

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 29 April 2026 at 2.00 pm

Chairperson:

Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst Herefordshire Council

Voting members present in person:

Liz Bickerton	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
Louise Bodnar	Voice of the River
Gordon Green	Wye Salmon Association
Andrew McRobb	Council for Protection of Rural England
Pat Stirling	Friends of the Upper Wye
Rosie Wilson	Herefordshire Wildlife Trust

Voting members in attendance remotely:

Helen Dale	Country Land and Business Association
Christine Hugh-Jones	Council for Protection of Rural Wales
Georgie Hyde	National Farmers Union
Sarenta King	Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
Councillor Catrin Maby	Monmouthshire County Council
Councillor Chris McFarling	Forest of Dean District Council

Other participants present in person:

Gemma Dando	Herefordshire Council
Daniel Humphreys	Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water
Claire Minett	Natural England
Martin Quine	Environment Agency
Dan Smith	Herefordshire Rural Hub
Kate Speke Adams	Herefordshire Rural Hub
Rosanna Willmott	Herefordshire Council

Other participants in attendance remotely:

Craig O'Connor	Monmouthshire County Council
Ann Weedy	Natural Resources Wales
Bradley Willson	Herefordshire Council

Support officers:

Ben Baugh	Herefordshire Council
Matthew Evans	Herefordshire Council

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairperson welcomed the attendees and explained that the meeting was being recorded by Eighty Sita Productions for a film project about the Charter for the River Wye.

The following apologies for absence (and substitutions) were recorded:

- Merry Albright, Herefordshire Construction Industry Representative
- Councillor Jackie Charlton, Powys County Council

- Nick Day, The Friends of the Lower Wye
- Simon Evans, The Wye and Usk Foundation
- Saul Herbert, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (Rosie Williams was present as a substitute)
- Councillor Andrew McDermid, Forest of Dean District Council (Councillor Chris McFarling was present as a substitute)

38. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the previous meeting held on 21 January 2026 were agreed.

With reference made to note 31 (Diffuse Water Pollution Plan Update) paragraph n., it was noted that a response was awaited in relation to the query '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.'

[Note: subsequent to the meeting, a response was provided to the Chairperson by Martin Quine; available here [Matters arising from the meeting held on 29 April 2026](#)]

39. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Attention was drawn to the questions and responses document published in advance of the meeting; available here [Questions and responses received, as at 29 April 2026 \(link\)](#).

40. NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (NMP) - INTRODUCTION OF APPROACH

Oliver Bowers (Haskoning UK Ltd) reported on progress with the development of the Wye Catchment Management Plan (CMP) and how it related to the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP). The principal points included:

1. An evidence review was underway, involving the collation of data and other information sources, to develop an evidence-led report that would identify the key issues and pressures within the catchment.
2. There would be an options assessment which would also explore synergies in relation to potential solutions.
3. An overall options appraisal would be conducted to develop a shortlist of solutions, supported by modelling, with the overall aim of attaining favourable condition.
4. Four key themes were identified: flooding, geomorphological constraints, water quality, and ecology.
5. There were ten sub-catchments, with some areas further subdivided to facilitate more detailed analysis where required.
6. The action plan would need to be implementable and include defined timescales, potential funding opportunities, assigned responsibilities, and monitoring arrangements. It was noted that data gaps may be identified and the action plan would address this, including consideration of feasibility studies where applicable.
7. It was anticipated that the CMP would span approximately ten years, with periodic updates scheduled.
8. It was intended that the options assessment would be completed by the end of summer 2026, followed by a period of stakeholder engagement.

9. The evidence base, modelling, and framework of the CMP would be utilised to develop a standalone NMP, incorporating relevant levels, targets, and bespoke elements. It was noted that there was a need to quantify and account for significant new housing growth in the catchment.
10. The team involved in the development of the CMP would be mostly the same for the subsequent development of the NMP.

In response to questions from the Chairperson, Oliver Bowers acknowledged the need to look at: evidence in terms of phosphate and total phosphorus; levels of ammonia; the condition assessments of the Wye and Lugg being conducted by Natural England, as well as the Welsh Evidence Base. The Chairperson highlighted the general principle moved at the previous meeting 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'; [note 30 of 21 January 2026 refers \(link\)](#).

Liz Bickerton commented on the need for action plan timings to align with budget cycles. In response to a question, Oliver Bowers indicated that, while additional modelling, engagement and adoption processes would be necessary, there should not be a substantial time gap between the CMP and the NMP.

In response to a question from Kate Speke Adams, it was reported that WSIMOD (Water System Integrated Model) would be utilised for water quality modelling given the scale of the catchment.

Helen Dale commented that consultation and engagement activities should include the broader agricultural sector. It was confirmed that an engagement plan was being developed. The Chairperson said that the board was the obvious route for consultation and engagement.

In response to a question from Pat Stirling, Claire Minett reported that the condition assessment for the Lugg had been largely completed, with work continuing for the Wye; this evidence would be appraised to determine if a nitrogen target was appropriate.

In response to a question from Christine Hugh-Jones, it was confirmed that the entirety of the catchment would be covered.

The Chairperson thanked Oliver Bowers and requested that the board receive ongoing updates regarding progress.

41. THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND (UWE BRISTOL) HAS BEEN AWARDED £1 MILLION TO LEAD RESEARCH INTO AGRICULTURAL POLLUTION IN THE RIVER WYE

Dr Rounaq Nayak (Senior Lecturer in Farming Systems, UWE Bristol) briefed the board. The principal points included:

- i. UWE Bristol had been awarded funding in April 2026 for the three-year research project.
- ii. The project would work directly with farmers to test the effectiveness of interventions and to generate evidence to inform policy development for the Wye, and for catchment programmes nationally.
- iii. There would be a 'living labs' approach to co-design solutions, delivered in partnership with Hartpury University and Hartpury College, with the engagement of farmers and other stakeholders in the catchment.

iv. The first phase would include participatory workshops over the next five months.

In view of the interconnected nature of the various projects and initiatives within the catchment, the Chairperson commented on the importance of establishing effective information flow to the Nutrient Management Board and to the Wye Catchment Partnership.

In response to a question from Councillor McFarling, Rounaq Nayak said that farm selection criteria were to be defined and would be informed by the findings of the participatory workshops and assessment of the feasibility of potential interventions.

It was noted that there would be engagement with farmers in both England and Wales.

Louise Bodnar, as the Voice of the River, expressed concern that the framing for the project appeared to be around the feasibility of interventions for farming businesses rather than the needs of the Wye and the species and habitats dependent upon it; adding that adjustments to 'business as usual' would not be enough to solve the problems for the river. Rounaq Nayak said that the participatory workshops would engage a diverse range of stakeholders and facilitate candid conversations about the issues.

Pat Stirling noted the need for due diligence within the project but felt that the opportunity should not be missed to share evidence and understanding obtained through the work on the Wye Catchment Management Plan.

It was noted that Rounaq Nayak was due to meet with the Wye Catchment Partnership at the end of May 2026.

Helen Dale commented that the Country Land and Business Association and the National Farmers' Union could assist with farmer and landowner engagement.

The Chairperson thanked Rounaq Nayak and noted that board members were keen to engage with the project as it moved forward.

[Note: subsequent to the meeting, a briefing note was provided; available here [Wye Catchment Living Labs Programme \(link\)](#)]

42. NUTRIENT BALANCE PROJECT

Dan Smith (Hub Farm Facilitator, Herefordshire Rural Hub) delivered the presentation [Wye Nutrient Balance Pilot Programme \(link\)](#) with the slide headings: Pilot programme; Nutrient imports by category; Nutrient exports by category; Nutrient balance kg/ha, and Import vs Export; Nutrient load scenarios; What next?; and Garnstone Farms – Case Study Nutrient Balance 2022, and 2024.

The Chairperson commented on the value of the project in adding data, granularity, and understanding on a farm by farm basis which would be key to identifying the right actions. It was suggested that sharing further details on the changes to the business in the identified case study would be beneficial. Dan Smith said that the case studies were going to be developed further and in accessible formats, including videos.

In response to a question from Andrew McRobb, Dan Smith commented on some of the factors that had impacted on nutrient balance, and emphasised the importance of engagement with farmers and knowledge exchange.

Pat Stirling noted the environmental and financial benefits of reducing imported fertilisers. In response to a question about soil testing, Dan Smith drew attention to the

next agenda item and commented on the utility of increasing the 'tools within the box' to provide tangible answers and to bring about effective change.

In response to questions from Louise Bodnar, Dan Smith clarified that pilot was undertaken in two years, and commented on engagement with the supply chain, including conversations outside of the catchment.

In response to a further question from Pat Stirling, Dan Smith said that the nitrogen figures were unexpectedly high but, as excesses could be quantified in budgeting terms, increased understanding could be a potential driver for behavioural change. Kate Speke Adams observed that the situation illustrated the limitations of regulatory approaches alone, as nutrient excesses through livestock feed had been overlooked for many years. Pat Stirling emphasised the need to work together for the benefit of the environment and for industries in the catchment.

The Chairperson thanked Dan Smith and noted that it was important for the board to look at nitrogen, as well phosphate and total phosphorus.

43. UNLOCKING SOIL LEGACY PHOSPHORUS: IMPROVING NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT THROUGH TOTAL PHOSPHATE SOIL TESTING IN THE WYE CATCHMENT

Kate Speke Adams (Herefordshire Rural Hub) delivered the presentation [Total P Testing Pilot \(link\)](#), with the slide headings: Background and rationale; Approach taken; Key findings; More questions than answers...; and What next?. The agenda pack included the paper [Total Phosphorus Soil Testing Pilot - Project Report \(link\)](#).

The Chairperson made a number of comments, including: the project was commended and the participants were thanked for their contributions; multiple related strands of research and work were emerging which needed to be joined up, such as collaborative efforts in terms of location testing; and there was a need to look at issues holistically, including the significance of nutrient accumulation.

Louise Bodnar commented on established scientific principles in terms of how legacy phosphate could be accessed for soil health enhancement and queried whether this could be communicated to farmers. Kate Speke Adams commented that many farmers were adopting regenerative practices and had active soils, but there were limitations in quantifying the effects of measures in the short-term and, given the urgency around river water quality, there was a need to understand what should be prioritised. There was a brief discussion about interrelating factors and ways to deliver the most effective results. Dan Smith acknowledged the importance of holistic approaches but noted that outcomes also depended on specific management decisions in relation to local soil types.

The Chairperson commented on opportunities to deliver both environmental and financial benefits.

44. GYPSUM FOR PHOSPHATE RETENTION IN SOIL

Rosie Willmott (Herefordshire Council) delivered the presentation [Gypsum: Reducing Phosphate Loss in Herefordshire Soils \(link\)](#), with the slide headings: Gypsum; International evidence base; Rapid analysis of Herefordshire soils; Outcomes; and Next steps. The agenda pack included the paper [The effects of gypsum application to agricultural soils on water extractable phosphorus \(link\)](#).

The Chairperson thanked Rosie Willmott for the presentation, Ben Taylor-Davis for highlighting the concept, and the farmers for their involvement in the research. Whilst recognising that this project involved a lab based trial, it was noted that the outcomes were very encouraging.

In response to questions, Rosie Willmott explained the next steps, including working with Lancaster University and a consultant to undertake a field scale trial from the autumn, and acknowledged that the articulation of co-benefits should be a key principle in engagement with the farming community.

Pat Stirling commended the approach and the early results, but emphasised that phosphorus was not the only issue affecting river health (e.g. nitrogen, ammonia, and sediment) and encouraged statutory agencies to adopt an integrated approach. Claire Minett said that the whole picture was fundamental for the solutions, and consideration would be given to new evidence and research, but phosphorus remained a significant issue, particularly for the Lugg. Ann Weedy said that the need to approach river health holistically was recognised, and commented on nutrient levels in Wales.

Georgie Hyde highlighted recent permitting changes for storing and spreading gypsum.

Andrew McRobb also commented on the issues with high levels of nitrate and the need for broad perspectives given the evolving information.

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

Gemma Dando reported that, following feedback from the board about the information provided to the Nutrient Management Board (NMB), the SOG had met to explore its future role, particularly in the context of the emerging Nutrient Management Plan. It was noted that consideration was being given to its purpose, terms of reference, and membership. It was proposed that representatives of the NMB and the SOG meet before the next board meeting to advance this work.

Andrew McRobb, Pat Stirling, and Councillor Swinglehurst volunteered to support this activity; Merry Albright expressed interest following the board meeting.

46. WIDER UPDATES FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Board members provided the following verbal updates:

- The Chairperson advised that, further to the Herefordshire Council motion in December 2025, [The Charter for the River Wye \(link\)](#) would be launched formally at an event on 24 May 2026 in Hay-on-Wye. Board members and other participants were encouraged to attend.

It was noted that a governance process was underway in Powys to seek support for the adoption of the Charter.

- Martin Quine reported that the River Wye Data Analysis Report 2025 would be released shortly.

[Note: the report was published on 6 June 2026; available here [Engage Environment Agency: River Wye Water Quality webpage \(link\)](#)]

Martin Quine also reported on: the appointment of an agricultural enforcement lead for the West Midlands; and the early stages of a Fixed Monetary Penalties (FMP) trial.

[Note: subsequent to the meeting, further detail about the FMP trial was provided to the Chairperson by Martin Quine; available here [Matters arising from the meeting held on 29 April 2026 \(link\)](#)]

- Louise Bodnar commented on a case study conducted in Denmark regarding the mitigation of river pollution through multiple mechanisms, including livestock reduction and nutrient regulations, and how these findings could inform the development of measures or trading schemes through the Wye Catchment Management Plan and Nutrient Management Plan.
- Ann Weedy reported that Natural Resource Wales had recently updated guidance on [Silage, slurry and other livestock manure storage \(link\)](#), and that funding had been secured for a new role in the Upper Wye Catchment Restoration Team to support engagement and targeted campaign work over the twelve months.
- The Chairperson said that updates would be provided by Herefordshire Council, including information about progress with the Herefordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS); available here [Matters arising from the meeting held on 29 April 2026 \(link\)](#).
- Andrew McRobb reported that the Hedgerow Heroes project had worked with 18 farms in Herefordshire to plant and restore approximately 10km of hedgerow during the planting season.

47. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The schedule of future meetings was noted, as follows:

~~Wednesday 24 June 2026, 2.00 pm~~ [moved to [Monday 6 July 2026, 2.00 pm](#)]
[Wednesday 7 October 2026, 2.00 pm](#)
[Wednesday 20 January 2027, 2.00 pm](#)
[Wednesday 3 March 2027, 2.00 pm](#)
[Wednesday 7 July 2027, 2.00 pm](#)
[Wednesday 6 October 2027, 2.00 pm](#)

The meeting ended at 4.02 pm

Chairperson