



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Cllr Seán Woodward
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Dear Cllr Woodward,

Thank you for your letter of 16 November 2022 to the Secretary of State about the permit review of wastewater treatment works in the Solent. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and I apologise for the delay in doing so.

I am aware of this issue and the work that the Partnership for South Hampshire and others have been doing to address it.

The Environment Agency (EA) remains committed to its plans to review the permits of Solent and Southampton Water in line with the 2024 price review (PR24) requirements. These will now include the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill requirements for nutrient pollution reduction as you indicate. This amendment places a statutory duty on water and sewerage companies in England to upgrade wastewater treatment works to the highest technical achievable limits by 2030 in nutrient neutrality areas.

The current permit limits of wastewater treatment works have been assessed at a waterbody scale. Natural England (NE) determined that this scale was not protective enough for the sensitive features around the Solent. Southern Water are therefore required to build new models to assess the impacts of wastewater treatment works at a more detailed feature scale that NE require in PR24. Until the models are built, the EA cannot assess permits at the required feature scale as their current models work at a different (waterbody) scale. This requirement for new feature scale models is also required at other sites around the country, where NE has evidence that it is needed.

While these new models are being built the EA will continue to make use of the existing environmental permitting regulations to monitor compliance with permit limits. It will continue to take appropriate enforcement action if a permit limit is breached.

I know that Simon Moody, the EA Area Director of Hampshire, Sussex and the Isle of Wight has been in contact with your office and has arranged a meeting to discuss this face to face this month.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact me about this important issue.

REBECCA POW MP