

29 June 2022

### 1. Water Protection Zone request (action from March NMB meeting)

Water protection Zones (WPZs) are existing mechanisms under the Water Resources Act 1991, to protect sensitive water bodies from the impacts of pollution and other harmful activities. In Wales designating an area as a WPZ is the responsibility of Welsh Ministers.

WPZs are an option if the weight of evidence suggests other measures and mechanisms will not achieve the required environmental standards.

Currently NRW's effort is focussed on identifying the causes of failure and seeking to address these by existing mechanisms. Through this process evidence will be collated of the need for any additional regulation, such as WPZs.

### 2. Wye Catchment activities

- All pig units in the Lugg catchment have been visited during spring 2022-with follow up work now progressing on those farms found to have issues. Further work also progressing on pig units in the wider catchment. Most of these units are below threshold for environmental permits (>2000 pigs or >750 sows).
- Work over the summer is targeting permitted intensive poultry units (>40 000 birds) now avian flu restrictions are lifted.
- Follow-up work is also being done on Dairy sector to ensure recommendations from previous visits under Dairy Project have been completed as new agricultural regs in Wales continue to be implemented with extended requirements for manure storage and containment coming in.
- Ongoing discussions with Welsh Government about the potential extension of this project to cover Beef/Pig and Poultry sectors.
- Water Company regulation  
A number Operator Self-Monitoring (OSM) Inspections have been carried out this year of Dwr Cymru Welsh Water assets, those targeted are on failing catchments or have had failures, a number of issues have been reported and follow up work undertaken.

### 3. Incidents

- We have received reports of suspected algal blooms, mainly around Llangorse lake and the River Llynfi. Investigations into possible sources are ongoing.
- Also responding to a number of reports of run off from field heaps, and other sediment run off.
- Warning letters have been issued for 6 reports and 1 advice and guidance.

- We also attended two low level fuel spills going into the Wye out of hours and one report of a fish kill on a small brook likely to have been the result of low flows in the area.
- 1 casefile is being compiled for a land spreading incident impacting on the Wye in March.

#### 4. NRW's SAC Rivers Project

A project has been running in NRW for the SAC rivers water quality issues we first reported in 2020. This project is required to enable NRW to fulfil its statutory obligations for the sustainable management of natural resources and our well-being duties with respect to the 9 Riverine SACs listed in the Habitats Directive. Delivering the SAC Rivers project, investigating and tackling phosphate pollution for rivers including the Wye, Usk, Cleddau, lower Teifi and the Dee, is part of the NRW Corporate Plan. Tackling water quality in Wales is also a key priority for Welsh Government.

#### Latest update

- We will be updating our Planning advice on our web site hopefully in July. We have now received the legal advice and a draft has been shared with the Planning sub-group. We've received several comments and have been working to address these where possible.
- Constructed Wetlands Policy Position Statement has been approved internally by RBB in March and is now out for consultation until July. Expected to be published on our web site in September.
- We are developing a policy position statement on nutrient neutrality principles. This will go to the Project Board in June. We have commissioned further work to develop an OGN for staff on nutrient calculators which started in March.
- Nutrient Management Boards (NMBs) are being set up for the failing SAC rivers (Wye already has a NMB) and NRW will be represented. The first meeting for the Cleddau, Teifi and Tywi NMBs occurred in mid-March. There are further meetings scheduled for June/July 2022.
- Carmarthenshire County Council have published the Nutrient Calculator developed by Ricardo on their [website in test mode](#). Although NRW has received a presentation by the consultants on the calculator we have yet to receive the technical report to comment on hence cannot issue an opinion at this stage.
- We have contracted out work to help us with potential screening criteria for small permit applications. We have received draft reports and are awaiting a final report. Policy decisions will then need to be made based on the evidence and initial workshop on this was held in April. This will allow us to define evidenced screening criteria for determining whether a discharge is likely to cause a significant effect on a SAC river.
- Other water quality attributes – we are undertaking a compliance assessment against targets for the other water quality attributes in the JNCC Common Standards Methodology Guidance (i.e., Biochemical Oxygen Demand, Dissolved Oxygen, Total ammonia, unionised ammonia, pH, Acid Neutralising Capacity and Trophic Diatom

Index). We are also looking at any potential implications. We do not yet have an agreed publishing date.

- Other habitats – we are awaiting policy decision on marine designated sites and any implications for planning and permitting. We are also looking at potential implications for lakes failing their nutrient targets. Our agreed lines to take for marine is – ‘Since the publication of the ‘Compliance Assessment of Welsh River SACs against Phosphorus Targets’ report NRW has sought legal advice in respect of our Marine Protected Areas. Following receipt of that advice we are reviewing the data on marine water quality within our SACs. We expect to include a peer review of the findings and will subsequently provide further information later this year’.
- Citizen science - NRW have written to the various groups undertaking citizen science initiatives on the River Wye explaining our position following closure of the Cardiff University coordination project and how we hope to use the data collected. [NRW Wye Citizen Science Advice](#)
- SAGIS Modelling  
Natural Resources Wales and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) are implementing a programme of water quality modelling to develop an improved understanding of the sources of phosphorus in rivers designated as Special Areas of Conservation. The water quality models and their outputs which are summarised in the Catchment Reports are currently draft pending the conclusions of an independent quality assurance which has been commissioned by NRW.

## 5. Additional Water Quality Monitoring on River Wye

- Water quality capital budget made available by Welsh Government has been used to purchase a network of data sondes for the River Wye. A total of 6 sondes have now been installed at key locations across the Wye and its tributaries in Wales. We have been discussing the installation with Environment Agency who already have two sondes on the lower river and are planning more.
- NRW are also undertaking an intensive catchment wide ecological monitoring exercise. 100 sites will have diatom communities assessed and 46 of those will also be subject to invertebrate monitoring.