

# Partnership Meeting

**Supplement 2** to the agenda for

## Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board

**Wednesday 16 April 2025**

**2.00 pm**

**Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane  
Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE**

		Pages
2.	<b>WELCOME TO RIVERS REPRESENTATIVE / VOICE OF THE RIVER</b>  A document setting out the governing principles for the seat on the board for the 'Voice of the River' is attached.	3 - 4
5.	<b>UPDATE FROM DEFRA ON £1MILLION FOR THE RIVER WYE</b>  A discussion document is attached, inviting board members to consider correspondence from Defra and points to be raised in response.	5 - 8
6.	<b>UPDATE FROM THE RIVER WYE STATUTORY OFFICERS' GROUP</b>  Further to the circulation of the River Wye Statutory Officers' Group (SOG) meeting slide deck in <a href="#">Supplement 1</a> , an update from Natural Resources Wales is attached.	9 - 12



# Voice of the River (NMB)

<b>Purpose</b>	The role of the Voice of the River is to influence decisions and actions that have an impact directly or indirectly upon the river, in line with the established guiding principles.
<b>Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the Board agreed to elect the role of Voice of the River to the Nutrient Management Board.</li> <li>• The role is appointed via an external recruitment process led by the established working group.</li> <li>• Membership to the role is entirely voluntary and is unremunerated.</li> <li>• The duration of the role is for a 2 year fixed period upon which it will be subject to a review by board members and the present incumbent.</li> </ul>
<b>Operating Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appointee will operate in the role under the following guiding principles as an appointed member of the Nutrient Management Board:</li> <li>• Someone who cares about the river</li> <li>• Someone who understands the science</li> <li>• Someone who has a strong, balanced sense about what needs to be done.</li> <li>• Someone who will not politicise.</li> <li>• Someone who is a skilled advocate</li> <li>• Someone who has knowledge of existing legislative frameworks.</li> <li>• Someone who can work constructively with others</li> </ul>
<b>Terms of Reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role as a member of the Board holds voting rights.</li> <li>• As a member of the NMB the role will be bound by the Nolan principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.</li> <li>• Conflict management – Mediation, noting the Chair reserves the right to terminate the role, in the event that differences cannot be resolved and progress of the board is hampered.</li> </ul>



**Notes - discussion document for NMB 16.4.25**

**The collaborative approach taken by Defra and Welsh Government is very welcome. As part of this process the NMB will be attended by Garreth Dunstall of DEFRA to gather views of the board and guests as to the scope of the proposed research or 'living lab'.**

**I would be grateful if you could read this e mail from Garreth in preparation for tomorrow and consider any points you may like to raise in response.**

I am getting in touch to give you an update on the research project and to ask for your help with the research 'scope'.

As you know, this is a significant piece of work which requires careful planning, which Defra and Welsh Government colleagues are progressing. I outline where we are in terms of project planning and structure below. In the interests of time however, I wanted to contact you today to help us kick-off a discussion about what should be in the research.

We are very grateful for the advice and suggestions you have provided in the previous weeks and months, setting out what you think the research should cover. We are considering this, alongside input from other stakeholders, and will shortly come back to this group with written proposals.

I will be attending the Nutrient Management Board on 16<sup>th</sup> April and can provide a further update then.

In the meantime, I would ask that you prepare your members to think again about what research is needed in the catchment and consider possible methods. Helping us to re-engage the local stakeholder in this way, will help ensure the research focusses on local issues and deliver the right solutions longer term.

How we plan to agree the scope, and other decisions throughout the project, is set out below:

**Decision making and governance**

- As noted, we are in the process of finalising our planned structures but would expect our 'working group' to instigate much of the work
- This working group will comprise Defra and Welsh Government officials, along with regulator officials (EA, NE and NRW)
- This group will make research proposals (e.g. scope, methods), which will be given to the 'steering group' to consider
- The steering group will comprise, WCP, NMB, Farm Hereford and other local stakeholders (TBC)
- This group will consider proposals, in line with project aims and objectives, and make recommendations

- The research 'advisory panel', will comprise official science and evidence experts from Defra, WG, NRW, EA and NRW
- The advisory panel will support or reject steering group recommendations, and explain why, and seek endorsement from the Project board
- Project Board will comprise senior officials from Defra and Welsh Government

#### Research project planning

- We are drafting an outline project plan to set out the sequence of tasks, over time, which need to be completed to deliver the research
- Broadly these will cover: 'Specification' (where we agree what the research should cover and why, which we'll use later to commission contractors to deliver the research); 'Planning' (where we agree structures and governance, to underpin decisions taken during the research, and ensure proper collaboration between parties); and 'Contracting' (where we manage commercial tasks around bids and contractors who will deliver the research)
- We will come back to this group once we have firmer details to share around the plan, noting importance of having clear timelines in place

There are a few other important points I want to make at this stage.

- We need to be clear on the commercial risks associated with this research, and make sure that we follow the necessary propriety around contractors. For that reason I would ask that you don't share any information about the research project with potential bidders for contracts, at this stage.
- Any actions which influence, or are seen to influence subsequent commercial decisions, or give preference to one contractor or business over another, would undermine the project
- As we shape the research, we want to prioritise actions which focus on farm level interventions and give effect to the 'living labs' approach we have trailed previously
- All research decisions must clearly demonstrate good value and correspond to wider government priorities.
- Our Deputy Director, Emma Donnelly, who recently joined the division, is keen to come and meet some of you soon. This should be a good opportunity to underscore the importance of collaboration between stakeholders and working cross border etc.

Looking forward to speaking to many of you next week, and if you have any questions in the meantime do please get in touch

Thanks

**Garreth Dunstall | G7 | Water (Environment and Public Health) | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

**I have done my best to produce a discussion document that reflects the progress made by DEFRA and starts the conversation about how we might respond. I have drafted this with the help and support of James Marsden and Kate Speke Adams.**

The five problems – High and low flows

Sedimentation of gravels/turbidity

Eutrophication

Temperature of water

Loss of biodiversity

plus

Chemicals of emerging concern

Pesticide/fungicide/herbicide

Invasive species

### **A Collaborative approach**

We are being asked to give consideration to the scope of research that might be undertaken as part of the funding for the living lab.

**We need to consider the role of plan making – the NMP and CMP25 as well as River Basin Management Plan, LNRS and others (including Land Use Framework and Carbon Budget 7) and how the data and evidence we already have, or will acquire as part of that process, will influence the decision making.**

### **The initial scope of research.**

We need to establish the ecological carrying capacity of the rivers – it is hoped that this will be part of the new DWPP, NMP/CMP25 which are in development.

Taking the main plans as a starting point do a data/evidence gap analysis including on a sub catchment level.

Consider missing or incomplete knowledge around causes and cures – for instance the determination as to whether legacy P losses are biologically active or inactive (May-Sept or winter) which is something WUF have proposed.

Consider ‘on farm’ evidence base for the efficacy of actions in order to ascertain cost benefit and environmental outcomes. Include local knowledge and lived experience as evidence as well as ‘hard data’ to quantify positive impact of sector changes. eg. Nutrient balance tool, Regenerative agriculture benefits.

Consider evidence base for the impact of actions in terms of locality/ co benefits/ acceptance/ outcomes

Consider need to understand societal resistance, culture change, socio-economic drivers and obstacles.

Legacy P – research to improve understanding of the role of total P in soils, the means to run down legacy P indices, and to identify possible pathways, trajectories and timelines.

Consider the early exploration of remediation. This may include research into soil remediation (biochar/phoslite/myco remediation), potential to limit legacy P losses through soil chemistry (calcium v magnesium).

Other potential areas of useful investigation:

A better dataset of soil indices.

Infiltration testing throughout and better knowledge shared about the impact of capped and tight soils on water retention during rainfall and drought.

### **Planned structure**

Working Group (Defra, WG officials plus EA, NE, NRW) will propose research scope and methodology to the

Steering Group (NMB/WCP/FH and others tbd) who will consider against objectives and make recommendation to the

Research Advisory Panel (official DEFRA/WG/NRW/EA/NE) who will support or reject the recommendation with explanation to

Project Board (senior officials DEFRA/WG) to sign off.

### **Comment:**

***In order to fully build on a collaborative approach it might be worth considering a blending of Working Group and Steering Group so the officials/ stat officers and local stakeholders (tbc) come together.***

Planned project scope

1. Specification – what research and why. This will underpin commissioning of contractor.
2. Planning – structures and governance
3. Contracting – the management of commercial tasks

As the project progresses a focus on farm level research is anticipated.

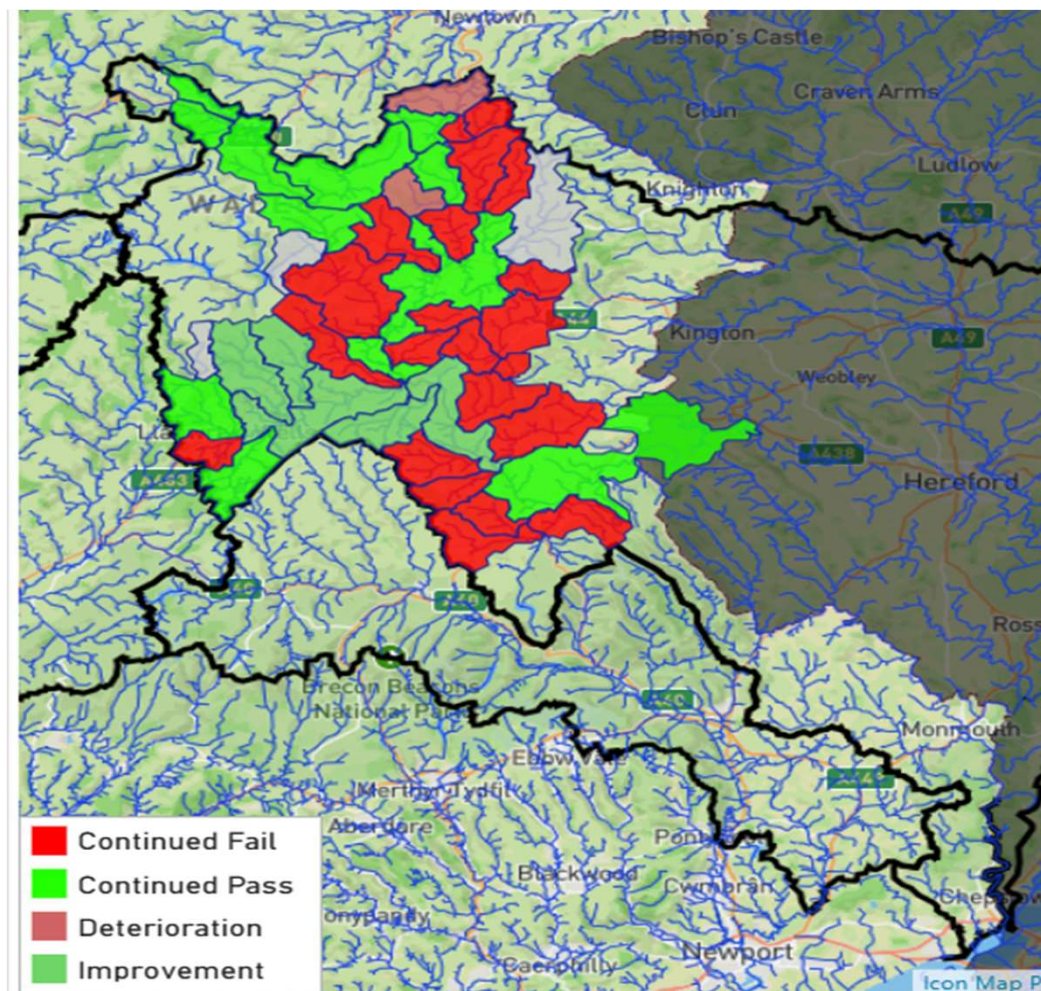


## 1. Latest Water Quality (WQ) Data

Natural Resources Wales / New water quality data sheds light on health of Wales's waters

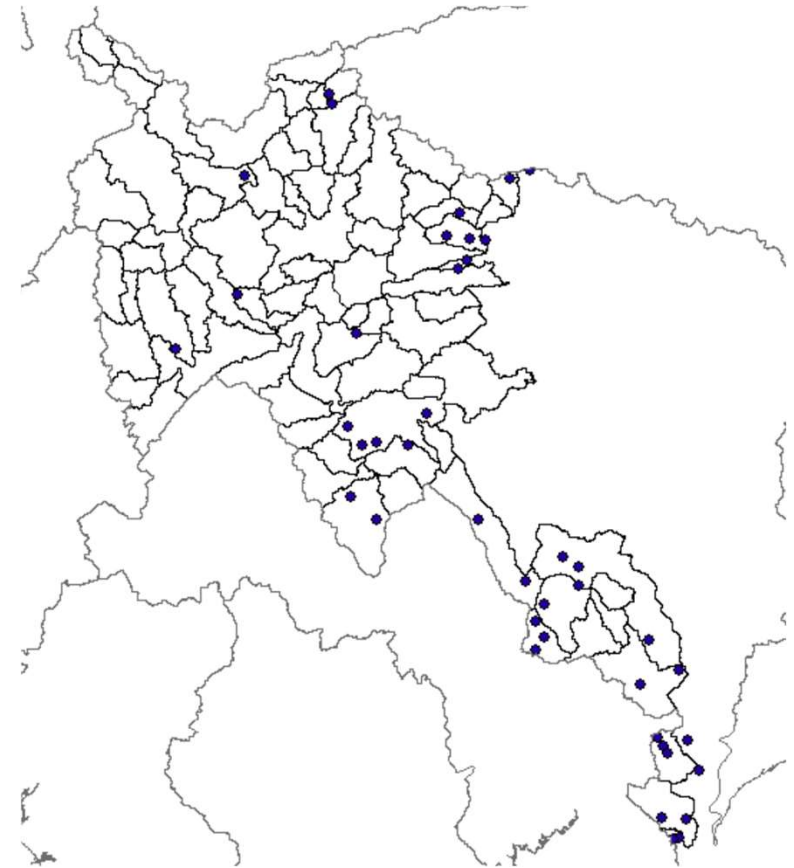
NRW has released its latest WQ data providing latest evidence of compliance against SAC targets and Water Framework directive classifications.

- o Focussing on Phosphorus and compliance against the tighter SAC targets there has been an overall improvement in the Wye since 2021.
- 5 x waterbodies in the Irfon catchment have all gone from fail in 2021 to pass in 2024.
- 2x waterbodies in the Ithon have seen a deterioration since 2021
- The furthest downstream waterbody on the Wye has also improved and is no longer failing for P removing the requirement for nutrient neutrality for this catchment



## 2. Regulatory Work 24-25 Agri sector

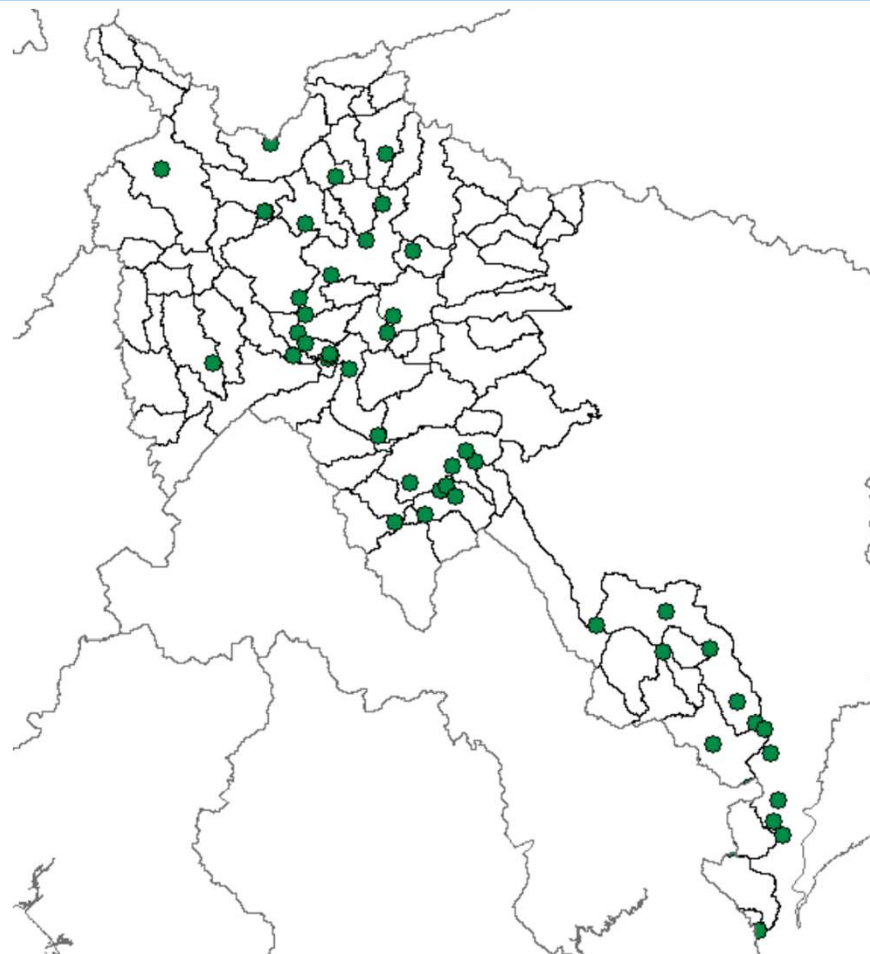
- 49 inspections against the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations (CoAPR) [The Water Resources \(Control of Agricultural Pollution\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2021: guidance for farmers and land managers | GOV.WALES](#)
- Inspection programme is prioritised for higher risk farms and will include unpermitted poultry units.
- Of those inspected 15 were found to be non-compliant.
- We are working with farmers to bring them into compliance. As cases are still live, we are unable to share details at this time.
- A further 22 compliance visits were made to permitted intensive poultry farms.



### 3. Regulatory Work 24-25 Water Sector

58x regulatory assessments were made of our permitted  
Water quality discharge sites

Our programme is again prioritised on risk or  
⇒ incident driven.



River Wye SOG

#### 4. Staff Changes / Recruitment

- NRW Chair Sir David Henshaw will be stepping down as his tenure ends in October – recruitment of a new Chair already underway (led by WG)
- NRW CEO Claire Pillman has decided to retire following a period of ill health- recruitment of her replacement will commence on appointment of new Chair.
- 2 New permanent Team Leaders now appointed to frontline teams covering the Wye catchment, with Jenny Phillips (South Powys) and Liz Park (North Powys) appointed permanently after 2-year recruitment freeze.
- A number of other NRW vacancies are now being advertised externally on our website .