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From: michael.gove.mp@parliament.uk  
Sent: 2 August 2023 11:44  
To: Jonathan.Quin@surreyheath.gov.uk  
Subject: Re: Urgent Concern Regarding Ongoing Sewage Odour in Camberley (Case Ref: MG29088)

Dear Jonathan, Murray, Kel and Lisa,

Thank you very much for your letter yesterday regarding the odour emanating from Camberley Sewage Treatment works, and I do appreciate you getting in touch.

Constituents have contacted me directly about this issue too, and since June, I have been in contact with Thames Water on several occasions and I have been providing Facebook updates.

Following Thames Water's response to me on 10 July explaining that an odour control system had been set up and a deep clean would take place from 12 July, I visited the area on 14 July and met some residents to discuss the odour issues.

Later in the month, following reports of the odour worsening and Thames Water's report to me that it has been importing extra sewage sludge, I wrote again to Thames Water on 26 July to point out that this situation is unacceptable and that I was particularly disappointed that Thames Water took the decision to import extra sewage sludge, despite knowing that residents were already impacted by the pre-existing odour issues.

I asked Thames Water to explain to me why the extra sewage sludge was not sent to a different treatment works, in light of the situation in Camberley, and I pressed for more to be done to eliminate the odour as quickly as possible. I have copied the response below, and I wrote again yesterday to ask for an update on the action being taken to eliminate the odour.

Also on 26 July, I wrote to the Environment Agency to ask for assistance and to Surrey County Council to raise concerns that Thames Water is in breach of the permission SCC granted in 2011 for Thames Water to expand the sewage treatment works in Camberley.

I received a response from the Environment Agency on Monday, which I have copied below, and I am pleased that in light of the information I shared, EA officers will now inspect Camberley Sewage Treatment Works as soon as possible to investigate the situation further.

I have not yet received a response from Surrey County Council concerning the planning matters, but I did write again yesterday to provide an update

on the response from the EA.

Regarding your request for me to visit the area again with you, I am very happy to do so, and hope the information I have provided reassures you that I am well aware of the unacceptable impact this issue is having on residents and that I have been working to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

I look forward to discussing this in person with you, and my office will be in touch shortly to fix a date.

Thank you again.

With every good wish,

Michael

**Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Surrey Heath**  
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**From:** Nikki Hines  
**Sent:** 27 July 2023 18:44  
**To:** GOVE, Michael  
**Subject:** RE: Odour at Camberley STWs (Case Ref: MG28899)

Dear Michael

Thank you for your e-mail below. I do understand yours and your constituents' frustration and appreciate that the odour must be unpleasant, particularly during the warmer weather. I have asked our Operational team for an explanation as to why we had excess sludge and why it was imported to Camberley which I hope you will find helpful.

We took the decision to import sewage sludge very reluctantly and only did so to avoid serious impact on the environment at other sites if the sludge had

not been moved to Camberley for processing. Operational issues, at the sites we would normally use for the processing of this sewage sludge, meant that we had to find another location and Camberley Sewage Treatment Works (STW) was the only site with suitable storage capacity. Unfortunately we couldn't remove the liquid sludge back out of Camberley to pass forward through the normal processing routes as quickly as we intended, leading us to instigate the recovery process we now have in place. This involves a temporary manned centrifuge which simply separates the 'Cake' from the liquid. We then transport the cake offsite and recirculate the non-odorous liquid through the works.

Prior to your constituents' complaint earlier this summer, we were not aware that residents were being impacted by pre-existing odour issues at Camberley STW. We commissioned an independent odour investigation in 2019 (which we have shared with Surrey Heath BC and are happy to share with you), following a major upgrade to the works. The report states that prior to the upgrade, we only received odour complaints from 5 properties. The report also shows that the upgrade reduced the odour emissions by 25%.

The site has an odour management plan for its normal operations and has odour control equipment installed on the most odorous parts of the process. Before the current event, we have only received a small number of sporadic complaints – which is to be expected from a process which is inherently odorous and despite us applying best practicable means of control, will emit odours from time to time. However, during a recent meeting with Surrey Heath BC, one of the councillors told us that residents have reported odours to them on an annual basis. We are working with officers at Surrey Heath to understand the number and frequency of these reports and will take whatever subsequent action is required.

I hope this helps to explain the situation and I apologise for the inconvenience this has caused the community. If you have any further questions, please let me know.

Kind regards

Nikki

**From:** Hill, Emma

**Sent:** 31 July 2023 17:25

**To:** GOVE, Michael

**Subject:** FAO Philip Duffy (Case Ref: MG28899) - Our reference: THMCU18585\_CT21634

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your email of 26 July 2023 to our Chief Executive, Philip Duffy regarding the odour issues your constituents have been experiencing at Thames Water's Camberley sewage treatment works (STW). Philip has read your email and asked me to respond on his behalf. He will also receive a copy of this response.

I can confirm our regulatory responsibilities relating to this site.

Permitted water discharges from the Camberley STW are regulated by ourselves. These permits do not include conditions or objectives relating to the control of substances or emissions (odour). Therefore, odours arising from the STW are addressed under statutory nuisance and regulated by the Local Authority.

Sludge recovery on the site takes place under an Exemption, which allows the Operator to recover waste such as Sludge, at a wastewater treatment works. Although registered with us, exemptions are not routinely inspected as this work stream is considered an unfunded activity.

We have received five odour reports relating to Camberley STW since 21 June 2023. Our initial assessment was of these being attributed to odour from the STW, therefore regulated by the Local Authority. As per our protocol, the reports were forwarded to Surrey Heath Borough Council.

In light of the information you have shared with us from Thames Water, regarding the importing of additional Sludge giving rise to subsequent odours, my officers will inspect Camberley STW as soon as possible to investigate the situation further, assess compliance with permits and exemptions on site and address any next steps. We are liaising with Thames Water on their management of the odour and have informed them of our investigations.

Thames Water has applied for a new permit for the regulation of sewage treatment (anaerobic digestion) at the site. Once issued, we will have increased regulatory control with necessary permit conditions to effectively manage odour.

Kind regards,

Emma

Emma Hill  
Area Director – Thames  
Environment Agency  
[emma.hill@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:emma.hill@environment-agency.gov.uk)