



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir James Bevan  
Chief Executive  
Environment Agency  
Horizon House  
Bristol BS1 5AH

5 November 2019

*Dear Sir James*

I write as a matter of urgency to raise my concerns, as well as that of many members of the local community, with regard to the work recently carried out by the Environment Agency (EA) along the River Cray.

As you will recall from your involvement in the Waste4Fuel case, which caused so much disruption to neighbouring residents over a number of years, this stretch of the river lies in a conservation area and runs into the Ruxley Gravel Pits Nature Reserve, both a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. You will, then, understand the importance the local community attaches to the site. Indeed, through the dedication of local resident associations and voluntary groups, as well as the involvement of the local contractor, idverde, biodiversity along the river has been strengthened, to the benefit of all who use it, including a number of local schools.

It has therefore been deeply disappointing to see the aggressive felling that has taken place along the banks of the upper section of the river in recent weeks. It is feared that this strimming back of vegetation has undone years of hard work, and frankly, has struck many in the community as an entirely counterproductive and harmful act. In fact, results from ongoing monitoring of the local habitat has already indicated an adverse impact on biodiversity in the Brook Park stretch of the river.

Moreover, this work was carried out with no warning or consultation with the local community groups who have worked so tirelessly to nurture this precious habitat. From what I understand, the Cray Catchment Improvement Group (CCIG), on which a representative of the EA sits, was not even notified. This has been compounded by the fact that residents have over a long period of time been asking the EA to remove rubbish from the river, with these requests gone unanswered.

It would appear that a lack of joined up thinking has led to this regrettable situation. I would therefore urge you in the strongest possible terms to commit to making a greater effort to engage with the communities within which you operate, as well as the agencies you work in parallel with. This would, I believe, mitigate incidents like this reoccurring in the future.

I would be grateful for an update on this matter, and would, of course, be happy to discuss it with you or local EA officers further.

*Bob Neill*

**Bob Neill MP**

cc. Cllr Colin Smith, Leader, Bromley Council  
Andy Wilson, Chairman, CRA20TEN and The Cray Forum