

# SEEMA MALHOTRA MP



House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

Environment Agency  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF  
[Sent via email]

15<sup>th</sup> March 2024

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Application for secondary effluent discharge scheme at the River Crane - EPR/UB3352GA/A001**

I write to register my opposition to the above application for an environmental permit under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 from the London Borough of Hillingdon.

River Crane is at the heart of my constituency. It represents the boundary between Hillingdon and Hounslow on the western edge of my constituency, while between Hanworth in my constituency and Whitton it also creates a boundary between Hounslow and Richmond.

For background, following major pollution incidents in 2011 and 2013, charities, community groups, executive agencies and private companies have come together to improve the River Crane and its surrounding environment. In particular, I would like to commend the work of Crane Valley Partnership, Friends of the River Crane Environment, Cranford Action Group, the Friends of Hatton Fields and Heston Action Group.

The River Crane now represents **one of the few river catchments in the UK with no licensed sewage discharges**. The proposed secondary effluent discharge scheme would be a major step backwards for biodiversity and community usage.

## **Biodiversity**

As a result of action taken by River Crane stakeholders, the Crane Valley has flourished and represents an important environment for West London flora and fauna. The River Crane supports a wide range of fish species, including bullhead *Cottus gobio*. Bullhead are normally associated with good quality river environments and are a protected Annex 2 species under the Habitats Directive.<sup>1</sup> The river and its wider environment also supports eels, kingfishers, water voles, tawny owls, adders, seven species of bats as well as important wildflowers and aquatic plants.<sup>2</sup>

I am concerned that sewage discharge is likely to cause significant pollution to the river and its environment. Experts say it is likely to promote the growth of algae which will adversely disrupt the River Crane's ecosystem. The supporting information does not assure me that the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wildtrout.org/assets/reports/Crane%20PP.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://u.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=XZWglAXZCCKEP14ph4hwGgmp6DStqzGAeyK7> and <https://e-voice.org.uk/tca/assets/documents/take-a-look-at-our-survey-of-t>

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Member of Parliament for Feltham and Heston

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proposal will maintain the level of water quality that has been achieved in the River Crane, as well as poor levels of risk assessment in case of failure of the sewerage system. I would also be grateful if you could provide further information on what other options have been considered, including use of a septic tank as proposed by Friends of the River Crane Environment and connecting the café to a foul sewer and why this course of action has been prioritised over the others.

## **Community use and engagement**

The proposed discharge goes against the work that has been put in by the groups that make up the Crane Valley Partnership to clean up the environment, as well as several strategies put in place, including Hounslow's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the Smarter Water Catchment Plan authored by Thames Water and the Crane Valley Partnership.

The work put in, especially by community groups, represents the importance of waterways and associated green spaces to communities in my constituency. Many communities in my constituency are ancient villages dating to the Domesday Book with many residents having lived there for generations. Development would change the sense and aesthetic of Bedfont as a village.

Crane River corridors act as strongly-performing Green Belt for residents. These open spaces are vital for activity, including successful "Green Gym" initiatives, as well as for relaxation, exercise, play, access to nature, clean air, reduced heatwave effects, community activities and a host of other quality of life benefits, particularly in the built-up, industrial area surrounding Heathrow Airport.

I am concerned that the degradation of the river, its environment, its flora and its fauna that this scheme would represent would discourage families with their children from making use of the river and its environment at precisely the time when we are working hard to increase awareness of the river and its place in community life. Hounslow Council has taken the proactive choice to codesign strategies with Friends groups and other community groups, and it is disappointing that the London Borough of Hillingdon has not consulted with the London Borough of Hounslow or its communities.

I am further concerned that this scheme may act as a precedent for further discharges throughout the river catchment.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "S. Malhotra".

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**Member of Parliament for Feltham and Heston**

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