

# Minutes of the Mogden Residents Liaison Meeting

Microsoft Teams (Virtual Session)

29/04/2021

## Present

Richard Aylard (TW)  
Barbara Ismay (TW)  
Dina Gillespie (TW)  
Samantha Duffy (TW)  
Jane Clarke (TW)  
Gayle Thomas (TW)  
Jonathan Coldwell (TW)  
Nigel Watts (TW)  
Simon (Local Resident)  
Keith knight (Resident)  
Barry Edwards (Resident)  
Andrea Cass (Resident)  
Gareth King (Resident)  
Katie Vassar (Resident)  
Jenni Heavingham (Resident)  
Salman Shaheen (Councillor)  
Mark Smith (Resident)  
Ruth Cadbury (MP)  
Katherine Dunne (Councillor)  
Margaret Thorburn(Resident)  
Murray Edwards (MRAG)

- Welcome and introductions – Richard Aylard

Presented by Richard Aylard (TW), started with a review of the minutes of the last meeting as well as the actions needed. Agreed with Gayle Thomas (TW) that the meeting minutes will be sent out to each attendee as well as be uploaded on the public domain

- Review of previous minutes and actions – Richard Aylard

Reviewed as per the last meeting notes, agreed that all the actions have been done and closed. Regarding number point number 9 – Dina Gillespie (TW) has been working with the London borough of Hounslow to obtain information for Murray Edwards (MRAG). She has been trying to obtain some dates to facilitate a joint visit with TW and MRAG but has not received any response yet. Murray Edwards (MRAG) advised this wasn't his understanding of the agreement and advised that he hasn't seen any dates. Gayle Thomas (TW) advised that the dates have been presented to Steve Taylor (MRAG) by the council.

Murray Edwards (MRAG) to liaise with Steve Taylor (MRAG) offline after meeting. Richard Aylard (TW) emphasis the takeaway point is that TW is happy to work with MRAG and the council to facilitate combined visits to site. Murray Edwards (MRAG) said he understood that the delay is never with Thames Water but rather a delay with the local council.

- Sewage discharge into DNR update – Richard Aylard

Richard Aylard (TW) reports finding as per PowerPoint presentation used in the meeting. Richard Aylard (TW) runs through what happened on the day of the flooding of the DNR – please refer to ‘Mogden Residents Liaison Meeting’ slide deck for incident summary. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that there was an estimate 10 -12 tons of grit which was cleared from the East Side Inlet works, the source of the grit is unknown, and the investigation is still ongoing.

Richard Aylard (TW) talks through the ‘Site Overview’ as per the presentation- this gives a detail overview of how the inlet / discharge processes work. Richard Aylard (TW) asks Dina Gillespie (TW Site Manager) to further explain how the blockage of grit happened. Dina Gillespie (TW) advised that because of the unprecedented amount of grit in the East Side of the site, the flow from the East Side had to be bypassed with storm tanks. She further goes on to explain that any overflow from the West side will also flow East which overwhelmed the site, the combination of the unprecedented amount of grit with the overflow from the west of the site. The levels in the sewers were twice as high as normal, the weakest point is at the discharge point.

Richard Aylard (TW) talks through the ‘Root Cause’ of the incident- please refer to slide deck. He advises that investigation is still ongoing although at this point, he feels that it will be very difficult to trace the root cause. Dina Gillespie (TW) said that she also believes it would be incredibly hard to trace the root cause.

Richard Aylard (TW) talks through some photographs of the grit which was cleared away from the site and explained again the course of events which lead to the flood in the DNR.

Richard Aylard (TW) talks through the ‘Incident Learning and Actions’. He talks about how to prevent this from happening again, putting in necessary reinforcements to make sure it doesn’t happen at any course of the sewer. Mark Smith (Resident) asks if there is any safety or precautionary measures for when surges do happen as it sounds as though TW don’t have any in place at the moment. Richard Aylard (TW) explains that the site works as a biological process- if there is too much to process then it will run across a weir and into storm tanks where it will be held until the incoming flow subsides and then it gets pumped back into the treatment works where it will be treated. He explains that the

sewage didn't reach the storm tanks and rather there was a blockage in the sewer. He explains that TW clear 75 000 blockages a year, so they are not uncommon, usually they have alarms which show where the blockage lies and when it is wet wipes or other solids, it must come out somewhere as there is a constant flow. Mark Smith (Resident) understood the explanation given by Richard but feels there is a level of responsibility by Thames Water to make sure it doesn't block or flood at any point of the sewer.

Anna King (Resident) asks if Richard Aylard (TW) was aware that TW Insurance won't pay any of the resident claims unless it can prove that TW acted negligently. She asks if TW knew the flood would go into the DNR then if the sluice gates were open earlier, their homes would not have flooded. She goes on to say she feels TW has acted negligently and asks Richard Aylard (TW) to explain more what happened in the 'communication error' onsite. She also asked about the monitoring of the levels in the culvert before it burst and when TW realized what had happened.

Richard Aylard (TW) advised that the miscommunication was regarding where the discharge was taking place because nobody had anticipated that discharge from Mogden would be going into the DNR – all of this will be in the detailed report. He also explains that at the point of the discharge there wouldn't have been any monitoring of the levels as it was going over the weir. Screens are designed to not get blocked but due to the unprecedented amount of grit, the screens were overwhelmed, and the sewer backed up.

Barry Edwards (Resident) commented that reports are always after the fact of something happening and asks what risk assessments were done for abnormal conditions and if any part of the network has been risk assessed for abnormal conditions- which would cause a situation like this elsewhere. Richard Aylard (TW) explains that it is possible for sewers to get blocked and that's why they do condition surveys and CCTV lines of the sewer as well as cleaning. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) explains that trunk sewers rarely every block and TW have a dedicated team to look after these sewers, particularly in Central London. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) went on to describe that blockages happen in the smaller diameters (6inch) sewers. He said that they are currently putting level monitors in place to monitor and avoid blockages in the smaller sewers. He goes onto further to explain that the risk of a blockage in a trunk sewer is very low because of the size and amount which flows through it.

Barry Edwards (Resident) asks if anyone has considered if the trunk sewers did block. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) advised that they do have 'critical' sewers and strategic sewers and they are subject to more risk assessments than those which are considered low risk sewers.

Keith Knight (Resident) says that historically when the works was built it was able to go into the river and alarm when this was happening, He asks why this technology isn't

being used now. Richard Aylard (TW) says that all the information will be reported as part of the investigation and if any records should have been referenced this will come up in the investigation. Richard Aylard (TW) also goes on to explain that any kind of electronic monitoring has only been implemented in the last few years. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) had advised that they are able to use mobile signal technology in recent years.

Ruth Cadbury (MP) asks what would have happened in the Thames had been on a high tide and her follow-on question was regarding silt accumulating in the rain. She asks what will be done by TW to avoid this happening again, especially with climate change and the possibility of this being a more regular occurrence. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that the only thing which wasn't on the risk register was the silt blocking the screen. He goes on to explain that there has never been a build up like this before, even in events of heavy rain previously. Richard Aylard (TW) advises that the report will be looking at ways to mitigate that. He has advised that a lot of the cross connections were done by local councils before TW took over and they were put in place to avoid flooding. Richard goes onto explain TW are trying to implement soft solutions especially when new developments are built. The problem with soft solutions is that we require a lot of space and Mogden doesn't have much spare room. Richard Aylard (TW) describes that a lot of work is being done to implement solutions which won't have effects on any other part of the system. He also mentions that the sluice gate and what could have been done with it will all be in the report and in detail.

Ruth Cadbury (MP) asks if this will now appear on the risk register now that it's happened. Richard Aylard (TW) explains they would have to understand all the impacts of it before adding it to the risk register.

Nigel Watts (TW) advised that it is indeed on the risk registered and in relation to sewage treatment works.

Jenny Heavingham (Resident) advises that she had been living locally for 35 years and had been flooded before, so she doesn't believe this event is 'unprecedented' as per the insurance company. She said that she will admit it's not flooded this badly before, but it has flooded many times before. She then goes on to speak about the silt and asks why all these things weren't included in the risk assessment. Jenny Heavingham (Resident) advised that TW should have known that this was going to happen and be prepared for it. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that the DNR may have flooded her property many times and that is not what is unprecedented, Mogden has never discharged into the DNR and caused a flood before which is unprecedented. He goes on to explain that residents need to claim from their home insurance. Richard Aylard (TW) goes on to reference legislation which means that Thames Water cannot be liable for things which end up in a public sewer.

Nigel Watts (TW) says it's worth recognizing the work which will be done, a full survey of the weak points of the sewer will be done and addressed going forward.

Anna King (Resident) says that she accepts TW were not prepared for a large blockage or the silt on the screens and that the legislation means TW is not always liable for public sewers. She goes on to ask at what point did TW know of the discharge into the DNR. She said that TW keeps referencing the report, but they have not had any access to it yet. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that a public version of the report will be made available and will answer all the questions regarding how and when TW was made aware of the discharge. The report will be up as soon as possible.

Mark Smith (Resident) asks about the risk assessment and advises that he doesn't think it was comprehensive enough. He thinks that the screens should have been included in the risk assessment. Dina Gillespie (TW) explains that it was the amount of silt as well as dealing with the flow those two things combined cause the flooding. She further explains that screens do block and there are grit removal procedures in place which was overwhelmed on the day of the flooding. Mark Smith (Resident) says that it feels negligent that a site like Mogden didn't have any precautions in place, he mentioned the wall which was originally built for odour being made of breeze blocks and obviously wouldn't withstand water. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that the wall was made for odour and not to withstand the pressure of water, it was never anticipated that the water level would be twice as high because it would usually flow over the weir into the storm tank.

- Duke of Northumberland River Clean

Jonathan Coldwell (TW) talks through and provides update on the river clean. Please refer to slide deck for information presented. He advised that all the cleanup activities were completed as well as 80% of general litter. Jonathan Coldwell advised it is an ongoing project and talked through some potential dates for surveys required. All findings and reports will be sent via Gayle Thomas (TW) to any parties which may want to see them. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) also talked through the macroinvertebrate survey- see slide deck for referenced information. Asked residents to capture any changes on the wildlife in the river, as this kind of survey relies heavily on local knowledge.

Keith Knight (Resident) says that he looks at the river every day and saw fish from a very large size down to small ones. He said since the incident he has not seen any fish so believes all the fish have gone from the river. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) advised that there is a biomass calculation which will be able to tell us the population of the fish, he advised it is a very complicated survey and goes further than just seeing fish.

Ruth Cadbury (MP) asks for a detailed cleaning information. She says it took 2 – 3 days for the cleanup operation and asks if this is normal. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) advised that

the cleanup should have been done quicker and normally is completed quicker. He said there were reports of a small amount of flooding in the park and teams were sent out to assess the situation and the cleanup teams were sent.

Jenny Heavingham (Resident) regarding fish in the river. She advised that there used to be big shoals of fish and now she cannot see any at all. She asks if the fish stock will be replenished. Jonathan Coldwell (TW) advised that therefore the assessments are being done and upon the results of the assessments the necessary steps will be taken. If it necessary, then it will be done in conjunction with the environment agency.

Anna King (Resident) advised she can share some data and observations with TW from the river before the flooding incident occurred.

- Customer communication and engagement

Gayle Thomas Presenting

- Mosquito update

Barbara Ismay Presenting

- Biodiversity update

Jane Clark Presenting

- AOB

Anna King (Resident) asks again when residents will be able to have a copy of the report for the public. Richard Aylard (TW) advises that it will be circulated as soon as possible. Anna King (Resident) asks why they can say they haven't been negligent if the report hasn't been concluded yet. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that TW worked together with insurers to rule out negligence very early on because they understood how important it is. The report relies on finer details which are harder to consolidate but most importantly doesn't affect the issue of negligence.

Barry Edwards (Resident) asks about odour issues and discharges into the Thames river which have been ongoing for years- he wants these topics to be revisited. He says that TW need to be able to anticipate abnormal events or we will never be able to solve larger issues. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that the discussions are already going on and this will be picked up at the next meeting (Mogden Technical Working Group).

Ruth Cadbury (MP) asks if residents would be able to access the technical report, Richard Aylard (TW) confirms it would of course be made public. Ruth Cadbury (MP) goes on to ask about more information regarding the pollution entering the river Thames and secondly, she wants to know when dilute solution will not be allowed to enter the river. Richard Aylard (TW) advised that the pollution Ruth had seen on her panorama show is caused by the Thames Tideway Tunnel and not at all from Mogden- everything gets screened which is released from Mogden.

Ruth Cadbury (MP) asks when Mogden will stop releasing diluted solution into the rivers and asks for a time scale, Richard Aylard (TW) advised that to get to the point of Mogden not releasing anything into the river is approx. 20 years away because of the volumes coming into Mogden. This will require a combination of new developments being built properly with suds and support from the local council, all the way up to parliament to enforce laws to stop surface water from getting in. It is going to take a long time because London is so built up and tarmacked, surface water runs a lot faster than other places and treatment works.

Murray Edwards (MRAG) regarding the panorama- asks if they were wrong in saying that Thames Water was putting raw sewage into the river. Second question was regarding why Mogden would be releasing into the river even when the site is not overwhelmed. Richard Aylard (TW) responded by saying that technically once the sewage had been through screens it has gone through the first step of treatment but of course panorama used language which was easier to understand for the public and so called it raw sewage. Regarding the second question Richard Aylard (TW) advised that from time to time the site will struggle to do the end filtration process as many other sites do.

### ***END OF MEETING MINUTES***

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 29 July 2021 (Remotely via Microsoft Teams)