This Assembly notes the increasingly urgent need to secure London’s water supply. With an estimated population growth of two million, urgent warnings from the Environment Agency that England could face severe water shortages within 25 years due to climate change and the increasing likelihood of droughts in the immediate future, the need for a sustainable solution is paramount.

Londoners consume on average 149 litres of water per person per day, around 5 per cent above the national average, and we recognise calls from Waterwise, echoed by the Environment Agency, for a target of 100 litres per person per day.

We note the Mayor’s role in securing London’s resilience against climate change risks, and therefore call on him to lobby Thames Water and Affinity Water for a rapid and scaled-up smart meter and water-efficient device rollout across London; accompanied by an awareness raising campaign informing Londoners about the need to, as well as how to, reduce their water usage.

This Assembly notes that both Thames Water and Affinity Water have been working together to meet the challenge of maintaining London’s supply. However, demanding leakage targets must be met, and we call on both companies to meet and exceed OFWATs targets to cut leaks by 15 per cent 2020/25.

Even with leak reduction and water efficiency improvements, a further solution to London’s water needs is required. This Assembly understands that a range of options have been considered to address the need for a long term, sustainable solution, but that many have unacceptable environmental consequences:

- i) Teddington Direct River Abstraction has been rejected by the Environment Agency, as the returned water is too warm and therefore ecologically damaging;
- ii) Deephams Re-use has also been rejected, due to its adverse ecological impacts;
- iii) Direct Transfer from the Severn to the Thames risks the transfer of Invasive Species to the upper Thames chalk streams and is therefore unacceptable; and
- iv) Oxford Canal Transfer will not provide sufficient quantity, reliability and also may have environmental impacts.

This Assembly calls on Thames Water and Affinity Water to continue to develop potential Canal Transfer schemes, but notes that such schemes may not provide sufficient water in light of the changing climate. This Assembly further notes that the only scheme that will provide a reliable, sufficient and sustainable source of water is the Abingdon Reservoir.

This Assembly calls upon OfWat and the Environment Agency to grant permission and Thames and Affinity Water to construct the Abingdon Reservoir as soon as is practicable, with completion no later than 2037, to ensure that Londoners continue to have a sufficient supply of wholesome water, and ecological impacts on the Thames, Lee and the chalk streams that feed them are minimised.”

I have written in similar terms to:

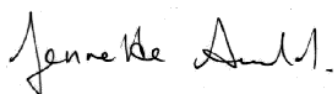
- Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London;
- Thames Water;
- Affinity Water; and
- The Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat).

I look forward to receiving your response.

Please note that, in the interests of transparency, your responses will be published on the GLA’s website.

If there is anything else in relation to this session which you wish to discuss, please contact Clare Bryant, Committee Officer, on 020 7983 4616 or at clare.bryant@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the London Assembly