

**Emily O'Brien's April 2023 Report
Lewes District Council**

I continue to be very busy supporting residents over flooding, housing, council tax, and of course planning and development at various locations including Caburn Field, Bovis/Potters Field and the Westbourne development including liaising with enforcement, chasing up confirmation on drainage works and raising concerns about contractor parking. I also helped Ringmer Village Hall to secure a charitable discount on their waste collections.

I have had a number of residents query the state of man of the footpaths/twittens, including the footpath between Shelley Road and the Lewes Road which many residents use to access the bus stop. Officers from LDC have now removed some waste material including asbestos which had been dumped, using specialists contractors. However in terms of removing the mud and improving the surface, ESCC tell me the land is largely unregistered (though LDC own a small section) so establishing responsibility for improvements seems tricky.

I wondered if the parish council might like to consider footpath/twitten improvement as a future agenda item and consider setting aside some of the Parish CIL funding either for this specific path (given it is a close proximity to new Caburn Field development and would directly benefit the residents who have been adversely affected by that development, so seems a good use for CIL) or for a wider programme across the village. If so, please let me know and Johnny and I would be happy to find out if LDC and/or ESCC are able to contribute.

ESCC have also advised that future footpath/twitten improvements could be secured via section 106 agreements and perhaps the parish council might consider including these requests in their submissions as it doesn't seem possible to add them retrospectively.

I continue to be busy campaigning on water quality issues both local and national, firstly highlighting that high levels of pollutants known as "forever chemicals", which don't break down in the environment, build up in the body and may be toxic, have been found in two waterways close to local water treatment works, in Barcombe and Neaves Lane, Ringmer as part of a European Research project (more detail here <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/environment/toxic-chemicals-found-in-lewes-district-waterways-4049961>).

Secondly, the environment agency released the 2022 figures on raw sewage discharge into rivers and seas which made horrifying reading. Despite an overall national improvement, the local situation appeared to be worse. At the Ham Lane sewage works in Lewes, the rate of untreated wastewater discharge into the Ouse river last year increased by more than five times to 2419 hours which made it the third worst site for discharge across the whole of Southern Water's 'league of sewage shame' as I like to call it.

We also saw a further deterioration in Ringmer with the Neave's Lane water treatment works, which discharges into the Bulldog and then Glynde Reach (and from there the Ouse then the sea) discharging 968 hours or 11% of the time, up from 895 hours in 2021. Despite Southern Water's repeated assurances on capacity, I find it hard to believe there is no link with recent new development and will continue to push for our planning system to recognise the links.

I would also like share our recently launched petition, building on our work recently to make Lewes District Council the first in England to look at 'Rights of rivers' at a local level:

<https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/tell-the-uk-government-give-rights-to-our-rivers>

I was concerned to find out at a recent Health and Wellbeing Board meeting that Lloyds Pharmacies are currently undertaking a closure programme. So far this has mainly affected out of hours provision (with closure of the Lloyds at Sainsburys in Newhaven which is the only 100-hour pharmacy in Lewes District) but the Director of Public Health suggested this might well affect village locations such as Ringmer. One to watch for the future.

As ever do get in touch if I can help with any issues – email Emily.obrien@lewes.gov.uk; Tel 07969 805795; Twitter: @EmilyLincOBrien; Facebook: @GreenEmilyOBrien.