EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

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Bust mains, bust company?

28 September 2026



A burst main that is leaking up to 750 litres of water every second has cause widespread outages across north east Surrey and forced a raft of school closures.

The issue, affecting Molesey, Esher, and the surrounding areas, was first reported at about 5am but the Local Democracy Reporting Service understands the leak is still ongoing and the valve has yet to be switched off.

Esher and Walton MP Monica Harding has described the widespread problem affecting her constituency as a massive failing of Thames Water saying years of under-investment in its infrastructure has once again hit residents.

Shops in the towns have run out of bottled water and huge tankers have been brought in to help top up the mains – but even these have run dry.

The Wilderness area of Molesey is underwater and is thought to be the source of the leak, but as of 9.30am water was continuing to flood the playing fields.

Mrs Harding said: “The whole of the Wilderness is flooded, I’m at the perimeter of Island Barn where the leak is.

“My understanding is the leak was first reported at about 5am this morning but it took Thames Water a while to find it.

“It’s still flowing, they haven’t turned off the valves.

“It’s because Thames Water doesn’t have data loggers and they were scrabbling around to find it.

“This is an infrastructure failing, the regulators haven’t done their jobs for years and the money has been sucked out of Thames Water.”

As yet, no decision has been taken on whether to set up bottle stations, or how long the problem will last.

Some suspect the issue could become more commonplace as rainfall returns; the long dry summer has left the ageing pipe network in a brittle state and the system is not resilient enough to cope.

Mrs Harding added: “The teams working on the pipes have been brilliant, they’ve been working really hard but they are dealing with the fallout of a failed infrastructure.”

Thames Water has been approached for comment.

In a statement the firm had previously said: “We are sorry customers in parts of south west London do not have any water or are experiencing lower pressure than normal this morning. Our engineers have located the leak and doing everything they can to ensure water is back on as soon as possible.

“The latest updates will be posted on our website, thameswater.co.uk.”

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

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Esher and Molesey water outage – tankers are being used to top up the mains and shops have run out of bottled water (image Chris Caulfield)

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