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Cllr Elissa Swinglehurst

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Dear Cllr Swinglehurst,

Thank you for your letter of 6 July about the Action Plan for the Wye and for your kind words of congratulation to the Secretary of State. We have been asked to reply and we apologise for the delay in doing so.

Cleaning up our waterways and supporting nature's recovery are top priorities for the government. Moreover, we are committed to delivering the Environment Act targets, which include reducing nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment losses from agricultural lands. As you may be aware, we have committed to review the Environment Improvement Plan. We will develop a new statutory plan with delivery plans to meet each of our Environment Act targets. Cleaning up our waterways will be a focus of this.

We share your concerns around the decline of the River Wye and the level of pollution is unacceptable. The river is of great importance for biodiversity, home to native species such as Atlantic Salmon and White Clawed Crayfish, and it is cherished by residents and visitors alike.

We are continuing to work with the Welsh Government to assess how best to move forward on the River Wye, including coordinating local action and influencing the right changes on the ground. Your feedback and that of other stakeholders is incredibly valuable as this collaborative input will help us understand how best to proceed and address ongoing challenges.

Nonetheless, we recognise the impact diffuse pollution from agriculture continues to have in catchments across England, including on the River Wye. In the catchment, and nationally, we want to work with local partners and farmers – including through our regulations, advice programmes and incentive schemes – to reduce diffuse pollution whilst boosting food security and enabling growth. This includes through our commitment to the steady rollout of the Environmental Land Management schemes.

Yours sincerely,

Ministerial Contact Unit