

Apology for odour from Camberley sewage treatment works, Riverside Way during Summer 2023

We would like to apologise to everyone who was affected by abnormal levels of odour from our sewage treatment works on Riverside Way, last Summer. Whilst odour can never be completely eliminated from wastewater treatment, the smell from our site last summer was unacceptable. We know how much this affected the local community, and we apologise unreservedly for it.

Why was the odour so strong last Summer?

The excess odour did not arise from our normal day-to-day operations. In 2023 we experienced issues at several sites, which left us with no option but to store excess sewage sludge in disused emergency storage tanks at Camberley. As warmer weather arrived, the sewage sludge generated strong odours.

What should we have done differently?

We did not effectively communicate with the community about what was happening, either before or during the incident. This caused uncertainty about whether it could have been a permanent issue, and we recognise this may have made it difficult for the community to understand what was happening. In future, if we need to speak to residents about any issues, we will be more open and will do so much earlier.

Also, we did not deploy odour suppression equipment, before the odour became a problem and when we initially installed it, it did not operate continuously. We have now reviewed our processes and if ever odour suppression equipment is required at any of our sites, we will be quicker to have it up and running.

What are we doing to stop this happening again?

We have decommissioned the emergency sludge storage tanks on site, so that they cannot be used to store sewage sludge again. We have also looked at the resilience of our sludge treatment facilities across all our sites and have a plan to invest in them, so that backlogs of untreated sludge do not occur in the future. You can view our proposed investment plans here: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/about-us/regulation/our-five-year-plan/pr24-2023/bioresources.pdf>

Once again, we offer our sincere apologies to all those affected last Summer.

The Thames Water Team