

Sewage Action Group for the Lambourn Upper Valley

Update October 2026

Domestic news:

Sadly, Andrew Gorton has moved away from Eastbury so has had to resign from SAGLUV, and we thank him for his valuable contribution. However we are delighted to formally welcome James Potter to the team. James needs no introduction to Eastbury residents, nor many others, as he has played a major role as Eastbury Village Warden in flooding and sewage issues, and has in fact been associated with SAGLUV from its beginning. He will be a huge asset to the group.

We reported in our May Update, that Hamish Riddoch was replacing Martyn Wright as Flood Warden for East Garston. Due to other commitments, Hamish is now not able to take on that role, so Martyn will continue as Flood Warden until further notice. Hamish will, however, continue his membership of SAGLUV.

SAGLUV 2026 Summer Review

Further to our Spring report, issued in May, good progress continues to be made by Thames Water to resolve the sewage flooding issues in our area.

Following latest discussions with TW, we can report on the three key work streams that are being given priority in our part of the Valley:

- Sewer pipe lining
- Eastbury/EG rising main
- Wetland proposals at East Shefford STW

In addition we have some encouraging news about the operation of the EG ATAC filter unit.

Sewer Pipe lining:

Thames Water have confirmed that all TW sewers in Eastbury and East Garston have now been lined.

The next phase of work will be to CCTV the network to check on the condition of the historical lining work and to identify any points of ingress, which could include private drains. This is likely to be carried out in 2027, but has to be at a time when groundwater levels are suitable i.e. not too low and not too high!

Another piece of good news for the Valley, although out of our area, is that TW are planning to line a further 6km of their sewers in and around Lambourn. Great news for the residents, the River, and everyone downstream, including us.

Eastbury/EG rising main:

This is the main sewer pipe that runs from Eastbury and on through EG to Great Shefford.

TW are continuing their feasibility studies into the various options for improvement. These options include re-lining, replacement, and even re-routing at Eastbury to feed into the Bockhampton main which runs directly from Lambourn to the sewage treatment works.

TW are also developing a high level design to increase the flow from EG Sewage Pumping Station (EGSPS). In layman's terms, this would mean bigger pumps and pipes to enable higher volumes of sewage to be pumped down through the network, thus reducing the pressure on the EGSPS and subsequent risk of flooding. Again, a positive development with the intent of stopping spills, and could contribute to the eventual redundancy of the ATAC unit.

Wetland proposal at East Shefford Sewage Treatment Works (ESSTW)

A formal proposal for a wetland filter scheme for ESSTW has been submitted to EA who are currently trialling this approach to intervention. TW consider this type of scheme a critical part of their proposals for storm overflow, and whilst awaiting feedback from EA, TW are mobilising a design team to further develop the detail of their proposal.

Given that storm overflows are an inevitable part of sewerage systems, this approach is widely accepted as a sustainable method of dealing with the problem.

East Garston ATAC unit:

Whilst no-one wants to see the ATAC unit returning to EG, until all of the above work has been completed and tested out, it makes a lot of sense to have the ATAC in place and ready, “just in case”. So, TW will be re-installing it in the coming months, but with some very significant changes to its operation, all of which is very good news indeed:

- Switch on time: TW have to be granted an EA permit to use the ATAC unit, as it means discharging filtered sewage into the river. The rules governing when it can be used are strict, and up until now the interpretation of those rules meant that TW were not able to switch the unit on until sewage actually spilled from manholes causing pollution.
In recent meetings with EA and TW, SAGLUV representatives have argued that this is not acceptable, as some properties suffer from unusable ground floor toilets and showers, due to sewer flooding, before there are spillages from manholes. We have argued that TW should be able to switch on the unit before manhole spillage thereby alleviating the problem of unusable loos. TW have recently negotiated with EA and have gained agreement to be able to switch on the ATAC when sewers are surcharged, but before spilling from manholes. This will mean that TW can activate the ATAC earlier than previously, with the aim of protecting properties from the inconvenience of unusable facilities. SAGLUV are delighted with this breakthrough.
- TW will be using a new ATAC contractor this winter with some welcome operational improvements. The pumps will be fitted with telemetry which will enable the contractor and TW to be alerted to any issues that may arise such as a pump failure. Previously, they had to rely on engineer visits to check, or calls from the public reporting problems.
- A further positive development at the EG ATAC site will be the trialling of float controls that will be set up so that if a main pump stops operating for whatever reason, the float switch will automatically trigger the stand-by pump to start working.

The above improvements will significantly increase the resilience of the EG ATAC system to everyone's benefit. It must be stressed that some of these operational modifications are being trialled for the first time, so there will be a bit of a learning curve to climb, and no doubt a few glitches on the way. However, we applaud TW for finding and implementing solutions to some long standing problems that we have been raising with them for some time.

Finally, a quick word about groundwater levels: At the moment, the level recorded at Longacre bore hole, up on the Lambourn Downs, is virtually the same as recorded at this time last year. It's still dropping, and the total rainfall we've had in the last 5 months has been lower than average, and some 38% lower than during the equivalent period last year. If the low rainfall continues into the winter, it could mean that we won't be troubled with groundwater anyway. But who knows?

The graph below (appendix 1) shows the Groundwater level recorded at EG against local monthly rainfall. You can see from past years, just how difficult it is to make any accurate predictions.

