

# Email to Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive, The Environment Agency

16 July 2021

Dear Sir James

We previously wrote to you in July and August 2020 to seek your intervention to resolve the long standing issue of illegally moored boats along the Thames in Elmbridge (the so called “slumboats”) which has been an ongoing issue for a number of years. This has been generating a large number of emails and complaints from our local residents and elected Councillors and an increasing amount of local frustration at a perceived lack of action in the face of increasing numbers of owners acting with impunity.

I am writing to you again with the full agreement of the Leader of the Council, Cllr Chris Sadler, to express our exasperation that, despite emphatic assurances from your staff, the EA seems to have gone back on all of those and allocated an even lower priority to these matters.

The previous news that the EA had appointed District Enforcement had been met with some optimism and a promise that work would be starting soon to enforce along the length of the Thames. The former Council Leader and Portfolio Holder met with your officers on site and were encouraged by the assurances and the anticipated progress. Your officers further attended a meeting of our Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 February 2021 to update them with the appointment of District Enforcement to manage the moorings on behalf of the EA. The EA officers updated our committee that:

**“enforcement action would be taken against the moorings along the entire length of the river and should there be incidents of overstaying, District Enforcement would be increasing the cost for the mooring rather than fining the individuals. In respect of unauthorised moorings, this was a focus for his team and although there were current restrictions, the team had been out on the river and on foot patrols to establish an intelligence picture of what was happening on the river at this time. This was not only in respect of unauthorised moorings but sunken and abandoned boats and his team was ready to take action as and when they were permitted to do so.”**

In the past few weeks we have been sent a copy of the attached transcript of a meeting between the Reclaim Our Riverbank (ROR) and your officers, which ROR claims to have been agreed with your officers. This has been widely circulated in the local community and among our Councillors and conflicts with what they have previously been promised. As you might imagine this has generated a good deal of concern, further frustration and even greater damage to the EA’s reputation. Furthermore it suggests that residents should now be contacting the council and Police to resolve. We have sought to clarify this with your officers and have asked for a position statement from the EA that we can publish but this has not been

forthcoming. I do not think this is a professional way for public authorities to behave and I am now asking for an urgent meeting with you to set the record straight.

We have been working closely with the EA to find a common solution to the problems above but it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide our Members with any reassurance when we are met with prevarication, assurances that do not appear to be real and, ultimately, a withdrawal of engagement.

I would be grateful if you would urgently issue a public statement to clarify the EAs position on unauthorised moorings along this part of the Thames and if you can offer some dates to meet I will flex my diary to resolve this issue with you once and for all.

Yours sincerely

Robert Moran  
Chief Executive  
Elmbridge Borough Council