



Freddie van Mierlo MP
Member of Parliament for Henley and Thame
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

17th April 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to request your support for the **Water Industry Act 1991 (Amendment) (Payment of Fines) Bill** that was introduced into Parliament today.

The Bill's purpose is **'to omit from the Water Industry Act 1991 provision enabling water companies to make an application for a change to the date by which a penalty or portion of a penalty must be paid or to appeal to the High Court in respect of such a date; and for connected purposes.'**

Section 22A and 22E(1)(c) of the Water Industry Act 1991, introduced under the Blair Government in the Water Act 2003, were originally intended to give water companies the right to appeal and offer flexibility in the case of an unreasonable penalty. However, it is evident organisations are using the appeals process to subvert fines, and these sections should have faced greater scrutiny by the government of the day.

Last year, Thames Water were fined £122.7M by Ofwat following two investigations which revealed breaches of its rules on wastewater operations and dividend payments. This was the largest penalty Ofwat has ever issued.

The legislation mentioned above currently allows water companies to apply to Ofwat to request an enforcement plan if a penalty is received. The fine was due to be paid in full by August 2025, but Ofwat granted a delayed payment plan to Thames Water with a backstop date of 31st March 2030.

More recently, Thames Water has been in conversation with Ofwat about a proposal that would waive fines going forward for the next four years if the company commit to investing into fixing issues that would usually incur penalties.

This is unacceptable and it cannot go on; legislation lets water companies off the hook and Ofwat is doing nothing to stop it. This is a failure to the British public, the Government promised a new, capable regulator yet has failed to deliver it. Please can you outline when we can expect to see the new regulator in place?

Thames Water continues to harm communities and individuals, polluting waterways and further increasing bills. Consumers are forced to pay for years of mismanagement, whilst Thames Water has negotiated away yet another fine. Without enforceable consequences for water companies' actions, nothing will change.

I hope you will consider supporting the Bill and announce the inclusion of similar legislation in the King's Speech. We would be very happy to work with you to take this forward as government legislation. As elective representatives, we must close loopholes in legislation that are currently abused.

Yours sincerely,

Freddie van Mierlo MP
Member of Parliament for Henley and Thame



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