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**Our Ref: THMCU22741**  
**Your Ref:**  
**Date: 6 August 2024**

Dear Adam,

Thank you for your email dated 12 July 2024 addressed to our Chief Executive, including copies of the correspondence sent to me regarding the unauthorised moorings in Elmbridge. On receipt of your email, Philip requested an immediate meeting with me to discuss the issues you raised. Philip has asked me to respond on his behalf and will see a copy of this letter.

I am sorry for our failure to respond to your letters in a timely fashion. It appears email correspondence between myself and Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) has been going into quarantine and letters sent to the Reading Office were delayed in arriving at Wallingford Area Office. Therefore, the correspondence had been missed. I understand the delay in our response is frustrating and not the service you expect from us, and I apologise profusely. To prevent this from happening again please use this email address [waterwaysthames@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:waterwaysthames@environment-agency.gov.uk)

I understand the impact of these issues on the community, and the importance of working with you and partners to identify solutions. I am working with my team to scope out a joint operation with you to tackle the issue of unauthorised moorings and commit to the removal of an agreed number of boats. I will ensure the team have the necessary resources to undertake such an operation. I also understand your frustration about the cancelled joint patrol on 12 June, when resources prevented us from proceeding on that planned date. I have asked the team to confirm new dates for joint patrols for the most problematic areas as part of a wider targeted operation.

By way of explanation, the recent wet winter and increased river levels have posed significant challenges for our local staff with warnings in place for an unprecedented six months which resulted in a shift in focus to incident response and a subsequent pause in river enforcement. After a period of recovery, I am happy to report that our local officers have recommenced the agreed regular Elmbridge patrols, compliance checks and required enforcement actions.

In response to the specific concerns raised in your letter:

- **Unauthorised Moorings at Hurst Park:** The team apologise for the delay in addressing the unauthorised moorings at Hurst Park. They are now prioritising the enforcement actions at Hurst Park and are committed to resolving this as soon as possible.

- **Responsibility for Removing Partially Sunken Boats at Cigarette Island:** We are finalising the legal review to clarify EBC's responsibilities. I have asked the team to ensure you receive a comprehensive response by 30 August at the latest.
- **Targets for Removing Boats in Elmbridge:** Our delivery targets were impacted by the recent incident and resource reallocation, but we remain dedicated to addressing unauthorised boats and the proposed joint operation would be an important mechanism for helping achieve this. I understand that MRAG have proposed some targets for year-end, and I have asked for advice on whether these are appropriate and realistic and will include a response in our update to you on the 30 August:
  1. A minimum 10% reduction on EA owned and unregistered land
  2. All boats to be registered with the EA and all sunken and abandoned boats to be removed
  3. 20% more riverbank in Elmbridge to be available for short term moorings.
- **Twice-Weekly Patrols:** We have resumed our patrols, focusing on Hurst Park, Desborough Cut and Cigarette Island, and will continue to update the Elmbridge community through our agreed newsletter.
- **Information on EA's Water Testing:** We carry out a wide variety of water quality testing on water bodies including;
  - Sampling to assess their condition under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive
  - Sampling to assess compliance with the Bathing Water Directive
  - Compliance monitoring from discharge points, which is supplemented by operator self-monitoring from discharge points.
  - Ad hoc sampling in response to pollution incidents.

Bacterial monitoring is only carried out at Designated Bathing Waters, where we have obligations to do so. None of the River Thames in Elmbridge is a designated bathing water, and so we do not monitor for bacteria in this area. Any concerns about water quality on the River Thames should be reported to our Incident Communication Service on 0800 807060.

- **Action Plan for River Enforcement:** We are developing a detailed action plan for the Elmbridge area. This plan prioritises high-need areas with clear steps for enforcement, which we will share with Elmbridge shortly. This plan complements our published Compliance and Enforcement Plan for the non-tidal River Thames, which is published here [Non-Tidal River Thames Regulation and Enforcement Plan 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/Non-Tidal_River_Thames_Regulation_and_Enforcement_Plan_1_April_2024_to_31_March_2025.pdf)

Finally, I want to assure you that the team are committed to restoring trust and if helpful I would be happy to meet with you to discuss these matters further. Please suggest some dates that work for you, and my office will coordinate accordingly.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Yours sincerely

Anna

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