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Dear Sarah-Jayne

Thank you for your e-mail of Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February and may I also take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for meeting with us on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February to discuss the impact of the Birmingham Resilience Project on the Parish of Romsley.

I note your decision to decline attending the Parish Council hosted meeting on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March but I truly believe that this is a missed opportunity for you to start to properly address the concerns of Romsley and its residents. Given that one of our community's biggest complaints has been that the consultation to date has not met their needs, it seems extremely odd that you would choose to follow this approach again and I do not believe that the community will see this as an appropriate response given the scale of the concerns that they have. I can of course understand the potential apprehension you may have about participating on the 14<sup>th</sup> but I will restate my offer to you that I will personally and neutrally chair this meeting and I will agree with you the meeting rules and terms of reference in advance to ensure it remains orderly and constructive.

You should also consider that the Parish Council has received an extension for submitting its response on the project to the planning authority on the basis of the meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> March taking place. We were hopeful that this meeting would provide the community with the reassurance it needs, and would allow us to draft our response to the planning submission accordingly. In addition, our District Councillors Margaret Sherry (leader of Bromsgrove District Council) and Councillor Chris Allen Jones who sits on the planning committee as well as our County Councillor, Rachel Jenkins, are all invited to this Parish Council meeting thus providing them with the opportunity to hear all sides of the debate openly and directly.

Given all the issue outlined above I would urge you to reconsider and agree to attend the Parish Council meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> March and I see no problem with this going ahead in addition to your own "drop in session" on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March.

Moving on, I recall that we covered a lot of ground in the meeting so I thought I would take this opportunity to restate the key concerns that we have collated from our residents. Additionally I would also like to update you on a Parish Plan development forum that we held on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February at which many residents raised concerns around your project. I will also use this letter to fulfil the action I took from our meeting of the 22<sup>nd</sup> to provide you with a list of potential legacy opportunities within the Parish that Severn Trent could become involved in.

**Key concerns of the community**

Over the past 4 months the Parish Council has met with Severn Trent representatives on two occasions and has written to your teams formally three times. In every interaction we have tried to constructively pass on the concerns of the community and the Parish Council about the Birmingham Resilience Project. Throughout this period our message to you has remained consistent and positive, and where we have suggested opportunities for you to address concerns or resolve issues, none of them have been unreasonable or particularly burdensome.

The Parish Council is the closest part of Local Government to the community and is well placed to capture and represent the views of its residents. It is also a statutory consultee in all planning matters. As such I am surprised and disappointed that the contents of our recent correspondence to you seems to have been largely ignored, and I am shocked that you make no meaningful reference to the contents of our meetings or correspondence in the consultation summary document that Severn Trent has been presented as part of your planning application.

However, to avoid any misunderstanding going forward, I would once more like to restate these community concerns and emphasise the need to resolve these if we are to provide our support to the planning application you have made.

The community's concerns fall into three broad areas which I have summarised below.

- 1) The location and design of infrastructure especially with regard to the break pressure tank on Putney Lane, this includes;**
  - a. The size and design of the infrastructure, its appropriateness for the greenbelt and the subsequent visibility of it from neighbouring properties and the main thoroughfare through the Parish.
  - b. The levels of noise, light or other emissions (such as exhaust emissions) emanating from the infrastructure when operational.
  - c. The frequency, size and access route of service vehicles attending the site when it becomes operational.
  - d. The ongoing safety and security of the infrastructure with a particular focus on the flooding risks associated with any form of catastrophic failure.
  
- 2) The potential impact of construction works on the Parish and its residents;**
  - a. That construction activity is limited to appropriate construction windows that minimise noise and other impacts for local residents.
  - b. Appropriate controls on construction vehicles accessing the site so that impact and disruption to the community is minimised. This includes barring access to the main village and Day House Bank for construction vehicles, the introduction of appropriate traffic calming around the entrances to the sites (including the known accident black-spot at the junction of Day House Bank and Bromsgrove Road) and a formalised traffic management plan for the period of the works.
  - c. Appropriate controls on noise, security lighting and emissions associated with construction.
  - d. That the sites remain secure from children at all times but access to public paths and bridle ways are maintained during the works.
  
- 3) Effective reinstatement and recovery of the environment following completion of the project;**
  - a. A clear and absolute undertaking to return the environment to its previous condition, particularly around footpaths and the ancient woodlands that may be affected.
  - b. A full and transparent environmental impact assessment.
  - c. That Severn Trent should address the outstanding issues from its previous major works in the Parish.
  - d. That Severn Trent and its contractors should provide a legacy to compensate the community for the disruption the construction project and subsequent operations will cause.

**Parish Plan forum – Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February**

On Saturday the Parish Council held an open community consultation to support the development of the Parish Plan. This meeting has been scheduled for many weeks and was not specifically related to your project. We were pleased to see attendance from more than 50 of our residents to capture their thoughts and desires for our Parish and its future. I was also particularly pleased to welcome our District Councillors Margaret Sherry and Chris Allen Jones who interacted fully with all the issues being discussed. Many topics were raised and discussed by our residents but a consistent topic raised by attendees was Severn Trent and the Birmingham Resilience Project and the feedback given confirmed to us the level and nature of community concerns we have passed to you historically and that I have repeated above.

There was a clear resentment that Severn Trent has not been appropriately transparent with the community on this matter. Repeatedly residents sighted shock and concern over the physical design and size of the Break Pressure Tank and its hoppers. Attendees felt the design was completely inappropriate for a green belt area, and wanted more detailed artist's impressions and specific clarity on operational issues of the BPT such as lighting, noise and the volume of servicing traffic.

Several residents raised issues about the construction phase and its impact with many wanting clarity and control on construction traffic volumes and traffic routes. One particular resident raised a significant concern about construction windows and stated that the proposed 7am to 7pm was at complete odds with the position adopted within Birmingham where the Local Authority has imposed a construction window of 8am to 6pm. I do not know if this is correct but the other residents who heard this were quite aggrieved and felt it again demonstrated the poor and shabby way in which Romsley residents were being treated.

For many residents the legacy position was important and many attendees felt that though they recognised the important nature of the project it was unreasonable for the Parish not to receive direct benefit and legacy given the scale of disruption and the scale of the BPT. The Parish Council outlined our proposals for legacy projects (which I have listed later in this letter) and though all received positive support, the School's crossing suggestion and the traffic calming for Day House Bank and Bromsgrove Road received unanimous backing.

Finally, once again many residents displayed frustration about the poor quality of reinstatement following the Severn Trent works in St Kenelm's Road during 2012, and questioned us as to how the Parish Council could stop this happening again.

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**Actions from our meeting of Monday 22nd**

I agreed at our meeting on Monday 22nd to come back to you on a number of actions.

I have contacted the Day House Bank residents group to clarify if they want me to pass on their contact details to you. Given you and your teams have already talked with Lois Swift and other Day House Bank residents I'm sure it will come as no surprise that at this stage they are not willing for me to pass on their details to you. However, the Parish Council is more than happy to act as a conduit of information, and we will pass on any items of communication you wish. This group of residents also reinforced their desire to me to meet with Severn Trent as a group in a properly chaired community meeting, open to all and officially minuted so a proper record of questions and answers is obtained.

In addition I also took the action agreed to outline to you the list of legacy opportunities that exist within the Parish that Severn Trent could look to support and derive community support from.

These legacy opportunities include:

- 1) Rectification of the outstanding issues left by Severn Trent in 2012.** Following on from the engineering works that Severn Trent completed in 2012. There remain a number of outstanding issues that Severn Trent need to resolve and this remains a critical issue for the Parish Council and the village residents. The majority of these centre on the car parking area at the park which the Severn Trent contractors used as a compound. The Parish Council provided the car-park area free of charge to Severn Trent but there was a verbal agreement that the surface of the park would be renewed and of course any damage rectified. Sadly, the contractor did not rectify the car park appropriately. Damage to both the park gate and the boundary fence was never rectified and though the contractor did indeed deposit aggregate on the surface, this was deficient in volume and quality and no attempt was made to properly fill the pot holes that were caused by the heavy vehicles and plant that were stored there. There are also a number of outstanding issues on St Kenelm's Road where the Severn Trent contractors replaced the damaged verges by laying replacement grass turf directly on to waste and aggregate from the works. The installation was of very low quality and has led to much resentment amongst residents. There are also many defects with the physical road surface; however, as this sits within the authority of Worcestershire County Council I will not be pursuing this matter with you. The current Parish Council forward budget shows a total cost of £14500 for rectification of the issues on St Kenelm's Road (£3000 for the gate, £6000 for the car-park surface, £3000 for boundary fence replacement and £2500 for turf replacement on St Kenelm's Road).
- 2) Sponsorship of community events:** In June we hold the annual Romstock Music Festival which attracted over 1000 residents in 2015 and all the proceeds that are generated are returned to our community. We have not yet agreed the main sponsor for the 2016 event and it would be more than appropriate for Severn Trent to sponsor the 2016 event and the subsequent events covering the construction period. In return for sponsorship you would receive as much space as you require for your information exhibitions. Total cost of sponsorship would be £9000 (at £3000 per year).
- 3) Support St Kenelm's School with its planned redevelopment of its facilities.** Our school plays a vital part in our community and I have talked to the Headteacher about opportunities to support the school. Dependent on curriculum pressure, the school will always welcome the input of organisations such as yourselves to enrich the children's experience. However, on a more material level the school has an ambitious programme to refurbish its facilities and rebuild one of its classrooms which is not really fit for purpose, this would provide a meaningful legacy to generations of Romsley residents and would provide extensive reputational and 'good news' benefits to Severn Trent both in and outside the Parish. Detailed cost estimates are not finalised but I believe a significant contribution would be appropriate given its "good news" and marketing potential for Severn Trent.
- 4) Traffic calming along Day House Bank and its junction with Bromsgrove Road.** Traffic issues along Day House Bank and its junction with the Bromsgrove Road have been an ongoing and persistent problem for residents for many years. Speeds are too high and properties are in such close proximity that HGV movements cause significant vibration issues. At the T-junction between the two roads visibility is poor and speeds are high and there is a resultant and well documented black-spot with many collisions occurring on the Bromsgrove Road when vehicles attempt to turn on to or turn off Day House Bank. Adding further to these traffic problems during both construction and operation of the pipeline and the BPT is one of the most frequently raised concerns within the community and as such provides Severn Trent with an excellent legacy opportunity. By working with Worcestershire County Highways team and funding traffic calming and appropriate changes to road layout, Severn Trent will provide a meaningful contribution to a significant community issue whilst improving the overall safety of your own project. I'm sure you recognise the benefit of this and avoiding the reputational harm that could arise for yourselves if there was a collision involving one of your vehicles at this location. Cost estimates could only be derived following detailed conversations with Worcestershire Highways Authority.

**5) Support the Parish Council with placing a crossing and traffic calming in front of our school:** Another traffic related issue that is important to our community is the installation of a Pedestrian Crossing in front of St Kenelm's school on the Bromsgrove road, with supporting traffic calming. In recent years we have had a child from the school hit by a vehicle and the resultant petition attracted many hundreds of signatures from across the Parish and the support of our MP, as well as County and District Councillors. The critical problem was funding and once again by working with Worcestershire County Highways and the Parish Council, Severn Trent can make a significant contribution that would be widely acknowledged by all. Initial conversations with Worcestershire Highways have indicated that they will be willing to install the crossing if the Parish Council can secure the funding. Our current cost estimates for the crossing and traffic management is circa £80000 with the final cost dependent on detailed discussions with Worcestershire Highways.

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Before I close this letter, I would like to reinforce to you the general consensus that currently exists in our community which is that we all recognise the importance of this project to the region and do not want to cause unnecessary disruption to it. Nevertheless, our community is gravely concerned about several aspects of the project and many residents feel that there has been a deliberate withholding of critical information, especially about the size and design of the Break Pressure Tank (BPT) during the consultation process. At this time the Parish Council remains neutral on whether this absence of key information during your consultation process is deliberate or just unfortunate oversight, but the community's trust in your organisation and your project is being lost rapidly. It is my belief that your attendance at the Parish Council meeting on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March was an important first step towards reversing this loss of trust by demonstrating that you are not deliberately withholding information and that you are willing to engage with us in an open and constructive way.

To ensure there is no misunderstanding on your side, my absolute responsibility is to represent and protect the interests of the community I was elected to serve. As such, and as a statutory consultee, the Parish Council will accurately and vigorously present the views of our residents as well as the facts we are aware of at the time of any planning response or planning authority meeting. However, I remain convinced that there is still plenty of opportunity for Severn Trent to avoid this potential disruption by taking time to work with the Parish Council and our residents in an open and collaborative manner to ensure that our communities views are properly accounted for.

You can resolve many of the outstanding concerns by providing accurate and trustworthy information about the construction phase and comprehensive details about the operational aspects of the Break Pressure Tank. Furthermore, given that the current consensus amongst residents is that the design of the BTP is not currently suitable for the greenbelt location you have plenty of time to work with the community to alter its design and ensure that the residents' concerns are mitigated. Similarly, you still have ample opportunity to rebuild wider community trust by resolving the outstanding issues from your past major engineering project in the Parish as well as committing to provide a lasting and meaningful legacy to our Parish that befits a project of this importance and scale.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to restate my commitment that the Parish Council will deploy all its resources and work with you constructively and collaboratively to support the delivery of the Birmingham Resilience Project if we can ensure that the Parish of Romsley, its residents and its environment is treated both reasonably and justly.

I look forward to working with you in the near future, to discuss, address and resolve the matters I have raised.

Kind regards,

**Richard Arrowsmith,  
Romsley Parish Council Chair.**

*CC. Rachel Jenkins – County Councillor for Clent Hills.*

*CC. M Sherry – Bromsgrove District Councillor for Belbroughton & Romsley.*

*CC. C Allen-Jones – Bromsgrove District Councillor for Belbroughton & Romsley.*

*CC. Ruth Bamford – Head of Planning & Regeneration for Bromsgrove District Council.*

*CC. Emma Anning – Senior Development Control Officer for Wyre Forest District Council.*