

Mr Ewan Larcombe
67 Lawn Close,
Datchet,
Berks

Our ref:
Your ref:

Date: 18 August 2010

Dear Mr. Larcombe

Algae at Slough Weir

Thank you for your e mail dated 12 August regarding the algal growth in areas of the Jubilee River

The extent of the algal mats this year has been a consequence of below average flows in the Thames and high temperatures, these are unusual though not exceptional circumstances

The long term trend is expected to show a reduction in algal mats over time as the Jubilee River floral community becomes established and nutrients are channeled into macrophyte growth rather than into algal growth. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Thames and Jubilee River have become clearer over recent years showing more macrophyte growth. Results of macrophyte surveys on the Jubilee River from the monitoring programme are suggesting that the macrophyte community is developing well and algal growth was observed to be lower during the previous three years.

We do not believe there are any practical options for improving the current situation. The suggestion to flush the channel by taking additional flow from the Thames is not practical in the current low flow conditions, and we do not believe this would provide any significant improvement with the safety booms in place. The removal of the safety booms, which might address some of the build up of algae, would introduce a health and safety issue at the weirs that the booms are designed to mitigate, namely, a physical measure to avoid craft and people being put at risk on the weirs during high flows.

In an attempt to improve the situation, in 2006 a number of floats were removed from the booms at both Manor Farm Weir and Slough Road Weir. At this time we also investigated other algae control measures including removal of the booms, modifying the boom linkages and ultrasonic methods, these were found not to be suitable for either health and safety, cost or effectiveness reasons.

This algae does not present a human health and safety hazard as it is not toxic. We monitor the physical presence of the build up of algae to ensure it does not present an unacceptable health and safety issue.

Swift House, Frimley Business Park, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 7SQ
Customer services line: 08708 506 506
Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk
www.environment-agency.gov.uk



The long term and natural solution is to allow, over time, for the algae to reduce which the evidence from the ongoing monitoring of the Jubilee River shows to be happening.



Ian M Tomes
Flood Risk Manager – South East (Thames Region)

cc: Paul Leinster
Linda O'flynn
Cllr J Grey
Cllr G Muir
Cllr Colin Rayner
Adam Afriyie MP
Graham Leaver
Caroline Spelman MP
Ian Thompson
Cllr Ian Trenholm