



**Charlotte Dale**  
LB of Lewisham Scrutiny Manager  
LB of Lewisham

**Wholesale Water**

Our ref Strategic Trunk Mains Review  
Name Timothy McMahon  
Phone 0800 0093965  
E-Mail Customer.Feedback@thameswater.co.uk

12 October 2017

Dear Charlotte,

**Lewisham Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Thank you for your email of the 19 July setting out the trunk main burst recommendations from the London Borough of Lewisham's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The recommendations submitted by the Council have assisted us in finalising our Trunk Mains Strategic Review and we are pleased to provide a detailed response to the Committee's recommendations.

We recognise how disruptive and upsetting the 2016 trunk main bursts were for our customers. They had a significant impact both at the time, and since, particularly for people whose homes and businesses were flooded.

We continue to work hard to provide the support people need to bring their lives and businesses back to normal as quickly as possible.

Our Trunk Mains Strategic Review, which builds on the recommendations of the preceding independent 'Forensic Review' led by Paul Cuttill OBE, was published on the 2 October. Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the Strategic Review. The Strategic Review makes 15 commitments, across five key areas:

- our operating model;
- monitoring;
- asset information;
- risk management and
- event response.

We will deliver the 15 commitments from our Strategic Review through an implementation phase over the next 18 months.

Many of the recommendations are fulfilled by our commitments in the Strategic Review or through our business as usual processes.

Set out below we respond to each of the Committee's recommendations:

- 1) That Thames Water improve their emergency response arrangements including instituting a dedicated emergency response line for the reporting of leaks and investigating the possibility, with the Metropolitan Police Service, of receiving a 'blue light' service from the Police should a major incident be declared.**

Theme 5 of the Trunk Mains Strategic Review provides details of our proposed improvements to event responses. This includes mobilising a dedicated trunk mains event response capability; creating a trunk mains event response improvement programme; and ensuring we provide appropriate customer care.

I can confirm we have a dedicated emergency response line for the reporting of leaks for priority services, including the Police, Fire Brigade and Local Authorities. This number connects direct to our control room and works 24 hours a day.

We work closely with key resilience stakeholder groups, for example through the London Resilience Forum, to discuss and determine best practice measures we can deploy in emergency response events.

The possibility of receiving a 'blue light' service from the Police, should a major incident be declared, is one that is considered on a case by case basis at the time of the event or incident. The ability to provide a 'blue light' service will depend on the circumstances of the incident, including the location of our technical teams and the Police. We continue to work closely with the Police and other emergency services to look at opportunities to improve our speed of response.

- 2) That Thames Water improve and join up their monitoring system for detecting the likelihood of bursts on major trunk mains.**

We can confirm this forms part of our Trunk Main Strategic Review. Theme 2 of the Trunk Mains Strategic Review sets out our commitments under monitoring. Our commitments include, formalising our trunk mains ongoing policy; providing updated and repeatable control room training; developing our data utilisation capabilities; and revitalising our monitoring unit installation process.

For example, through our commitment to revitalise our monitoring installation process, we will increase the speed and reduce the complexity of our process for installing and commissioning Synchronix and Hydroguard monitoring units.

We would be happy to keep you updated on our work to improve our monitoring system.

- 3) That Thames Water, when submitting their case to OFWAT for their future 5 year investment plans, prioritise the phased improvement of ageing Victorian pipe replacement on major trunk mains. This should be completed within a specified period to be determined and published by Thames Water, but 15 years is proposed, given the problems that major bursts on these roads cause to businesses and residents.**

In the long term our strategy is to replace the trunk mains network, starting with those parts where the risk of a failure is greatest. Better information about our network and better risk models will help improve the detailed planning required. Our Business Plan for the period from 2020 to 2025 will be released for consultation in early 2018 and will include options for a comprehensive long term programme of replacement. We would be happy to share and seek feedback on our draft plans with the Council in early 2018.

**4) That Thames Water develop and publish performance and attendance standards, both in relation to major and minor pipe bursts.**

Commitment 5.2 of our Trunk Mains Strategic Review confirms that we will instigate a programme of works to improve our event response capabilities. We will set appropriate Service Level Agreements aligned to customers and stakeholder needs to improve our performance, and refine our event response processes to bring them closer into line with those of the Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingency Act. As part of this work we will consider the most appropriate methods to share our performance.

It may also be helpful to explain that the Discover Water website (<https://discoverwater.co.uk/loss-of-supply>) provides an overview of how all the water companies in England and Wales compare in relation to the number of burst pipes.

**5) That a clear and comprehensive compensation policy be developed by Thames Water, covering clean up/insurance/compensation and goodwill payments. This should be clearly communicated to customers and available on the company website. Compensation for inconvenience should be formally recognised and included in the policy.**

We have drafted an information booklet which lays out what a claimants' options are following flooding and explains the claims process. This booklet has been produced in cooperation with the Consumer Council for Water, an independent body that represents water and sewerage consumers in England and Wales. The organisation provides impartial advice and advocacy for consumers.

We have recently shared this draft booklet with customers' affected by flooding events and they have asked for further refinement to our policies, particularly in relation to clarity on insurance and goodwill payments. We have commitment to address these concerns and we will present a final version of the booklet in the near future.

**6) That the Mayor, GLA and London Boroughs support the campaign of the Fire Brigade Union to become the statutory Emergency Response Service for flooding, as recommended by the Pitt Review in 2008, in view of the recent major bursts resulting in severe flooding and given the fact that such occurrences are more likely in the future due to the ageing Victorian trunk mains network across London.**

This recommendation is noted:

**7) That the London Plan should include provision, when planning permission for basements is being requested, to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out prior to approval to ensure the risk to life of flooding is minimised.**

This is duly noted. It may be helpful to explain that we work closely with the Mayor of London's planning team on the drafting of strategic planning policies for London, including on water, wastewater infrastructure and flooding. We would be happy to work with officers on a flood risk assessment policy, should the Mayor's planning team consider one appropriate.

### **Next steps**

Significant improvement steps have already been taken on our journey to improve our trunk main water network. We have already committed an additional £97m investment into our trunk main network over and above what was in our business plan for 2015 to 2020 and we have set aside additional money to support the trunk mains implementation phase, which we will deliver over the next 18 months.

In Lee High Road in Lewisham we recently trialed a new technology with the aim to help us detect defects on our water pipes and reduce the likelihood future bursts. This innovative trial, a first in the UK, involves lowering a rocket-shaped scanning device through a specially designed hatch built onto the pipe. Following this work we are planning to install new monitors and valves to the trunk main in 2018. This will help to reduce the risk of future bursts in this location.

We will continue to share our progress on the Trunk Mains review with our stakeholders and work with our partners, including the London Boroughs, to deliver on the investment with minimal disruption, engaging with our customers throughout.

I trust you find the above update helpful. Should you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact my colleague Mark Mathews on 07747 647 862 or via email at [mark.mathews@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:mark.mathews@thameswater.co.uk).

Yours sincerely



Tim McMahon

**Head of Water Networks, Wholesale Water**