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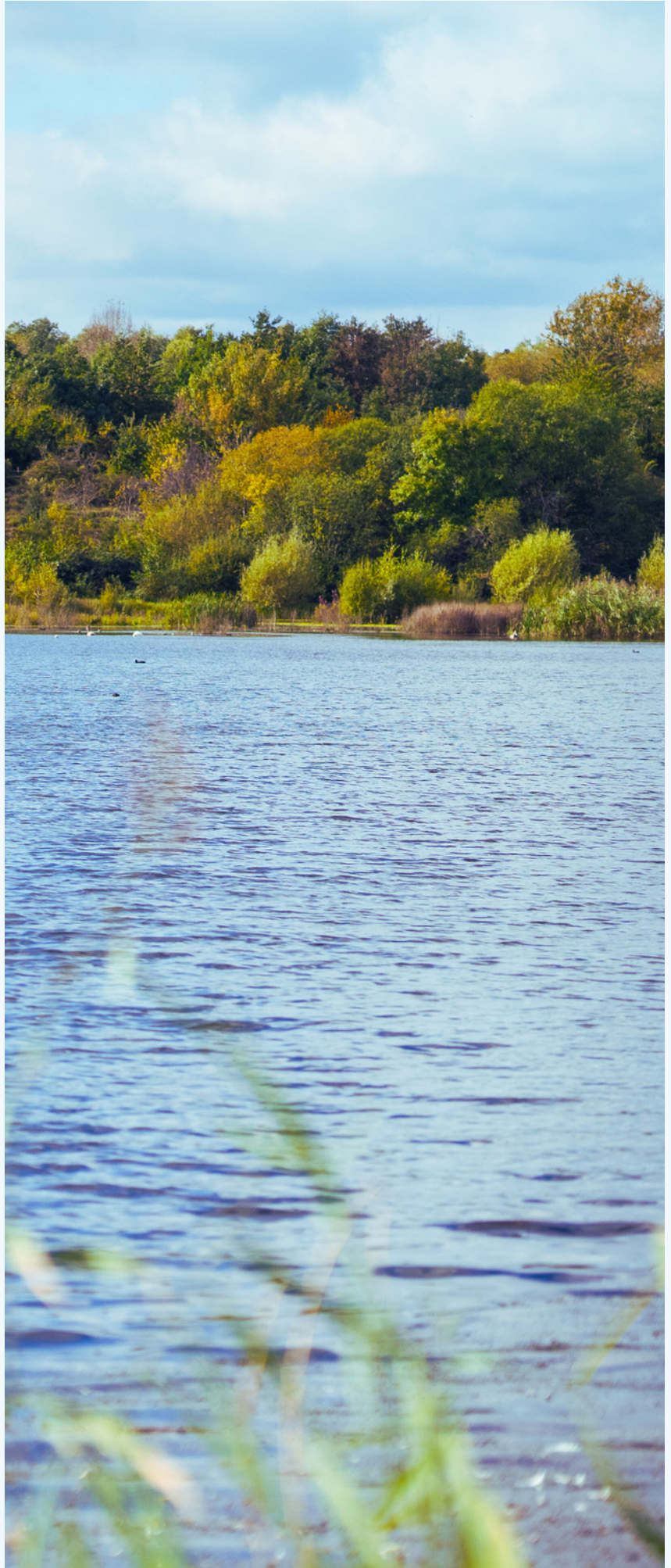
from Southern Water

AffinityWater

RESERVOIR NEWSLETTER

SPRING
2024

ISSUE 1





COMMUNITY UPDATE

We're pleased to introduce the first edition of our [Reservoir Newsletter](#) - your source for the latest information about our proposal to build a new reservoir in the Upper Thames catchment.

I work for Thames Water overseeing the development of our proposals for the new reservoir. I've had the opportunity to meet many of you face-to-face and hear your views and concerns directly. It was great to meet some of you at the Autumn 2023 community drop-in events. We'll shortly be announcing new dates for you to join us again to share your views about the reservoir proposal in Summer 2024.

Listening to your views is fundamental to our plans. Your feelings and perspectives matter, and it's important for your voices to be heard throughout this careful planning process. We hear your concerns about issues such as flood management and how the reservoir would be operated safely. Over the coming months, we'll use this newsletter and our engagement events to tackle the issues that you've raised directly with us and that we know you are interested in.

A new reservoir in Oxfordshire will provide water to 15 million people across the South East and will bring a range of benefits to the area. It's hard to predict what all our challenges might be over the reservoir's expected life span (up to 250 years). But we know we must make bold decisions and act now or face the very real prospect of serious water shortages in the decades to come.

Alongside the new reservoir proposal, we're working on a wide range of options to protect future water supply. We're developing new sources of water, including water recycling, and we're making the best use of our existing water resources. We've been continuing the roll out of our smart meter programme which gives our customers greater control over their water use and bills, as well as helping us to detect and reduce leakage. We know that tackling leakage is a big issue for us, and we must and need to do better. We've committed to reducing leakage by more than half by 2050 and we will need to make progress. We also all need to play our part and use water more wisely.

The proposed new reservoir project isn't only about providing vital new water infrastructure, it's also about delivering an invaluable resource for local communities to use and creating a space for all to enjoy. By working together and focusing on the issues and concerns that are most important to you, I strongly believe we can create a reservoir that not only secures our future water supply needs but also provides fantastic opportunities for recreational and environmental benefits.

Best wishes,

Nevil Muncaster
Engineering and Asset
Management Director,
Thames Water



RESERVOIR PLANS

The proposed new reservoir would provide water to Thames Water customers in London and the Thames Valley as well as customers served by Affinity Water and Southern Water.

Our proposal to build a 150Mm³ reservoir in the Upper Thames catchment would play a crucial role in protecting local and regional public water supplies during periods of drought. When there's plenty of water during the winter months, the reservoir would be filled with water from the River Thames. When river levels drop or demand for water increases, water would be released from the reservoir back into the river for re-abstraction downstream.

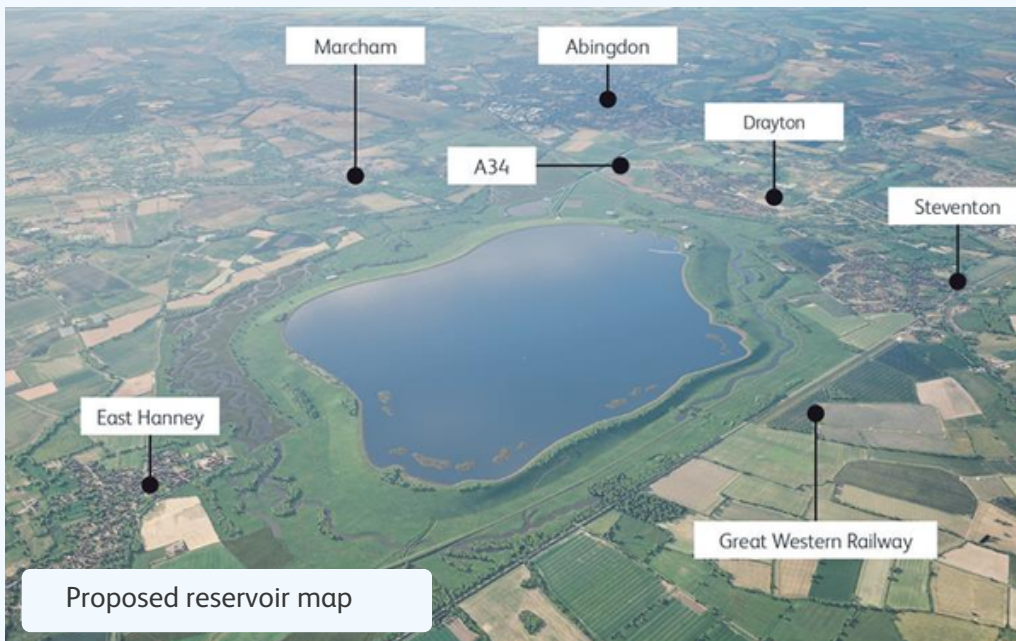
As the reservoir is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, we are preparing a Development Consent Order (DCO) application which we are planning to submit to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in 2026. This will seek a range of planning, land, and environmental consents required to construct and operate the reservoir. Your feedback will play a crucial role in the DCO application process, with opportunities for local authorities and community groups to participate at various stages, including pre-application, submission, examination, and post-approval.

An update on our revised draft Water Resources Management Plan (rdWRMP)

Our revised draft Water Resource Management Plan (rdWRMP) was submitted to the Secretary of State in August 2023. The plan sets out the needs case for the reservoir and follows extensive public consultation over the last two years. It is our statutory duty to prepare a plan every five years for sign off by the Secretary of State. As with all other water companies, we're in regular dialogue with Defra on our rdWRMP submission. We are currently liaising with regulators and doing further work on our plan to enable the Secretary of State to make a decision on the next steps. Throughout this process, we continue to engage with stakeholders, informing them of our plans and listening to their views.

Where is the proposed new reservoir site?

The proposed site is set within the area bounded by the A34 and the village of Steventon to the east, the Great Western Main Line (London to Bristol) to the south, the A338 and village of East Hanney to the west, and the River Ock to the north.



Why has the proposed site been chosen?

There aren't many suitable sites in the South East for a new large reservoir, as they need to be close enough to a large river and have suitable underlying geology.

The proposed site:

- is close to the River Thames
- has reasonably flat land
- has the right geology and ground conditions for a reservoir e.g. the site has an abundance of non-porous (Kimmeridge) clay to retain large volumes of water.

What will happen over the next 3 years?

2024 - 2025

Site environmental surveys including ground investigations and proposed clay compaction trial

Summer 2024

Community consultation events

Autumn 2024 - Spring 2025

Design development and refinement

Summer 2025

Statutory public consultation

2026 - 2027

Submission and examination of DCO (if approved, the reservoir would be operational by 2040)



What will the reservoir look like?



We've been looking at various elements of the reservoir design and preparing proposals that we'll seek views on in the coming months. We have a world class team in place to design the reservoir site, including technical specialists with international expertise in developing reservoirs which support social, environmental, and economic benefits for the local area.

Our existing reservoirs were designed over 30 years ago and our approach to design has evolved along with the technology. Our ambition is to create a natural space which will be sensitively landscaped to fit in with the surrounding countryside, with new habitats to encourage greater biodiversity. There will be new green spaces for people to explore and enjoy, with accessible leisure and recreational facilities including walking, nature trails, cycling, fishing, birdwatching, and a range of water sports for all.



How can you get involved?

Your perspective and concerns are important in shaping how we approach this project and its potential impact on the community. At the start of 2024, we hosted a series of workshops with representatives from Parish Councils, land and water-based recreation groups and environmental stakeholders. The purpose of these sessions was to help us shape our future commitments and to hear honest and open feedback on our emerging masterplan. We will provide a summary of our findings from these workshops later in 2024.



We're planning to launch a public consultation over Summer 2024 where there will be opportunities for you to shape the design of the reservoir site, meet the project team and share your views. We'll be providing more information about these upcoming events soon.



Understanding the local geology

A thorough understanding of local geology is important for ensuring the safety, sustainability, and success of the reservoir project. We've recently been on site and completed the first phase of our **ground investigation surveys** on Thames Water land along Hanney Road. These surveys help us to better understand local ground conditions. As part of this initial work, we've drilled boreholes to extract clay samples to measure its strength and properties.

Our next phase of ground investigation surveys began on the site in March 2024 as we expanded our work across the wider proposed reservoir area. This work will run through the course of 2024 and 2025. We're writing to residents to keep them updated on these works and you can find more details on our progress [here](#). We'll also provide a further update on our ground investigation work during the Summer 2024 consultation events.



We're also planning to undertake a 6 -12 month **clay compaction trial** starting in May 2024. Ahead of this work, we have carried out surveys for ecology and archaeology. This has led to some interesting discoveries including Roman ditches, pits, and even some Roman pottery.

Using land we own to the south of Hanney Road, we plan to create test embankments at a height of up to approximately 3 metres to see how the strength and water content of the local Kimmeridge clay changes and performs under pressure when it's compacted. We'll also be able to assess how easy the clay is to extract and move, and we will test what clay layer thickness performs best. The aim of the trial is to obtain high quality samples and measurements of the compacted clay material to help inform the design of the reservoir embankments, as well as supporting our Environmental Impact Assessment.

To proceed with the trial, we've submitted a planning application for our work to the Vale of White Horse District Council for their consideration. We'll notify local residents once we have approval to proceed with this trial.

Contact our Engagement Team



- If you have any questions or topics you would like us to cover in the future, please contact our Engagement Team on email: info.SESRO@thameswater.co.uk.
- For more information on our proposed plans or to register to join our future events, please visit www.thames-sro.co.uk/sesro or scan the QR code here.

