

MAYOR OF LONDON

Zack Polanski AM

Chair of the London Assembly Environment Committee
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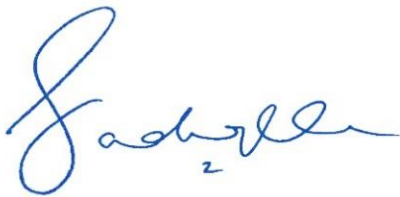
Dear Zack,

Thank you for the London Assembly's Environment report on "Water and London's Rivers" that was published on 18 March. I am sorry for the delay in responding.

The current state of our rivers is clearly unacceptable, and Londoners rightly demand change. I wrote to Thames Water earlier this year, calling on them to do more to improve the state of London's rivers.

The annex below provides further information on the actions I am taking in response to your recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan

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Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Environment Committee's report on Water and London's Rivers March 2024

Recommendation 1

Thames Water and Ofwat should set a more ambitious leakage reduction target in future, aiming for zero leakage by 2050, and be more proactive in monitoring and addressing leaks.

- The Mayor continues to hold London's water companies to account for better management of incidents and water infrastructure failures, calling for greater investment in London's ageing water infrastructure to increase resilience. He met with Ofwat and Thames Water to call for improvements. As a result, Ofwat granted the conditional allowance of £480m ringfenced for London upgrades, including £300m specifically for network and pipe upgrades. Shareholders made commitments at the time too. This was then matched with a similar-sized investment, which was a condition of the allowance.
- The Mayor, when he met the chair of Ofwat in 2023, said costs for infrastructure upgrades must not fall disproportionately to customers during a cost-of-living crisis.

Recommendation 2

Thames Water and the Mayor should work together on information campaigns to promote reductions in water usage across London in 2024 and beyond.

- The Mayor is taking action to encourage Londoners to use less water. This includes policies in the London Plan to reduce water consumption in new developments. London Plan policies secured water efficiency measures for residential development approved in 2022 that would save around 535 million litres of water per year when compared to the upper requirement of national building regulations – enough water to fill 218 Olympic-sized swimming pools.
- The Mayor lobbies water companies to consider demand management alongside new and more resilient water resources infrastructure. The Mayor responds to their water resource plans, where he continues to send clear messages to take urgent action to stop the leaks in our water supply network, which lead to millions of litres of water being wasted every day, and to invest in improving our ageing water infrastructure.
- Through the Mayor's Climate Resilient Schools and Schools Climate Kick Start programmes, the Mayor ensures that longer-term messages around sustainable water use reach young Londoners across the capital. Thames Water's visits as part of this programme have saved 558,892 litres of water per day, which is one Olympic-sized swimming pool per week.

Recommendation 3

Thames Water should also continue to expand smart metering to inform people of their water use, particularly targeting those that use the most water.

- [Collaborative communications](#) on water efficiency need to go beyond 'awareness' campaigns. With the more widespread introduction of metering, particularly smart metering, more information on water consumption can be provided to users. Campaigns to reduce usage can be linked to this information, such as by providing real-time information, providing incentives linked to tracked reductions and social norms communications.

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Reducing the barriers to water efficiency will also enable behaviour change. Product labelling is a major step in making the purchase and installation of water-efficient fittings easier. More widespread rollout of retrofit programmes, such as Thames Water's Smarter Home/Business Visits, and links with energy efficiency retrofit programmes would further reduce the barriers to behaviour change.

- The [Mayor expects London's water companies](#) to increase the number of properties that have water meters as part of a wider water efficiency strategy – providing safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable groups and prevent water poverty.
- In the Mayor's response to the Defra consultation 'Improving our management of water in the environment' in early 2019, the Mayor called for more transparency and sharing of water data to aid water efficiency efforts – so that we can improve water resilience and better protect vulnerable water users.

Recommendation 4

Thames Water should coordinate with Ofwat to open a consultation on new water tariff options for the 2025-2030 price control period. This should include options to link the charging structure to water use, as well as social tariffs to ensure water remains affordable to all.

- The Mayor supports this recommendation for Thames Water.

Recommendation 5

Thames Water should work proactively with local communities to adequately respond to their concerns around new infrastructure to secure future water resources and should learn lessons on effective community engagement for future consultations.

- The Mayor supports this recommendation for Thames Water.

Recommendation 6

Given the environmental impacts of the proposed Direct River Abstraction scheme at Teddington on water temperatures and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, the Mayor should encourage Thames Water to explore alternatives.

- Climate change will seriously impact water availability in the future and lead to increased droughts if no action is taken. The London Climate Resilience Review interim report states that 'not having enough water to go around would cost London's economy alone £500m each day. It would also kill wildlife and concentrate pollution in rivers. London needs a new reservoir, significant investment to reduce leaks, smart metering, and greater public education about water efficiency actions.'
- The Water Resource Management Plan 2019 proposed a 300ML/D recycling of water at Teddington, and the Mayor wrote to Thames Water raising concerns about the ecological impact. As a result, Thames Water removed this option in their final 2019 plan. In this new draft 2024 Plan, Thames Water has reintroduced a Teddington proposal to remove and recycle 75ML/d of treated effluent. Thames Water has considered a variety of options and this smaller size, and they say the proposal allows them to manage the ecological impacts while providing a resilient supply for London at a reasonable cost, which is critical in this cost-of-living crisis.
- The Mayor responded to Thames Water's draft Water Resources Plan, calling for it to accelerate the development of the proposed new reservoir. The Mayor provided conditional support for this scheme as a means of boosting London's water supply resilience, but

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emphasised this option should only go ahead if the environmental impacts associated, including any impact on the river quality, temperature and ecology, can be shown to be managed appropriately and only if it can satisfy the relevant regulators (including the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England), including any impact on river quality and ecology.

Recommendation 7

Thames Water should accelerate investment in its wider sewer infrastructure in areas of London not covered by the Thames Tideway tunnel, to ensure that it has the capacity to deal with intense rainfall events. The Committee considers that the distribution of costs to cover necessary infrastructure must not adversely impact the affordability of water for customers.

- The Mayor believes that Thames Water's current performance on leakage is not good enough, and he continues to lobby to ensure that more is done to reduce leakage and support a reliable service to Londoners. Failing to address leakage undermines performance now, impacts Londoners and London's economy, and risks further undermining its resilience to climate change. London needs a realistic plan that brings down leakage faster than the current pace while balancing the impact on bills and disruption.
- When he met the chair of Ofwat in 2023, the Mayor said costs for infrastructure upgrades must not fall disproportionately to customers during a cost-of-living crisis.
- Thames Water has announced the replacement of 70 miles of pipework. This investment is welcome and much needed – Londoners have suffered outages and disruptive water mains bursts for too long. The Mayor has been pushing Thames Water to provide a water supply system that is fit for purpose, and renewing London's pipework is an important first step.
- In 2022, in his response to Thames Water's Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan, the Mayor also called for further work to be done to monitor overflows.

Recommendation 8

All overflow points should have Event Duration Monitors fitted and real-time data about outflows should be published on the website, along with three monthly summaries, as is already the case where Monitors are installed.

- While the action is not for the Mayor, the Mayor supports the recommendation for transparency and data sharing. He highlighted this in his response to Thames Water's Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan in 2022.

Recommendation 9

The Mayor should encourage his environment team to prioritise work to bring together groups and engage communities on the health of their local rivers in 2024-25 and providing guidance to communities in London about how to work with government, local authorities, charities, water companies and the Environment Agency to help reduce pollution.

- The Mayor recognises the urgent need to tackle the appalling state of London's rivers. The Mayor supports Catchment Partnerships in London and Green Space Information for Greater London (GIGL), which recently published the [London Rivers Week map](#) 2023 showing where restoration has occurred and potential river restoration opportunities.
- The Mayor has set targets in the London Environment Strategy to restore 10km of river by 2025 and 40km by 2050. The 2025 target has already been surpassed. Monitoring by the London Rivers Restoration Group shows that since 2016, 26km of river have been restored.

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The Mayor has funded projects through the Greener City Fund and Green and Resilient Spaces Fund, which have restored London rivers in Enfield and Brent and reduced their flood risk.

- The Mayor has funded smaller-scale projects to improve rivers through the Rewild London and Grow Back Greener Fund, including the creation of new marginal habitats in the River Lea to link wildlife sites and improvements to the Hogsmill River to support a newly reintroduced population of water voles.
- In November 2020, the Mayor awarded £700,000 through his **Grow Back Greener Fund** to 34 community projects to create and improve green and climate-resilient spaces. The Projects were delivered in neighbourhoods with poor access to green space and high levels of deprivation.
- The Mayor has awarded £3.4m of funding through the second and third rounds of the **Grow Back Greener Fund** in December 2021 and December 2022 (including £500,000 from Thames Water in 2021). Funding is supporting 101 community projects to plant trees for shade, create and improve green spaces and boost climate resilience. Relevant projects from the 2021 fund include:
 - **Water Quality Nature Solutions Project** – The [Canal and River Trust](#) received £55,000 to help improve water quality and support wildlife by installing floating reedbeds at Brent Reservoir. These floating ecosystems, installed in partnership with local volunteers, are now cleaning and filtering the water and providing habitats for fish and nesting birds.
 - **Chinbrook Community (Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme) SuDS** – [Thames21](#), working with the London Borough of Lewisham, London Borough of Bromley, Friends of Chinbrook Meadows and Quaggy Waterways Action Group, received £65,000 to create new wetlands at Chinbrook Meadows. The new wetlands will reduce flood risk, improve water quality in the River Quaggy, and create new habitat for wildlife.
- In March 2022, **six large-scale projects were awarded £3.44m from round one of the Mayor's £4m Green and Resilient Spaces Fund**. These projects will bring benefits to areas more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and will strengthen climate resilience, increase biodiversity, improve access to green space, build green skills and promote health and wellbeing.
- On 18 April 2023, the winners of the second round of the Mayor's **Green and Resilient Spaces Fund** were announced, supporting large-scale, innovative enhancements to green and blue spaces and the wider public realm that will strengthen London's climate resilience, increase biodiversity, improve access to green space, build green skills, and promote health and wellbeing. Almost £3m of funding was awarded to four projects and nine development projects.
- Decisions on Project funding are supported by the Mayor's Climate Risk Mapping, updated in 2022.
- The Mayor also supported the production of the [Urban Wetland Design Guide](#), providing practical advice on the design and maintenance of constructed wetlands for the purpose of mitigating urban diffuse pollution. It is based on the London Borough of Enfield's track record of delivering urban wetlands in a variety of settings.
- To address road runoff, in 2019, the Mayor, along with the EA and Transport for London (TfL), funded work by Middlesex University – a project managed by Thames21 – to understand this risk to our rivers. Phase 1 modelled the pollutants likely from London roads so you can see which roads are likely to be the highest polluting. Phase 2, published in September 2023, includes a Decision Support Tool (DST) that predicts the pollution risk posed by London's strategic road network, identifies pollution pathways into the river, and

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guides and prioritises where and how nature-based solutions can be used to tackle road runoff pollution.

- To address misconnections, the GLA is involved with Connect Right (the public face of the National Misconnections Strategy Group). As part of this, we participated in National Misconnections Day on 31 March 2023, raising awareness of misconnections and their causes.

Recommendation 10

The Government should further increase funding to the Environment Agency for enforcement activity, in order to enable the Agency to effectively monitor river health and enforce environmental protections in London.

- It is evident from the state of London's rivers and the current public outcry against water companies that self-regulation by water companies has failed. Enforcement and more resources aimed at tackling river and sewer abuse will be an important part of improving the health of London's rivers. Monitoring of river restoration in London is co-ordinated by **the London Rivers Restoration Group, chaired by the EA**, of which the GLA is a partner. The group works with Catchment Partnerships in London and Green Space Information for Greater London CIC to record and map river restoration works. In 2020, the group published a report titled [River Restoration in London: a 20 Year Review](#), which includes further detailed mapping and monitoring information. It should be noted that the report references approximately 39km of river that have been restored up to 2019. The most recent monitoring by the London Rivers Restoration Group shows that 5,805m of river were restored in 2020 and 5,742m in 2021, bringing the cumulative restoration total for 2000-2021 to more than 50km.

Recommendation 11

The Mayor should continue to support the London Surface Water Strategic Group to encourage a joined-up approach across London.

- The Mayor has been instrumental in working with partner organisations to set up a Surface Water Strategic Group to take a more coordinated approach to managing flooding. The Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy attends the Surface Water Strategic Group on behalf of the Mayor, and work is progressing on developing London's first city-wide surface water flooding strategy in the coming months.
- The Group has now published an update ([London's Surface Water Strategy | London City Hall](#)) on the progress that has been made against the various recommendations within the review that were undertaken since the 2021 flooding.
- On behalf of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy met Minister Rebecca Pow in May 2023 to ask the Government to ensure that further funding was devolved to London to deliver SuDS or that funding was at least made easier to obtain for these schemes.

Recommendation 12

The Mayor should significantly scale up funding and installation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and scale up the resources available for local boroughs and other landowners to increase their own SuDS installation.

- The work of the Surface Water Strategic Group, on behalf of the Mayor, has ambitions to significantly scale up the delivery of SuDs. As part of the workstreams, the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC), EA, Thames Water, GLA and local

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authorities are working together on a project called **PROSPER** (launched in 2024), which is looking at ways to improve how funding can get to Surface Water schemes. The project is trying to make it easier to apply for funding from Defra to deliver SuDS. £1m of funding has been allocated to explore the best ways to do this.

- The GLA is exploring SuDS delivery options through its work on the [Infrastructure Mapping Application](#). This will increase the opportunity identification for SuDS across London. There is a piecemeal approach to the availability of SuDS opportunity mapping across London, with those local authorities that were part of the early phases of the [London Strategic SuDS Pilot Study](#). A project has commenced to extend this opportunity mapping across London, part funded by TfL, Thames Water, and the RFCC. The Mapping Application has demonstrated that the costs of SuDS can be reduced by 25% by using a dig-once approach to delivery, building back greener when a Utility needs to do work.
- Funding remains a major issue for tackling surface water flooding in urban areas. The National Infrastructure Commission has suggested that in the highest surface water flood risk areas, including London, funding should be devolved. The Mayor supports the devolution of flooding funding to the GLA. The GLA is best placed to understand the boroughs' funding needs and therefore to allocate funding to boroughs for delivery. If funding is not immediately devolved, then it must be better targeted towards where it is needed most – **SuDS schemes**. The current funding criteria, including the requirement to find matched funding, make it very difficult for smaller SuDS schemes to access funding.
- The **Climate Resilient Schools programme** – a partnership between the Mayor of London, Thames Water and the Department for Education – worked with 95 of the most at-risk schools for flooding. This programme **installed 564 SuDS rain planters** and 24 weather stations in schools across London. 60 schools also received bespoke climate adaptation plans, and 28 schools took part in Thames Water Smarter Business Visits, saving over 500,000 litres of water per week.
- The Mayor has worked with partner organisations to develop a **new approach to demonstrate the benefits of SuDS schemes**. Modelling shows how multiple small-scale SuDS schemes, when delivered together and located strategically, can reduce flood risk to properties and so attract flood risk funding. This has unlocked £1m of regional flood risk funding.
- The Mayor's £4m **Green and Healthy Streets Fund**, delivered in close partnership with TfL, supports exemplar projects that redesign streets to integrate green infrastructure and climate resilience measures such as SuDS, alongside interventions that support active travel, reduce carbon emissions, and improve air quality. The fund supports 11 boroughs to deliver 19 projects on borough roads and within the wider public realm.
- The GLA was awarded **BEIS Pioneer fund** to identify the barriers to implementing **SuDS** and find **market approaches to help deliver more at scale** in Highways reinstatement works. This work was launched at City Hall on 4 September 2023.
- The Mayor also has strong policies in the **London Plan** to secure the **delivery of SuDS in new development**.
- The Mayor supports Thames Water's Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan which indicates it will explore **depaving incentives**. The rate of these incentives could be related to the location of the paving, supported by enhanced modelling to identify hotspots.

Recommendation 13

The Mayor should double the target in his Transport Strategy to 100,000 square meters a year of roads draining into sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) per year. Transport for London (TfL) should also double its targets for SuDS installation to deliver 10,000 square metres of roads draining into SuDS per year.

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- The Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) set an ambitious target for an additional 50,000 square metres of catchment draining into SuDS per year across boroughs' and TfL's highways. In its 2023 Adaptation Plan, TfL set itself an annual target of 5,000 square metres (10% of the MTS target, despite TfL managing only 5% of London's roads by length). This resulted in the delivery of almost 8,000 square metres of catchment draining into SuDS on TfL's highways in the 2023/24 financial year, as well as the development of a SuDS project pipeline.
- TfL will continue to work towards its annual target of installing a minimum of 5,000 square metres of additional catchment draining into SuDS per annum.
- TfL has also contributed funding towards SuDS Opportunity Modelling for London, which will be procured by the EA in 2024/25. This will identify those locations that are likely to be most effective at surface water flood risk reduction, helping to target limited public sector resources where they will be most effective. This modelling should inform future target setting to ensure an evidence-based and cost-effective approach to surface water flood risk management.

Recommendation 14

Defra should work with the London Surface Water Strategic Group to establish a need-based fund to enable boroughs to access simple and long-term funding for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), while significantly increasing funding available for SuDS installation.

- Defra has been invited to advise the Surface Water Strategic Group and is aware of the actions of the Surface Water Strategy and its recommendations for the need to unlock funding and the ways in which this would work best for London, as well as the need to devolve funding to London and the boroughs.

Recommendation 15

As recommended by the London Climate Resilience Review, the Mayor should conduct an audit of land the GLA owns or is responsible for on the riverbank and develop an action plan by 2025, including ways to raise flood defences and create natural areas where flooding can be allowed to occur without harm.

- The Mayor is working with the EA to support its updated Thames Estuary 2100 (TE2100) plan to ensure London remains protected from tidal flood risk in the future. The plan was launched at City Hall in 2023.
- The Mayor has started a review of all land within the GLA family to understand the current situation and liabilities and develop an action plan.

Recommendation 16

The Mayor should also consider how to use his wider planning powers to ensure councils develop riverside strategies and landowners take appropriate action to construct and manage higher walls.

- The Mayor is supportive of the Thames Estuary Partnership developing landscape character areas. Officers wrote to the Regional Flood and Coastal Chair to support a recent first stage of updating the Tidal Thames Riverside Strategies in 2021. The refresh of the existing Joint Thames Strategies to bring them up to date with new policies and strategies will support Riverside Strategy development. This project secured crucial additional capacity to progress this important work, which would otherwise not take place and enable better join-up across multiple organisations, boundaries, and disciplines.

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- The Mayor is working closely with the EA TE2100 team to help ensure the planned benefits of the TE2100 programme can be delivered, including through riverside strategies. GLA officers also sit on the TE2100 Infrastructure Taskforce.

Recommendation 17

The Mayor should work with the Port of London Authority (PLA) to carry out and publish a status report on existing river based energy projects by the end of 2024. This should include an assessment of potential barriers and opportunities for further renewable energy generation projects on the Thames.

- More information can be found on the energy projects at the PLA webpages [Climate change | Port of London Authority \(pla.co.uk\)](#). This includes a trial undertaken to facilitate scale and full-size trials of the types of schemes that could be used.

Recommendation 18

The Mayor and the Port of London Authority (PLA) should work together to create a prospectus for investors of river based energy projects, and actively market the opportunities identified to ensure more renewable energy generation projects on the Thames are installed.

- The Mayor and PLA meet regularly along with TFL to identify opportunities. Guidance on approaching the development of these schemes from the [Environment Agency: Guidance for run-of-river hydropower development](#) can be found on its webpages.

Recommendation 19

The Mayor and the Port of London Authority (PLA) should set out clear and ambitious targets for expanding the proportion of craft using zero emissions and renewable fuel sources on the section of the river from the O2 to Teddington, with Targets for 2030, 2035 and 2040.

- The PLA has published and shared its net zero river plan, pushing for faster decarbonisation of river-based emission routes, primarily from vessel movements. It has published a three-year action plan (2024-2027), which can be found here: [Net Zero River Plan | Port of London Authority](#).

Recommendation 20

The Port of London Authority (PLA) should publish the findings from its feasibility assessment for a River Ultra Low Emission Zone (RULEZ). In response to this, the Mayor should set out his position on such a scheme, and any plans for its implementation.

- The Mayor will respond to any findings from the PLA when they are published. The Mayor and TfL are continuing to work with the PLA and other stakeholders to support and promote the use of less polluting river vessels to reduce air pollution and carbon emissions.
- **Between 2019 and 2021, the Mayor funded the Clean Air Thames project through his Mayor's Air Quality Fund in partnership with Cross River Partnerships, the City of London Corporation and the PLA.** Clean Air Thames was designed to reduce emissions from inland vessels operating on the Thames within Greater London. It aimed to tangibly improve air quality on the Thames by retrofitting vessels with Selective Catalytic Reductions (SCR) technology. Two vessels were retrofitted in the trial.
- **In March this year, the Mayor announced funding through his Mayor's Air Quality Fund for the Healthy Waterways project.** Healthy Waterways is a pan-London scheme led by Camden, Newham, and Hackney to better engage canal boaters on air quality and

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how they can reduce their emissions. It has been granted £35k to engage boaters across London's canal network and develop a new Healthy Waterways strategy as a legacy to the project. As with past rounds of the MAQF, the GLA will report on the impacts of the funded projects in due course.

Recommendation 21

In response to this report, the Mayor should set out the major environmental achievements of the Thames and London Waterways Forum over the last five years, and his key priorities for the forum in 2024-2025. The GLA should also swiftly publish meeting notes of the Thames and London Waterways Forum since 2018, as well as a schedule of its future meetings.

- The meetings that have been held can be found here: [Thames and London Waterways Forum | London City Hall](#). The Mayor is working with the PLA on his priorities for the Thames and London Waterways Forum going forward. Future meeting dates will be shared once these have been arranged, along with the relevant minutes after the meetings. The last meeting was held in December 2023; however, no minutes were taken for this meeting.