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House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Mairi McAllan MSP
Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform
The Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Regent Road
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12th August 2021

Dear Mairi

Impact from Seafield WWTW on Bathing Water at Portobello West and Portobello Central

Many congratulations on your appointment as the Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform.

I have been contacted by Leith Links Community Council (LLCC) regarding their concerns that the poor bathing water quality at Portobello West and Portobello Central may be being contributed to by output from the neighbouring Seafield Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW). LLCC has cited a recent SEPA report which states that Portobello is one of 25 Scottish beaches contaminated with faeces.

I am aware that generally the presence of faecal matter in the bathing water at Portobello is attributed to contaminated rainwater runoff which is taken out to sea after collecting in storm drains. I am aware also that Scottish Water in 2018 undertook investigations into extending the storm drain pipe at Seafield to take contaminated runoff further out to sea and thus away from bathing areas.

There is nonetheless an understandable question posed by some local residents over whether the Seafield WWTW itself might be contributing to the issues around the bathing water quality at Portobello. The concerns specifically relate to the fact that the bathing water quality at Portobello West tends to be poorer than that at Portobello Central, which in turn tends to be poorer than the next signifier to the East, Fisherrow – i.e. that the water quality appears to get poorer the closer the site is to Seafield WWTW.

I would welcome assurances you might be able to provide regarding this, particularly in relation to the testing regime around the Seafield WWTW and its impact on bathing water quality.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Tommy Sheppard
Member of Parliament for Edinburgh East

- cc. Ash Denham, MSP for Edinburgh Eastern
Ben Macpherson, MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith
Deidre Brock, MP for Edinburgh North and Leith
Adam McVey, Cllr for Leith and Leader, City of Edinburgh Council