

DRFA

**Derby Road
Fund Association**

Contact:

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Date: March 2025

Dear Neighbours,

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL AND INVESTMENT: STREET LIGHTING COLUMNS

This letter is to update you on recent developments regarding the 10 streetlights on Derby Road.

An inspection of the street lamps was carried out by Carter Electrical Installation Ltd (CEIL) on 27 August 2024. The DRFA was subsequently issued with a National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC) Certificate, which gave an 'unsatisfactory' rating (Code C2: potentially dangerous urgent remedial action required).

The Certificate states that *"the street lights do not have a disconnect switch, so supply to the box below the swan neck is permanently live to one side of the lamp. Wiring is aged, fittings are obsolete. The General Condition of the installation is that everything is old aged. There is no isolation for street lighting circuits. Equipment: C2 ratings on fitting obsolete"* ([to see the EICR certificate please click here](#)). The broken street light No 8 outside 17/19 Derby Road was fitted with a new light.

CEIL is not a Distribution Network Operator and is not licensed to work on the concentric (Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks: SSEN) cabling that feeds the box.

It was also noted that a few street lamps are tilting due to damage or degradation below and or above ground, which is a safety issue.

Following this, DRFA wrote on 12 September 2024 to Chris Burchell, Managing Director of SSEN. He responded by saying *'that having consulted with colleagues, they wish to visit the site with a network engineer to assess the situation before responding substantially. This is to ensure that they identify appropriate ownership, assess the design and review the conditions. They will do this promptly and will update in terms of their findings and advice.'*

SSEN completed their site visit in September 2024. During the visit, SSEN made lamp no 8 safe by removing the fuse so that the wire is no longer live. The report the DRFA received from Richard Gough, SSEN, Head of Thames Valley Region & Designated Engineer, is set out below:

"The SSEN distribution system assets associated with these lighting columns are in good condition and comply with statutory requirements, e.g. the Electricity, Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations.

The cables feeding the lighting columns are concentric cables with PVC outer insulation meaning they are effectively insulated, and the outer PVC covering is safe to touch; likewise the associated fuse carrier and neutral and earth connection blocks are sound and safe in situ. In comparison to modern standards, it is unusual for the fuse carrier and earth/neutral connections to be situated so high in the lighting column, however this is not an issue or breach of regulations/associated guidance.

SSEN is not the owner of the lighting columns and therefore I can't assess the condition of the assets and make determinations about the lifecycle and replacement requirements. It should be noted that SSEN is obliged by legislation to remove its assets (incoming cables, fuse carrier, earth/neutral connection blocks) from street furniture confirmed as being unsafe due to damage or degradation if the owner doesn't take the appropriate action to ensure safety. From the photographs ([please see our website](#)) gathered by my colleagues last week it can be determined the lighting columns are old and degraded to an extent, however there are no obvious signs that the current level of degradation requires SSEN to take action. The owner of the lighting columns should however be aware of their condition and have a plan in place to repair/replace them before they do become problematic and a potential public safety risk.

Finally, considering the age, approx 100 years, of these light columns, following a search of our records, unfortunately we have nothing on file for the light columns."

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SSEN also advised that the electricity supply to the street lamps is unmetered (not billed) and that this was fairly common across the UK.

Derby Road is un-registered and the lighting columns are not owned by the DRFA, SSEN or Reading Borough Council. However, following the report's findings and the need highlighted by SSEN for a plan to be put in place to resolve the issue, the DRFA will fund the repair/replacement of 10 street lighting columns (including street lamps Nos 5 and 7 located outside Ellesmere Close and Moss Close).

While the need to undertake reactive repairs is urgent, as volunteers, the replacement of such infrastructure is not within the DRFA's expertise. Committee members are aware that we need to be extremely cautious about accepting advice to remove/replace the old lighting columns, given that the street lighting columns form an important and significant part of the safety of pedestrians and all users of the road.

Lyn Anthony-Higgins, the DRFA Chair, wrote to the Chief Executive at Reading Borough Council on 21 January 2025 to seek the Council's support to work together with residents and businesses to provide the required specialist knowledge and expertise to improve the safe repairs/replacement of the lighting infrastructure, which the DRFA would fund.

The Council have confirmed that they will work with us and undertake the necessary works. The Council's Highway Officers and Milestone Infrastructure Ltd, the Council's term street lighting contractors, carried out a site visit on 12 February 2025.

We appreciate this is a lot of information, but thought it important to keep residents and businesses informed of what has been happening.

We will be in touch again once we have received the Council's written response and quotes following the site meeting.

Best wishes

The DRFA Committee