

Chris Loughlin
Chief Executive & Acting Managing Director
South West Water & Pennon Group
Peninsula House
Rydon Lane
Exeter
EX2 7HR

10th March 2020

Dear Chris,

Larkbeare sewer – open letter to South West Water

It has been more than four years since the discovery of issues with the condition of Larkbeare sewer, which runs beneath Bull Meadow park and Temple Road, in the St Leonards area of Exeter.

This is a public surface water sewer which is the responsibility of South West Water.

Exeter City Council and Devon County Council have quite properly fenced off areas of land affected to protect local residents, users of the park and park maintenance staff. Whilst this is necessary to ensure public safety, it has meant the loss of very significant areas of a public open space and a residential street, not to mention the ongoing cost to the local authorities/local taxpayer for securing the area.

We share the local authorities', residents' and park users' growing frustrations about the lack of resolution to this issue.

We understand that South West Water have previously contested their ownership and responsibility for this and for other sewers throughout Devon and Cornwall. You will be aware that Water UK, the industry body, introduced a nationwide protocol to resolve issues of this nature, which came into force in February 2019. If South West Water wishes to dispute its ownership and responsibility, it should follow this protocol to its conclusion so that this matter can be determined.

We are concerned that there has been no response from South West Water to correspondence sent by Exeter City Council over 18 months ago, which included a submission of expert evidence, and sought to resolve the issue of ownership and responsibility.

While calls for action from the public and the two local authorities are ignored and repair works remain outstanding, local residents and park users face the continued loss of local amenities.

As elected local representatives, we are asking South West Water to bring this long outstanding problem to a swift conclusion. If South West Water no longer wishes to contest the ownership of this sewer, please undertake the necessary repairs so that the safety issue can be resolved, and this area of a popular public park and adjacent highway can be reopened.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw MP
Cllr Richard Branston (Exeter City Councillor for Newtown & St Leonards)
Cllr Matthew Vizard (Exeter City Councillor for Newtown & St Leonards)
Cllr Carol Whitton (Devon County Councillor St Davids & Haven Banks)