

By email only
emma.hardy.mp@parliament.uk

Contact: Conservation Team
E-mail: swtconservation@sussexwt.org.uk
Date: 8 May 26

Dear Ms Hardy,

Thank you for your support in convening the relevant parties following the October 2025 bio-bead spill in Sussex. As you will be aware, the clean-up at Camber Sands and Rye Harbour Nature Reserve is ongoing and beads continue to wash ashore, polluting the environment and posing a threat to wildlife.

This spill has been classified as a Category 1 incident and has caused profound frustration within local communities. More than 10,000 people have now signed the 'Bin the Beads' petition. Despite earlier assurances that the Environment Agency's investigation would be shared in February, we are now approaching May without any further information.

I am writing to request the following:

1. That you and ministerial colleagues continue to hold Southern Water to account and work with regulators to assess, as a matter of urgency, the feasibility of removing bio-bead systems from coastal wastewater treatment works. We understand bio-beads are widely regarded as outdated technology, and we consider their removal and replacement with appropriate alternatives should be fast-tracked. We have repeatedly been told that cost and site constraints make change unfeasible; we do not accept this position. We ask that a fully evidenced feasibility assessment is funded through the current water company investment programme and that any required upgrades are delivered in the next investment cycle.
2. That the Environment Agency publishes the findings of its investigation into the incident, and the adequacy of the response, as a matter of priority—together with a clear explanation for the delay of several months beyond the previously indicated timetable. The public and affected organisations need an account of how this occurred, the environmental impacts, and what timelines are in place for enforcement action and remedial measures.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. Should you wish to visit Sussex to discuss any of the above, we would be pleased to host you at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.

Yours sincerely,



Henri Brocklebank
Director of Conservation

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