



From Lord Berkeley
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To all MPs representing Thames Water customers
House of Commons

23rd April 2014

Dear colleagues,

Thames Water customers face £70-80 per year extra on their water bills to pay for this “vanity” Tideway Tunnel – but there is now an alternative!

I write to you since some, or all, of your constituents are Thames Water’s 8m customers, stretching from David Cameron’s constituency at Witney through Swindon, Newbury and Reading to Greater London, and such customers are represented by some 120 MPs. These customers will all have to pay through their sewage bills for the proposed £4 billion, or more, Thames Tideway Tunnel (TTT). Furthermore, London’s residents may not welcome perhaps 500 trucks a day moving materials to and from the sites along the Thames every day for 5-7 years during construction.

Ministers insist it is the only way to clean up the tidal Thames, but they are wrong; there are many other ways which, taken together, will clean it up more quickly, more cheaply and with less disruption to London’s life than a tunnel.

The key is to stop the storm water entering the sewage system; that way, one only has to treat sewage rather than rain water diluted with a little sewage, and there is enough capacity in the sewage system to deal with the sewage. It is the rain that is the problem!

8-10 years after the decision to proceed with the TTT was taken, the technology of the alternatives is now here and proven to achieve this simple breakthrough. A combination of measures, ranging from foul/storm sewer separation, real-time control of the sewer network, detention tanks, a series of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs) schemes, and infiltration of storm water into underlying gravel, can do it.

The problem is less serious than Thames Water (TW) makes out; they insist on using flawed evidence of dry-weather sewage flows; they forget to say that the analysis of the health benefit, as would be done by NICE, shows it is only worth spending £1.5m; and the Government justifies the need for the Tunnel by gold-plating the European Commission’s spill limits. They even say that the TTT is necessary to stop fish dying, when only one fish death as a result of spills from the Combined Sewer Outfalls (CSOs) to be connected to the Tunnel has been recorded in the last ten years.

So Ministers seem happy to approve, in this election year, massive decades-long hikes in 8 million TW customers’ water bills. On top of that, they have also provided taxpayer-funded guarantees in case TW and its shareholders, managed by Macquarie Bank of Australia, find that they cannot afford to build the Tunnel. This is necessary mainly because OFWAT, the

water regulator, has allowed TW to be bled dry of money to satisfy the voracious financial appetite of its shareholders, rather than allowing the company to retain assets to invest in a long-known requirement to upgrade London's sewerage network.

This Government says it believes in "value for money", but the TTT costing £4.1 bn today has an economic benefit of just £180m, according to Prof Chris Binnie, not the £3-5bn forecast 5-7 years ago!. Further, the Government in its analysis assumed that from 2006 to 2011 incomes would rise by 10.6%, whereas they actually fell and have fallen further since. Hence, in today's terms, the cost of the Tunnel to the consumer will have even bigger impact than originally thought.

Ministers now accept that the value of two of the three benefits of the Tunnel concept, health and fish, are grossly exaggerated in their analysis. Further, Ministers have only looked at single alternative solutions and found them too expensive. Not surprising!! They should have looked at a combination of solutions using the most economical of the many alternatives where appropriate. However, although required of them by the EU Water Framework Directive, they now refuse to look into how a combination of measures could provide a much cheaper solution, and save their taxpayers significant money.

So here is a package of measures, in the shape of 'Thames Tideway Tunnel - Alternatives to the Tunnel : A Strategic Plan,' by Prof Binnie and others..

The alternatives are clearly set out, starting with the need for an independent study using up to date figures and statistics, without any of the massaging and misinformation that DEFRA and Thames Water have done over the years to support its decision to go for the expensive TTT.

Ministers need courage to change their mind but, in an election year with such excessive cost hikes forecast on customers' water bills, surely a review leading to a change of direction, will be seen as a vote winner? I do therefore urge you to press ministers to undertake such an independent study before committing to the TTT.

I am of course happy to brief you further at any time, and apologise for not addressing this letter personally.

Yours, Tony

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Berkeley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Berkeley

Attached - Thames Tideway Tunnel - Alternatives to the Tunnel : A Strategic Plan,' by Prof Binnie.