

7 June 2023

ESSO response to Michael Gove MP re Balmoral Drive delays

Dear Mr Gove,

Thank you for your email. I appreciate you taking the time to write on behalf of your constituents and also the efforts you have made over the last year to fully understand the complexities of our construction works to install the replacement pipeline.

This is a once in a lifetime replacement and, though the construction is temporary, I would like to assure you that I fully appreciate the inconvenience and disruption that our works bring to those living in the vicinity of the scheme. This was also recognised by the Secretary of State in his decision to grant the Development Consent Order, where he expressly recognised that there would undoubtedly be some impact on individuals and businesses while the work was underway. However, it is important to remember that the replacement pipeline will play a significant positive role in supporting the UK's continued transport resilience and will help to keep 100 tankers off nearby roads everyday.

With regards to vibration caused by our works. We have submitted a technical report and several sets of raw data to Surrey Heath Borough Council's Environmental Health team which shows that vibration caused by our works is within the limits set by the Surrey Heath Noise and Vibration Management Plan, and is below the levels that may cause cosmetic damage. To date no technical evidence of damage caused as a result of our works has been confirmed or submitted to us. And I feel I must be clear that it is incorrect to state that damage has resulted from our works. If any of your constituents have concerns, we would encourage them to seek professional advice and contact us with any evidence so we can review their concerns and provide compensation where and if appropriate.

You mention the advice received by Surrey Heath Borough Council. Our position is based on the expertise of vibration specialists and industry standard practice and it's not clear to us the basis of the advice that has been provided. Our draft management documents were scrutinised during the public examination and were part of the granted DCO, and the Borough Council has approved the final version. Both versions include our commitment to work in line with British Standards and I can confirm that our work remains in line with British Standards. I am unclear about why the British Standard, which surely the Borough Council must require other developers to use, is not deemed sufficient in this case.

While I appreciate your wish for me to meet with local residents. I am unable to agree to this, I feel the need to treat all communities consistently and fairly. Across the 97km we do not routinely meet to discuss matters that are settled within our existing approvals. I am also wary of meeting in this location as I'm aware that this Ward is subject to a by-election.

Regarding our works in the road and the local diversions. While the works have taken longer than expected, we have not prevented access to the local estate. A suitable diversion has been in place at all times and our works have been undertaken with

approved Highway Permits.

I understand your frustration that there is not a set compensation code for temporary construction-related disturbance within our Development Consent Order granted by the UK Government. I would like to reassure you that Esso is following the established norms in this matter. There are no obligations in either the Roads and Street Works Act 1991, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or the Planning Act 2008, for compensation to be paid to those living nearby or adjacent to construction works.

However, we are collaborating with communities via our established voluntary Environmental Investment Programme (EIP), which is investing to support communities along the 97km replacement pipeline route. We have a significant EIP package that has been agreed with the Borough Council and includes activities in the vicinity of Balmoral Drive.

We also have a number of EIP activities with other landowners, which together makes the most comprehensive package in any single Borough across the 97km scheme. I have attached a map of all EIP activities in Surrey Heath Borough. These activities provide a fair contribution to the local community in the light of the additional temporary disruption caused. I would also highlight that this a voluntary scheme, above and beyond the landowner compensation payments that we have made to the Borough Council and other landowners.

While I realise that this email is unlikely to provide the response you hoped for, I would like to assure you that we are working hard to complete the works as quickly as possible, with the least amount of disruption. We have a matter of weeks of work left on Balmoral Drive. The Sandringham Way diversion will be removed, following resurfacing this week. I have asked Philippa (Head of Engagement) to make sure her team provides you with a weekly update on our progress.

I am grateful to the residents for their patience and forbearance during the installation works of this nationally significant infrastructure project.

Once in place, pipelines are quiet neighbours. I am confident that the Southampton to London Pipeline will prove far less intrusive than the 100 tanker vehicles a day that would otherwise be needed to transport aviation fuel via local roads to the country's leading airports.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Sunderland,
Project Executive.