

Rt Hon Emma Reynolds
Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

8th January 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

Statutory Consultation: South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO)

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the statutory consultation on the [South East Strategic Reservoir Option \(SESRO\)](#).

TVCC is the only accredited Chamber of Commerce for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Swindon and one of the largest of the 51 Accredited Chambers of Commerce in the British Chambers of Commerce network. TVCC has provided services and support to the Thames Valley business community as an a-political, not for profit organisation, for over 75 years.

We serve over 4000 active international trade customers and members, one of the largest representations of major multinational employers and international trading SMEs in the British Chamber of Commerce network.

As set out in our [Business Manifesto 2026](#), delivering modern, resilient infrastructure networks is a core priority for the Thames Valley business community. This includes transport, energy, digital connectivity and essential utilities such as water. We are focused on ensuring that statutory bodies and infrastructure providers invest in and deliver efficient, future-proofed networks at pace. Reliable water supply underpins economic stability, business continuity, housing delivery and sustainable regional growth.

The South East is, we understand, already one of the most water-stressed regions in England, and climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of drought conditions. We recognise forecasts indicating that, without further intervention, the region will require significantly increased water capacity by 2050 and beyond. In this context, we support the principle of a strategic reservoir as part of a wider, integrated approach to water resilience for the Thames Valley, London and the South East.

From a business perspective, the proposed reservoir offers several potential benefits, including securing a reliable water supply for homes, businesses and critical services; enabling sustainable economic development, including the delivery of new homes, schools and employment space; supporting regional growth and competitiveness over the long term; and creating substantial opportunities for employment, skills development and local supply chains during construction and beyond.

We recognise the positive work undertaken to date to incorporate environmental enhancements into the project and note the clear potential for longer-term legacy benefits. These include recreational opportunities, environmental improvements and biodiversity gains, which, if delivered sensitively and collaboratively, could contribute positively to placemaking and tourism.

Our support is offered on the basis that this positive approach continues as the project develops through the planning process. It is important that environmental impacts are robustly assessed, minimised and mitigated, with genuine enhancements to biodiversity where possible; that local communities and businesses continue to be meaningfully engaged throughout the design, construction and operational phases; that the reservoir is delivered as part of a genuinely integrated water management strategy, alongside continued investment in leakage reduction, water efficiency and demand management; and that clear opportunities are created for local businesses to participate in supply chains, skills programmes and employment pathways.

We welcome Thames Water's commitment to collaboration and transparency and encourage ongoing dialogue with the business community as the project progresses.

TVCC looks forward to continuing to engage constructively with Thames Water and other stakeholders to help ensure that the SESRO project, if taken forward, delivers long-term resilience and shared prosperity for the region.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Britton

Chief Executive

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group