

Scaling New Heights in Leak Detection

2 months ago



Speaking exclusively to FM Business Daily, [SOS Leak Detection](#) CEO Paul Bateman outlines the company's renewed focus on supporting FM and commercial estates with fast, non-destructive detection and preventative solutions.

Having joined SOS Leak Detection six months ago, Paul Bateman is already shaping the company's next phase of growth. He brings a fresh, commercially-focused perspective to a market that is becoming increasingly important to FM and commercial property teams.

This fresh perspective may prove to be exactly what the business needs as it looks to expand beyond its traditional insurance market focus into the wider commercial and facilities management sectors.

A Career Built on Transformation

Paul's journey to SOS began with a qualification as a quantity surveyor, followed by a career spanning civil engineering, highways and railways. His experience encompasses roles across the entire stakeholder spectrum – client, contractor and subcontractor – providing what he describes as "a well-rounded view" of stakeholder management.

Paul's breadth of experience gives him a clear understanding of how FM, insurers, landlords and contractors operate. This perspective underpins SOS's shift towards building long-term partnerships in the FM sector, where reliability, reporting accuracy and speed are critical.

His recent career has been marked by significant business transformations. Paul was involved in a management buyout of a rail plant hire business in November 2018, backed by private equity, before exiting in November 2023.

"It was a tough time for the industry," he reflected. "There were a lot of headwinds to deal with – COVID, inflation, industrial action – but it enabled me to grow my experience and progress in my career."

Following a brief spell with a turnaround situation in South Wales, where he professionalised an owner-managed business and implemented digital solutions, Paul took some time off before being approached about the SOS opportunity in May 2024.

Seeing the Opportunity

What attracted Paul was the opportunity to take a high-performing insurance-led business – with 99 percent first-visit success and a 4.9 ★ Trustpilot rating – and position it more strongly in the FM and commercial markets, where demand for fast, non-destructive leak detection is growing.

"FM teams are under pressure," he explains. "Downtime, water loss, compliance obligations and tenant expectations all converge. What SOS offers is speed, national coverage and reporting that gives FM and estates managers the confidence that issues are identified, resolved and documented properly."

Having experienced both sides of business sales previously, Paul was keen to see this journey through to success. He noted that with backing from private equity firm YFM and a seasoned chairman, the foundations were in place for growth. "We're a small team. There's not lots of red

tape," he said. "It just needs somebody to come in, look at the team, look at the opportunities, reset the strategy, come up with a plan and deliver it."

Embracing Prevention and Technology

Central to the strategy is prevention. SOS is developing IoT-enabled monitoring and early-warning systems designed for FM portfolios, helping estates teams detect issues before disruption occurs.

The business is actively exploring partnerships with water retailers and envisages a joint venture approach that could offer comprehensive water management solutions to large property portfolios.

"Our aim is to partner with water retailers and estates-focused service providers to offer integrated solutions that reduce downtime and protect assets," Paul says.

The company is also investigating AI applications to streamline operations, from inbound jobs and triaging, through to reporting and invoicing.

"There are lots of things that we could make more efficient by using AI to help us," Paul stated. "Our intention would be to streamline a lot of the manual processes, allowing our staff to spend more time on value adding activities. This would also give us the ability to scale without the need to grow our back-office team."

Leading with Balance

Paul describes his leadership style as calm, structured and focused on empowering teams. "People perform at their best when expectations are clear and the environment is supportive," he explains.

"Within the world of private equity, it's all about pace, energy, building teams, being decisive and having

the ability to adapt to changing environments," he noted.

He also acknowledged the balance required between achieving results and recognising the long-term impact on team members who may continue with the business beyond his tenure.

"I'm here to do a job, and that is to take the business on its next stage of growth, creating job opportunities and delivering shareholder value."

Building on Strong Foundations

Paul is enthusiastic about SOS's existing strengths. He praised it as "a good, honest business" with a great reputation and national service capability.

SOS has a fully employed national team of specialist engineers – a model that differentiates it from many competitors. "Our engineers take real pride in their work," he says. "We meet 98 percent of SLAs consistently and find leaks on the first visit in 99 percent of cases."

Most importantly, Paul found a team genuinely invested in the business's success. "Everyone takes pride in what they do; they care about the business and want it to improve," he stated. "There are some that sit in the office until 7pm talking about other things that we should be doing, just trying to make the boat go faster."

Ambitious Targets Ahead

Looking ahead, Paul's focus is clear: establish a recognised preventative and diagnostic solution for FM portfolios, build long-term commercial relationships, and continue strengthening service performance. "If we keep doing what we say we'll do, and support FM teams with speed, accuracy and professionalism, the rest will follow."

"We're strongly recognised within the insurance market, where our national coverage and reporting standards are well established," Paul says. "We're now translating that same capability into the FM market, where consistent service, accuracy and transparency matter just as much."

Paul believes the opportunity is significant, particularly given the limited competition in dedicated leak detection. "There's not a lot of people in our space, really," he observed. "We are hoping to use our reputation and quality of service within the insurance sector to show why we are the best out there at the moment."

With education about leak detection services forming a key part of the growth strategy, Paul recognises the challenge ahead.

He acknowledges that leak detection is still misunderstood outside the insurance world, particularly in FM where responsibilities are broad and pressures high. "Part of our work is education – helping FMs see how early detection prevents disruption, protects assets, and cuts cost."

As SOS Leak Detection embarks on this ambitious transformation under Paul's leadership, the combination of strong foundations, clear vision and willingness to embrace new technologies and partnerships suggests the business is well-positioned to achieve its growth ambitions in the commercial FM sector.