Notes of the meeting of Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board held in Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Wednesday 21 January 2026 at 2.00 pm

Chairperson:

Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst	Herefordshire Council

Voting members present in person:

Merry Albright	Herefordshire Construction Industry Representative
Louise Bodnar	Voice of the River
Simon Evans	The Wye and Usk Foundation
David Gillam	Save the Wye
Christine Hugh-Jones	Council for Protection of Rural Wales
Andrew McRobb	Council for Protection of Rural England
Stuart Smith	Wye Salmon Association
Pat Stirling	Friends of the Upper Wye

Voting members in attendance remotely:

Liz Bickerton	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
Councillor Jackie Charlton	Powys County Council
Helen Dale	Country Land and Business Association
Nick Day	The Friends of the Lower Wye
Sarenta King	Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
Councillor Catrin Maby	Monmouthshire County Council
Councillor Andrew McDermid	Forest of Dean District Council

Other participants present in person:

Claire Minett	Natural England
Martin Quine	Environment Agency

Other participants in attendance remotely:

Emma Guy	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
Daniel Humphreys	Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water
Craig O'Connor	Monmouthshire County Council
Ann Weedy	Natural Resources Wales

Support officers:

Ben Baugh	Herefordshire Council
Gemma Dando	Herefordshire Council
Donna Thornton	Herefordshire Council
Judith Whateley	Herefordshire Council
Bradley Willson	Herefordshire Council

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were recorded from Gordon Green, with Stuart Smith present as the representative for the Wye Salmon Association.

29. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the previous meeting held on 22 October 2025 were agreed.

30. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The full details of the context and question from James Marsden was published in advance of the meeting, Questions from members of the public (link). The question being:

> 'Whether, and if not why not, the Board will adopt and promote a nutrient and sediment target for the River Wye/Lugg SSSIs and SAC aligned with EIP25 Commitment 26, such as: *Reduction in total N, P and sediment pollution (tonnes) from agriculture by at least 18% by December 2030 from 2018 baseline.*
>
> The new Wye Catchment Management Plan (CMP) should at least align with EIP25, and arguably should be more ambitious, so a nutrient and sediment target (eg as proposed above) could be adopted now without pre-empting what the CMP may say about the 'what, where, how and who by when' trajectories to achieve the target?'

The Chairperson commented on the need to explore alignment between the Nutrient Management Plan and the Catchment Management Plan. James Marsden emphasised that the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP) included legal binding targets but there was the option to go further.

It was moved that the new Nutrient Management Plan, as and when it was scoped and designed, needed to at the least accord with the legally binding targets.

31. DIFFUSE WATER POLLUTION PLAN (DWPP) UPDATE

The main points of the discussion on the 'Diffuse Water Pollution Plan - River Wye Special Area of Conservation, November 2025' (DWPP) included:

a. Pat Stirling made observations about the identified issues with diffuse agricultural pollution, particularly run-off, and the suite of mitigation measures, noting that a focus on regulatory compliance would not deliver the reductions needed. Martin Quine said that the mitigation measures would contribute towards reductions but acknowledged that there would still be a gap, highlighting the need for further research to identify additional measures and mechanisms. In response to a question about the level of commitment to deliver the range of options presented, Martin Quine explained that: the DWPP was an updated evidence base which identified the actions needed to reduce nutrients, albeit it did not come with funding; there was delivery against some actions already and others required more investment or work with the supply chain; significant resources were already being deployed in this area; and the DWPP provided the evidence for the direction of travel.

b. Pat Stirling requested that best efforts be made to produce a forecast of what would be achieved, based on the actions identified in the document, with specified timeframes. Andrew McRobb supported this request, stating that the board needed to understand what was going to happen and by when, along with measurable impacts such as reductions in kilograms. Councillor Maby endorsed this suggestion; comments were also made about the need to combine the English and Welsh evidence, and the need to identify and highlight resource issues. At the discretion of the Chairperson, James Marsden reminded the board of the Environment Improvement Plan targets and said that it should be feasible to plot a trajectory to identify the extent of the gap; a comment was also made about the reductions to the budgets of environmental regulators over the past decade.

c. Councillor Charlton said that it was clear from the DWPP and the Evidence Base for Wales that no single agency or authority could achieve the priorities on its own

but there was currently a lack of a clear strategy for collaboration, to assign responsibilities, or to monitor progress; adding that, despite ongoing uncertainties, action was necessary and on a cross-border basis.

d. Louise Bodnar questioned the extent to which the board was able to input into the strategic priorities and said that existing research pulled together by WWF into the effectiveness of different mechanisms to reduce diffuse pollution should be utilised. Claire Minett noted that there was an item on the Nutrient Management Plan later in the agenda and outlined how Natural England used research and evidence to target advice on farming practices.

e. Louise Bodnar commented on the effectiveness of buffers in reducing diffuse pollution into rivers, streams, and ditches but noted that this was not identified as a strategic priority. Claire Minett commented on voluntary initiatives and need for collaboration across sectors.

f. Merry Albright considered that: the DWPP did not say what actions were required and by when to bring the river into favourable condition; further assessment of a Water Protection Zone was needed, as uptake and delivery of voluntary measures could not be relied upon; the work of Welsh Water had been acknowledged appropriately; developers had made significant contributions to offset nutrient loads from new housing but this could not remedy diffuse pollution from other sources; the '85% reduction of loads' for the Lugg should be quantified in terms of kilograms; and targeted action may provide better value for money.

g. Martin Quine clarified that the judicial review concerning the Water Framework Directive was distinct from the judicial review related to the Habitats Regulations, with each involving different legal frameworks and obligations. Clarifications were also provided about the designations and targets in different parts of the catchment.

h. In response to a question from David Gillam, Martin Quine commented on the potential for a feasibility study for a Water Protection Zone but a timeframe or indicative process for this could not be provided.

i. The Chairperson noted that, in addition to Herefordshire Council's motion in favour of a Water Protection Zone for the whole of the River Wye system (Full Council minute 31 of 28 January 2022 refers), the Wye Catchment Nutrient Management Board had voted to submit its own request in January 2022.

j. The Chairperson commented on the need to explore the cost benefit analysis of potential actions, including broader opportunities such as flood prevention, flood alleviation, and biodiversity net gain.

k. A request was re-iterated for an indication for the reduction that would be achieved and over what timeframe. The Chairperson questioned whether it would be possible to expand the DWPP to include such a trajectory. Martin Quine said that the DWPP had been developed jointly by the Environment Agency and Natural England, and that feedback would be provided to the agencies.

l. Simon Evans commented on: the significance of other actions to meet water quality conservation objectives; the difference between phosphate and phosphorus; and the implications of soil loss in the vicinity of the Black Mountains.

m. Councillor McDermid commented on the need to raise issues at a higher political level, including the constraints of voluntary approaches and concerns about strategic issues such as water supply into the future, housebuilding commitments, and wastewater management.

n. The Chairperson questioned whether the number of Ground Water Source Protection Zones within the English portion of the catchment, as referenced at page 67 of the DWPP, had resulted in guidance being issued. A response could not be provided in the meeting.

32. WELSH EVIDENCE BASE UPDATE

The main points of the discussion on the 'Phosphorus in the River Wye - Evidence Base for Wales, Issue 4, 8 December 2025' (Evidence Base for Wales) included:

1. The Chairperson noted the need for an overarching document to reconcile differences of approach taken to the Evidence Base for Wales and the Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP).

2. Simon Evans commented that: references to phosphorus should be reviewed; the document was well structured; modelling using Farmscoper V5 was endorsed; and the findings of UKTAG and the Wye Algae Project in relation to phosphate should be noted.

3. Jed Knight said that there was a lack of ownership in the document in terms of some of the recommendations and actions currently but acknowledged that this may be addressed through the Nutrient Management Plan.

4. Councillor Maby queried the percentage figures for 'attributed sources of phosphorus in the failing waterbodies', as mentioned in the Executive Summary; it was noted that Figure 11 showed total sector contributions.

5. Merry Albright commented on the need for universal information and noted potential challenges in aligning the Evidence Base for Wales and the DWPP.

6. Councillor Charlton commented on: differences in the presentation in the two documents; the need to assist laypersons in understanding the situation and the proposed actions; the limitations of voluntary agriculture mitigation measures; and the positive actions being undertaken by water companies.

7. Merry Albright re-iterated the need for quantification, especially as this would help to demonstrate the outcomes being delivered.

8. The Chairperson urged delivery partners and board members cited on actions applying to the production or control of nutrients to report such matters to the board.

9. In response to questions from the Chairperson, Ann Weedy commented on the phasing of the Control of Agriculture Pollution Regulations and said that it would take time to increase compliance and for associated improvements to become evident; hence the sentence 'It is recommended that compliance with existing regulation is improved before NRW introduce increased controls as part of a WPZ.'

10. The Chairperson acknowledged the concerns expressed by other board members regarding the uptake and implementation of voluntary measures and the necessity for a more assertive stance, noting 'Do not apply P fertilisers to high P index soils' as an example.

11. Andrew McRobb said that it would have been preferable if both documents had been commissioned in identical formats but noted the different drivers for each.

33. NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (NMP)

The Chairperson outlined options for the development of the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) and invited comments from board members and other meeting participants. The principal points included:

i. Gemma Dando reported that: the Statutory Officers' Group had identified a preference for single plan, with a single set of objectives, given the need to pull in the same direction and work to the same goals; and Herefordshire Council would be prepared to undertake a coordinating role.

ii. Pat Stirling said that: the proposal was welcomed, particularly given the overlap between the Nutrient Management Plan and the Catchment Management Plan; the process would need to be communicated to the respective members; the Evidence Base for Wales identified measures per sub catchment area and this level of specificity would be needed in the plan; and the need to improve the ecological status of the catchment on both sides of the border should be recognised.

iii. The Chairperson suggested that interim targets and trajectories should be included, and consideration should be given to lifting the evidence base further, particularly to assist regulators on matters such as voluntary agriculture mitigation measures and Water Protection Zones.

iv. Andrew McRobb noted that there was general consensus for a single plan, but consideration should be given to discrete elements for the Nutrient Management Board given its specific responsibilities and accountabilities.

v. In response to a question from the Chairperson, Pat Stirling advised that the membership of the task and finish group for the Catchment Management Plan had not yet been announced but he supported the inclusion of a representative from the Nutrient Management Board.

Later in the discussion, the following additional points were made: Helen Dale requested agricultural sector representation; and the Chairperson said that the Nutrient Management Board nominee would need to represent the diverse viewpoints of board members.

vi. In response to a question from Pat Stirling, Claire Minett reported that Natural England had undertaken condition assessments for the Lugg and the Wye, and subsequent analysis may inform whether a nitrogen target was applicable or necessary; data would be shared at the earliest opportunity. Ann Weedy reported that SAC and WFD compliance had been undertaken in 2024, with the next assessment due in 2027.

vii. Helen Dale supported a single plan, subject to it being produced collaboratively, with any proposals informed by risk and cost assessments.

viii. Liz Bickerton made observations about the need for an actions focused approach and for measurable indicators to ensure that progress was being made.

ix. Councillor Charlton said that it was important to have clarity around the ownership of the plan, with a preference expressed for ownership by the Nutrient Management Board.

x. Gemma Dando clarified that the Herefordshire Council resource offer was around the initial development of the plan. It was noted various issues would need to be explored, including ownership and the roles of each organisation, mindful of the separate decision-making arrangements.

xi. Louise Bodnar invited the Environment Agency to consider whether any effective and actionable measures identified through the Nutrient Management Plan would help to progress the case for a Water Protection Zone. It was suggested that funding should be used on applied research to test the effectiveness of the actions in the Nutrient Management Plan.

Martin Quine confirmed that the Environment Agency considered data and evidence from various sources.

It was moved that the Nutrient Management Plan forms in some way part of the Catchment Management Plan, as a detachable document and which will be overseen in terms of the delivery of actions by the Nutrient Management Board.

34. UPDATES FROM THE RIVER WYE STATUTORY OFFICERS' GROUP (SOG)

The Chairperson welcomed the updates and invited comments from board members and other meeting participants. The principal points included:

- Gemma Danda reported that, following comments made by the board at the last meeting (note 17 of 22 October 2025 refers (link)), the SOG had considered its purpose and ways of working, and that there was an appetite to refresh the terms of reference. The board was invited to provide further feedback about the information being shared.

Councillor Charlton said that the board should review the arrangements regularly and provided an update on officer representation from Powys County Council.

- Merry Albright made a number of points, including: the 'River Wye Special Area of Conservation 2025 growing season monitoring summary report' was interesting but it was considered unfortunate that monitoring had been paused at two sites during part of 2023 and all of 2024, and that more testing points would be helpful; attention was drawn to the RePhoKUs document 'Soil Phosphorus Status and Water Quality in the River Wye, Phase 3: Surplus P and Subsoil P Enrichment of Wye Soils', particularly the ongoing issues with legacy P; and, with reference made to national funding opportunities identified in the Natural England slide, it was suggested that there should be clarity about the allocations for initiatives in the catchment and the nutrient reductions that were anticipated.

- Pat Stirling considered that there was a need to articulate targets and measurable outcomes to provide insight into progress over time.

35. WIDER UPDATES FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

It was noted that that The Wye and Usk Foundation would endeavour to provide written updates to the board more often.

36. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted.

[Note: This was moved subsequently to Wednesday 29 April 2026, 2.00 pm]

The meeting ended at 4.09 pm **Chairperson**