

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
REPORT TITLE Thames Water Update Report	
REPORT OF James Abbott – Local Engagement Manager (Thames Water)	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Culture and Environment Committee	DATE 23 February 2026
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report provides Camden Council with an update on recent water main incidents, ongoing repairs, planned investment and customer support across the borough. It has been brought to the Committee due to the scale and visibility of recent incidents, particularly in Kentish Town and Plender Street, and the need to outline Thames Water’s response, future plans and support for residents.</p> <p>Contact:</p> <p><i>James Abbott</i></p> <p><i>Thames Water Local Engagement</i></p> <p><i>Manager</i></p> <p>James.abbott@thameswater.co.uk</p> <p><i>07747 648 403</i></p>	
RECOMMENDATIONS: The Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.	

Signed: James Abbott

Date: 12/02/26

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Camden Council's Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee with an update on Thames Water's performance and activity within the borough. It sets out details of recent incidents, including burst water mains and flooding, outlines the response and support provided to affected residents and community facilities, and summarises ongoing and planned investment in water infrastructure across Camden.

The report also explains Thames Water's approach to leakage reduction, mains replacement, highway reinstatement, flood risk management and customer support, including billing and affordability measures for vulnerable households. It is intended to support the Committee's scrutiny role by providing transparency on recent events, future works and how impacts on residents are being managed and mitigated.

2. Incident Updates

Kentish Town, NW5

- On 31 October 2025, a large water pipe burst outside Kentish Town Underground Station on Leighton Road.
- The burst caused significant flooding on surrounding streets, including Peckwater Street and Lady Margaret Road.
- As a safety precaution, Kentish Town Underground Station was temporarily closed, then reopened once the area was made safe.
- Around 4,300 homes and businesses initially experienced low water pressure or no water, with a further 6,200 properties temporarily affected while the pipe was safely shut off for repair.
- 14 homes and 8 businesses were internally flooded, including basements, a medical centre and a listed pub.
- Seven households needed temporary accommodation, and extra support was provided to vulnerable residents.
- Thames Water declared a major incident and deployed engineers, customer support teams, welfare units and insurance loss adjusters to the site.
- The damaged pipe was safely shut off the same morning, replaced on 2 November, and returned to service on 5 November after water quality checks.

- Roads and pavements were repaired in partnership with Camden Council, and the area was largely restored by 10 November.
- A customer support hub operated on site for over a week, providing face-to-face updates, help with claims and goodwill payments.
- Investigations show this was a one-off failure, with no previous bursts on this pipe and no wider issues found in nearby pipes.
- The incident is now in the aftercare and insurance phase, with named case managers supporting affected customers.

Plender Street, NW1

- In January 2026, a smaller water pipe burst on Plender Street (NW1).
- Flooding affected St Pancras Community Centre, nearby flats and a local launderette.
- Engineers reduced water pressure quickly, then shut the pipe to carry out an urgent repair.
- Bottled water was provided, and water supply was restored the same day.
- Road repairs were completed between 12–18 January, with permanent reinstatement recorded.
- Due to flooding inside the Community Centre, insurance loss adjusters and restoration contractors were appointed to manage drying and repairs.
- Current plans allow for 6–8 weeks of drying and strip-out, followed by around 6 weeks of reinstatement, subject to Camden Council approval.
- An alternative repair method is being explored to reduce overall timescales and disruption.
- Several community services (including a nursery, exercise classes and prayer space) have had to relocate temporarily, with alternative venues arranged.
- Key local dates, including polling station use in May 2026, are being factored into the repair programme.
- The insurance claim remains active, and Thames Water is considering additional support where appropriate.

3. Mains Replacement Overview

The water industry operates in five-year regulatory cycles known as Asset Management Periods (AMPs). During each AMP, Ofwat determines the amount of funding that water companies may collect from customer bills, along with expectations for how this funding should be invested.

Across AMP8, which runs from 2025 to 2030, we will significantly increase our mains replacement activities. The programme will expand from 220km completed during AMP7 to 550km in AMP8.

This upward trajectory continues into AMP9, where the company anticipates replacing approximately 1,000km of mains. This is subject to discussions between Ofwat and our creditors.

Regional Split and Delivery Approach

The 550km is split across three regions:

- 264 km in Greater London
- 61 km in Central London (includes Camden)
- 225 km in Thames Valley.

In previous AMPs, we have completed full District Metered Areas (DMAs), which are sections of the network used to monitor usage and leakage.

However, the strategy has now shifted toward delivering work in smaller clusters, focusing specifically on pipes with the highest rates of bursts and leakage.

Across the network, more than 1,700 km of mains have been identified as high risk and therefore prioritised for replacement, with approximately 30 kms within Camden.

This approach means Thames Water and our contractors can work with Camden's officers to plan projects in a manner that minimises local disruption.

We have also refined our delivery model so contractors are aligned directly with individual local authorities rather than DMA boundaries. This change is intended to strengthen working relationships and reduce the number of different companies operating simultaneously within the same borough. Clancy has been appointed as the primary contractor for Camden. Several meetings between officers, Thames Water and Clancy have already been held to plan for the next works.

Because the works in Hampstead and parts of Haringey began at the start of the current investment period, they will continue to be delivered by Browne, another contractor, and are expected to continue for much of AMP8.

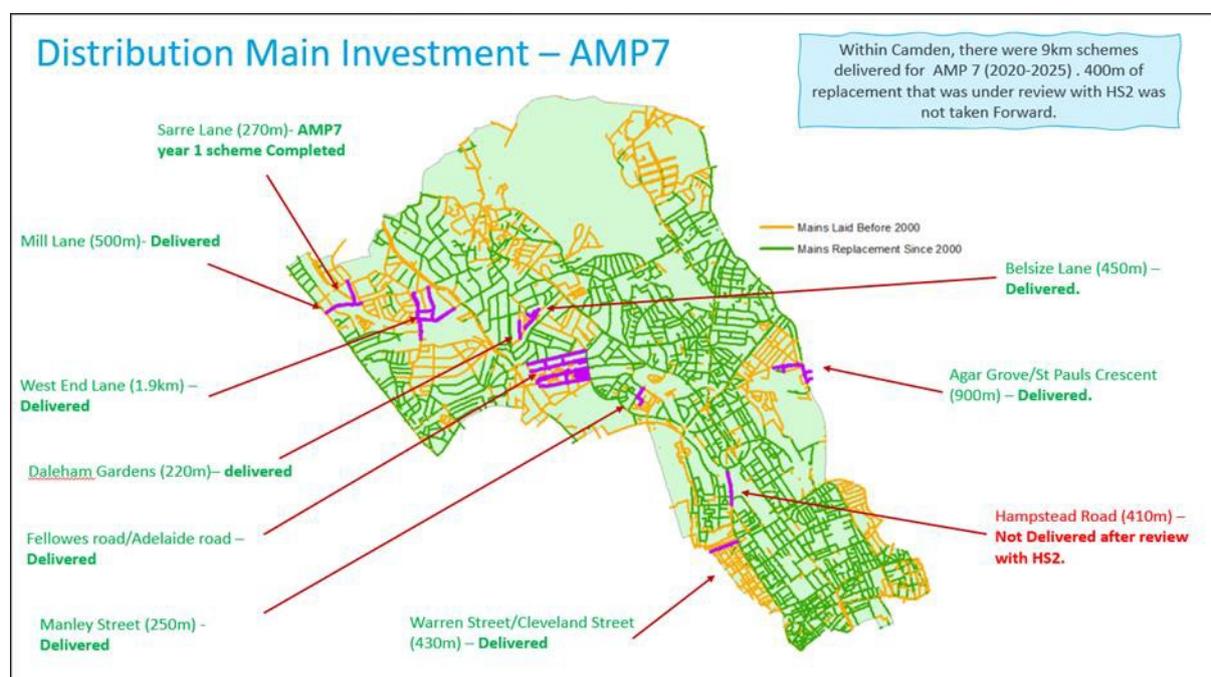
4. Funding Pressures

Ofwat sets the level of investment that water companies may recover from customer bills, and this includes spending on mains replacement.

The amount allocated is considerably less than it will cost to reach our target. We have made significant efficiency improvements to reduce this cost, but the focus must be on projects which deliver most value for money.

This means prioritising schemes with the lowest external or third-party costs to ensure that customer bills are used most effectively. There are several areas where support from the local authority may help to reduce cost pressures. These include assistance with parking bay suspensions and lane rental charges as well as allowing more working gangs at any one time.

5. Mains Replacement in Camden



2025 map

Since 2000, Thames Water has replaced around 245 kilometres of distribution water mains – small local water pipes - across the London Borough of Camden. This represents approximately 59% of the borough’s distribution mains network, reflecting sustained long-term investment in renewing ageing pipework.

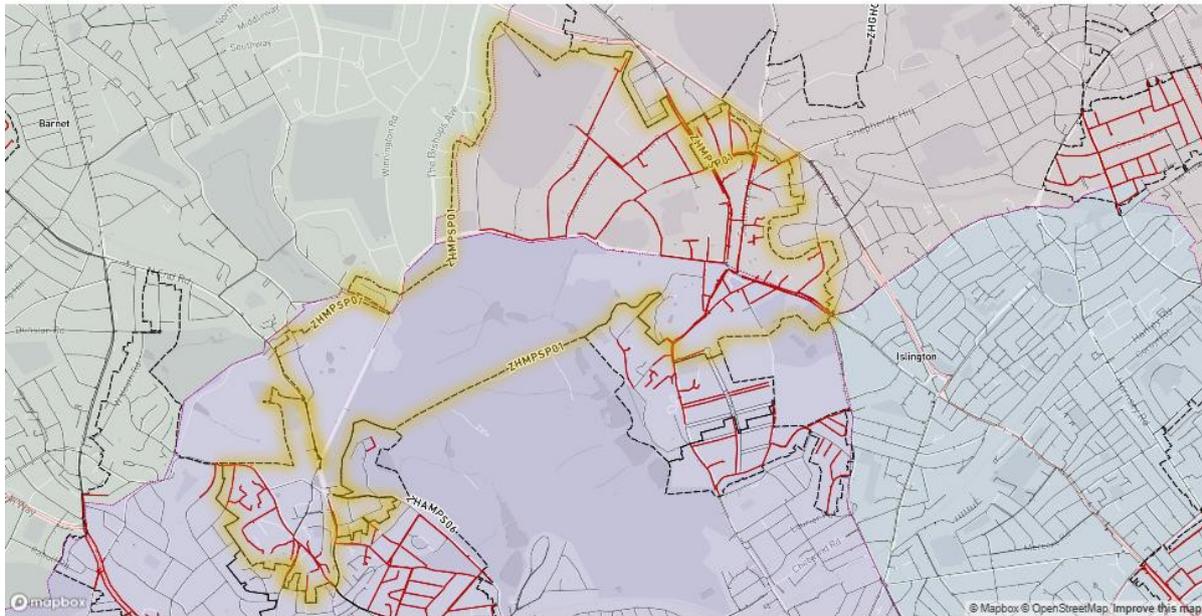
Since the last update to the Committee, all remaining distribution mains replacement activity previously identified (approximately 3.7km) has now been completed.

In addition to distribution mains, Camden contains around 95 kilometres of strategic trunk mains, which are larger pipes that move water across wider areas. Since 2000, approximately 5 kilometres of trunk mains have been replaced. Trunk main replacement is typically more complex and is planned on a risk-based basis.

Recent major schemes referenced in previous reports include around 600 metres of mains replacement on Eversholt Street (linked to HS2 works) and 400 metres in the Warren Street area.

Mains replacement remains a key part of Thames Water's long-term investment strategy in Camden, helping to reduce leakage, lower burst risk and improve the resilience of the water supply network.

Hampstead 01 – Ongoing Scheme



Hampstead 01 Map (pipes in red are planned for replacement)

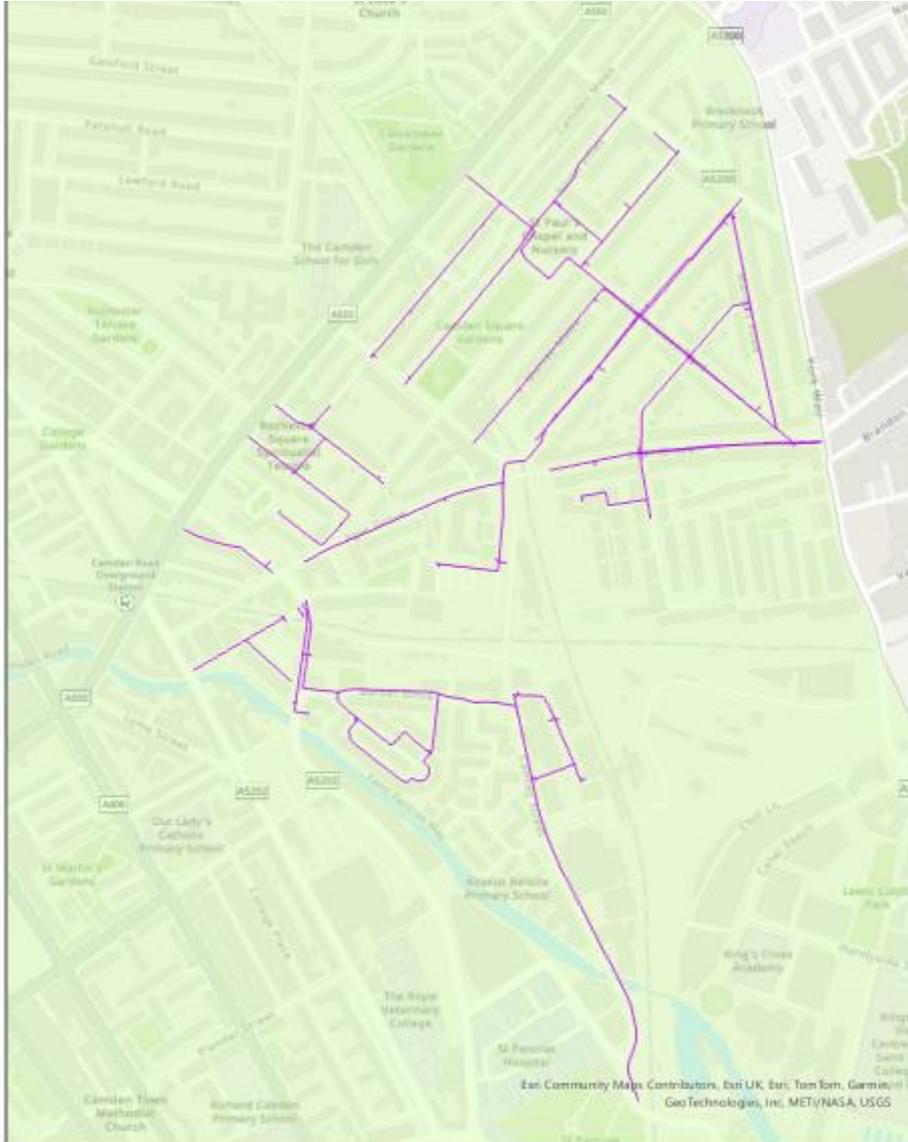
The Hampstead 01 DMA is a large-scale mains replacement programme underway across parts of Camden and Haringey (N6 area). This project started in April 2025 as part of AMP8.

The scheme will replace ageing Victorian cast iron pipes across approximately 60 streets with modern plastic mains. This will reduce leakage and burst frequency, improve pressure stability, and provide long-term network resilience.

Works are being delivered by our contractors, Browne. Due to the scale of the project, phased road closures, lane restrictions and parking suspensions will be required, alongside short, planned supply interruptions.

Given the geographic spread and density of residential and commercial properties, the overall impact is rated high. A Customer Communication Plan is in place to ensure regular engagement with residents, businesses, councillors and key stakeholders.

Maiden Lane 14 (Camden Town) – Upcoming Scheme



Maiden Lane 14 Mains Replacement Map

Thames Water is planning a major mains replacement scheme in the Maiden Lane area, covering approximately 7.5 kilometres of water mains.

The programme is expected to be delivered using two construction teams (gangs) and phased over several years. Current planning assumptions are:

- Around 3.5 kilometres to be completed in Year 2 of the programme.
- The remaining 4 kilometres to be completed by the end of Year 3.

Further details on timings, traffic management and customer communications will be shared with the Council and local stakeholders in advance of works commencing.

6. Leakage and Mains Repairs – Camden (2025 to January 2026)

Since the beginning of 2025, Thames Water has maintained a consistent programme of leakage detection and repair activity across Camden.

Leakage-related streetworks activity:

- 473 leakage-related permits were raised during 2025.
- This equates to an average of 39 leakage repairs per month.
- Activity peaked in April (74) and March (65), reflecting seasonal demand and proactive repair activity.
- In January 2026, due to extreme weather conditions, 47 leakage-related permits were raised, slightly above the 2025 monthly average.

Mains repairs:

- 123 mains repairs were completed during 2025, averaging 10 per month.
- Monthly volumes were generally stable throughout the year (between 5 and 15 per month).
- January 2026 saw 30 mains repairs, approximately three times the 2025 monthly average, reflecting the impact of the recent cold weather event on the network.

In total, between January 2025 and January 2026, there have been 520 leakage-related streetworks activities, including 153 mains repairs.

7. Leakage and Mains Repairs

Concerns have previously been raised about the quality and timeliness of some highway reinstatements, particularly where permanent surfacing has taken longer to complete. In a small number of cases, this has related to the need to source specialist materials, such as natural stone paving, which can have longer lead times. These locations have now been fully resolved.

Overall performance on reinstatement remains strong. During 2025/26, sample inspections undertaken by the London Borough of Camden indicate a pass rate of around 95%, covering both temporary and permanent reinstatements. Street Manager data for the same period shows that 96.5% of reinstatements were completed permanently at the first attempt.

Where delays do occur, they are generally limited to streets requiring specialist materials. There is currently a sector-wide challenge in sourcing certain types of natural stone, due to longer supply chains and fewer available suppliers. Thames

Water continues to work with local authorities and other utilities through the Highways Authority and Utility Companies (HAUC) forum to identify suitable alternative materials where appropriate and to minimise delays.

Seasonal pressures over the winter period also affected contractor availability in a small number of cases, extending timescales beyond what would normally be expected. This position has since improved and performance is now stabilising.

8. Reinstatements

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9. Flooding & Flood Risk Management

The main source of flood risk in Camden is heavy rainfall overwhelming the drainage systems causing surface water and sewer flooding. This risk is increasing due to a combination of climate change, driving more frequent and intense rainfall events; the loss of permeable surfaces, causing more rain to run off more quickly from impermeable surfaces; and more people living in areas at risk of flooding, especially the creation or conversion of basement properties into habitable spaces. These risks and their drivers are prevalent across most of London.

The Flood and Water Management Act sets out the responsibilities for managing the different types of flood risk. The Act defines Lead Local Flood Authorities (Boroughs in London) as having lead responsibility for surface water flooding, and water

companies for sewer flooding. In urban areas, especially those served by combined sewers, the two types of flooding interact, so a close collaboration is required between these two organisations.

Following the extreme summer storms in 2021 more than 42 properties in the borough were reported to Thames Water as having been flooded. We believe that the actual number was significantly higher as residents/customers either did not know who to report their flooding to, or were reluctant to do so, as they feared an impact on their property value and/or rental income and increases in their insurance premiums.

We propose a six-fold approach to managing this increasing risk:

- a. **Work with communities in areas of flood risk to help them prepare for future flooding:** We, together with Camden and the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, have co-funded the National Flood Forum to set up and support the South Hampstead Flood Action Group (SHFAG). We have attended the Group's meetings, help shape their flood action plan, and co-funded a study into local SuDS opportunities.
- b. **Ensure that our drains are operating to their design standards:** As noted previously, we target areas for sewer cleaning where blockages are most likely to occur.

Over the course of our last investment cycle (2020-2025) we have very significantly accelerated our sewer cleaning maintenance programme, increasing it from c.300km/year in 2017/18 to c.1500km in 2024/25.

We have also significantly increased our coverage of Sewer Level Monitors across the waste network, rising from 2,000 in 2020 to 19,000 by 2025, enabling earlier detection of rising sewer levels so blockages can be identified and cleared before they lead to flooding.

- c. **Identify and protect those properties most at risk of sewer flooding.** We have installed 54 property-level sewer flooding reduction devices, mainly non-return valves, to help prevent sewer flooding.
- d. **Reduce the rate and volume of rainwater entering the sewer system.** We have co-funded the installation of two SuDs projects in Camden to date (Mount Pleasant and Belsize Road/Priory Gardens) and have shortlisted three further bids to our Surface Water Management Programme. We have also launched the first of a number of project calls for property-level projects (e.g. rainwater harvesting butts and front garden de-paving). It is worth noting that in heavy rainfall event, a paved area of six square metres can contribute the same volume of flow to the sewer network as the wastewater from 100 homes. Reducing the 'urban creep' of impermeable surface is therefore critical.

- e. **Take a catchment-based approach to managing surface water.** We co-funded the Flood Ready London partnership to produce the London Surface Water Strategy, which was published in May 2025. The strategy recommends that surface water should be managed at a catchment level and subdivides London into 10 surface water catchments. It prioritises two catchments ('Central' and Lea Valley) and recommends that the partners in each catchment form a strategic partnership and develop a catchment-level action plan. Camden sits within the Central catchment. We have provided £500k to Flood Ready London and helped them leverage this funding to create a £3.725m funding pot to help deliver this action plan.

- f. **Ensure new development contributes to reducing flood risk.** We believe that all new development presents an opportunity to reduce flood risk through reducing run-off and collecting and using rainwater. We hope that the catchment-level focus may identify opportunities for new 'strategic' development sites that could play a strategic role in reducing surface way.

10. Customer Contact, Support and Performance

Customer contact levels in Camden increased during periods of operational pressure, particularly during the January cold weather event. Bursts, flooding and planned works were the main drivers of enquiries.

Where impacts were greatest, especially for flooded or vulnerable households, additional support was provided. Customers on the Priority Services Register were prioritised, with proactive contact before, during and after incidents.

To improve coordination, Thames Water has established dedicated Customer Aftercare and Learning and Incident Communications teams. This has improved the flow of information between operational and customer-facing teams, helping to provide clearer updates and reduce repeat enquiries.

Recent enquiries have mainly related to visible works, road closures, access and reinstatement timelines linked to mains replacement schemes. Despite increased demand during the January freeze, service levels were maintained and priority cases were escalated promptly.

11. Bills and Support for Vulnerable Residents

Customer Bills and Investment

Water bills increased from April 2025 to support essential investment in ageing water and wastewater infrastructure. For 2025/26, a typical household bill increased by

£196 per year, equivalent to around £17 per month for metered customers and £19 per month for unmetered customers. This increase reflects the scale of investment required to reduce leaks, prevent bursts, improve river health and maintain safe drinking water supplies.

Bills will not rise by the same amount every year. Following the larger increase in 2025, future increases are expected to be smaller. For 2026/27, typical bills will rise by up to £2.42 per month, in line with inflation and within Ofwat's price limits.

Additional income from bills is being reinvested directly into the network, including upgrades to pipes, sewers and treatment works, improving reliability and resilience across London, including Camden.

Affordability and Financial Support

Thames Water recognises the impact of bill increases, particularly in London. Around 24% of London households were living in poverty in 2023/24, making affordability support a core priority.

In the first half of 2025/26, Thames Water provided £133 million in financial support, double the amount provided in the same period the previous year. Overall, around 550,000 customers are currently receiving help through discounted tariffs, grants, payment plans and debt-matching schemes.

Key support schemes include:

WaterHelp – provides a 50% discount for households whose water bill is more than 5% of their income. This is the largest scheme of its kind in the sector, supporting over 400,000 customers and delivering £78 million in bill reductions in 2024/25.

WaterSure – caps bills for households with large families or water-dependent medical conditions who receive means-tested benefits, supporting around 29,000 households.

Extra Support Payments – one-off payments of up to £700 for households in financial difficulty, with £23 million distributed to 74,000 households.

By 2030, one in ten households will receive a 50% discount on their water bill.

Proactive Support and Auto-Enrolment

Thames Water is the first water company to automatically enrol eligible customers onto social tariffs, removing the need for applications or forms. By working with local authorities and using shared data, customers who qualify for support can be identified and enrolled automatically.

Following a pilot in London boroughs, thousands more households will be supported through auto-enrolment, with plans to deliver around £10 million in additional financial support across 18 boroughs.

In January 2025, Thames Water also wrote to 300,000 households in areas of higher deprivation to increase awareness and uptake of available support.

Priority Services Register

Additional support is available for customers who need extra care, including households with young children, health conditions or mobility needs. Over 600,000 customers are now registered on the Priority Services Register, receiving tailored support such as bottled water during supply interruptions and accessible communications.

Looking Ahead

Under Thames Water's future investment plans, all customers identified as being in water poverty will be supported. Thames Water is also engaging with government on proposals for a national social tariff, expected to be introduced across all water companies from April 2027.

Together, these measures aim to balance the need for long-term investment in infrastructure with strong, targeted support for vulnerable customers in Camden and across London.

REPORT ENDS

