

## Environment Agency (EA) Actions in the Wye Catchment

### **Monitoring, Evidence and Modelling**

- We continue to update our River Wye webpage, [Engagement HQ](#). This includes our latest bi-annual River Wye Data Analysis Report.
- We will be deploying 10 sondes and 4 autosamplers in the Wye, Frome and Lugg catchments to provide continuous water quality monitoring data and help with phosphate analysis. There are currently 7 sondes deployed in the Wye and 1 in the River Lugg. Members of the public can access information on the sondes [here](#).
- We will continue to review the data from the sondes and update the [Algal Bloom and High Temperature](#) page.
- We will carry out monthly water quality monitoring and identify sources of organic pollution in Hereford as identified in our River Wye Data Analysis Report, which can be viewed at the following link: <https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engagehq.com/integrated-data-analysis-reports>
- We will carry out surveys known as Rapid Assessment of PeriPhyton Ecology (RAPPER) in rivers from May to October, plus reactive surveys when algal blooms are present. The RAPPER method involves identifying macroalgae (algae that can be recognised with the naked eye) growing on the substrate in a 10m section of river. This will give us an overall assessment of nutrient enrichment within the waterbody.
- We will be trialling new methods for sediment sampling over the summer as we suspect that sediment in the substrate is a source of phosphate that is possible driving the algal growth in the Wye.

### **Potential Nutrient Management Schemes & Tools**

We are working with key organisations within the Wye NMB to develop options for agricultural nutrient management and associated tools, which we will present at the September NMB.

### **Agriculture**

- We have increased our farm inspections in the West Midlands (WMD). We carried out 536 in total from March 2022 – 2023, with 291 taking place in the Wye catchment. This is a 54% increase of farm inspections being targeted to the Wye Catchment.
- In January 2023, we undertook a two-day project in the Wye catchment, focusing on 3 high-priority waterbodies. We completed 22 farm inspections and identified 15 non-compliant sites. The areas of non-compliance related to Farming Rules for Water (FRfW), in particular soil testing & planning of applications of organic manures and manufactured fertilisers.
- We continue to increase awareness for FRfW, working closely with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Herefordshire Rural Hub.
- In January we worked with the NFU on an article about farm inspections for their farming magazine, British Farmer and Grower. In addition, we have issued an advice and guidance letter to all farms within the catchment to help reduce the impact of agricultural pollution on water quality.

- We have worked with Herefordshire Rural Hub to produce a quick guide for farmers on FRfW. A copy of this leaflet can be found at the top right hand of the '[EA Actions in the Wye Catchment](#)' section.

## **Project TARA**

We started project TARA (Testing Approaches to Regulation of Agriculture) within the Wye catchment, which aims to assess whether the increase in poultry farming and Anaerobic Digester (AD) sites could be having a negative effect on the phosphate loading on land. The summary of findings for this project will be available within the next couple of months.

## **Agricultural Supply Chain**

- We are working with Avara foods and various organisations within the food supply chain to find opportunities for nutrient reduction (primarily phosphate). We will develop, deliver, and share best practice working across various sectors to put in place measures for reducing nutrients.
- A key priority is to develop appropriate guidance and standards for the management of manure, including site drainage.
- We are engaging with the Courtauld 2030 / Wye Agri Food Partnership. This is a voluntary initiative, bringing together organisations within the food supply chain including major supermarkets. The Courtauld 2030 commitment, led by WRAP identifies three priority areas for reducing food waste, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable water management. More information can be found here: [Courtauld 2030 Water Roadmap | WRAP](#)

## **Water Resources**

- From January to December 2022 a total of 94 compliance inspections were carried in the Wye Catchment and these inspections identified 20 non-compliances. In total 343 inspections have been completed across West Midlands Area.
- We have completed the New Authorisations programme in the Wye Catchment, which means that most previously exempt water resources activity is now licensed.

## **Water Industry**

- In 2020, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the EA and Ofwat led a review of the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) ahead of the next price review (PR24). This is to make sure the next round of WINEP actions achieves greater environmental benefits for every pound invested by water companies by using a more outcomes-based approach.
- We are working with Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) on the WINEP ahead of PR24.
- DCWW have completed measures to improve flow monitoring of storm and treated effluent and improvements have been made at eight DCWW sewage treatment works. From 2023 & 2025 the schemes include improvements to a further 6 sewage treatment works. The improvements will include more stringent phosphate permit limits on discharges, improvements to storm tank storage volume and measures to improve flow monitoring.
- In 2022, DCWW had no failing sewage treatment works in Herefordshire. There were 12 pollution incidents recorded, all of which were assessed as "Category 4 – no impact events".

- In 2022/23 (April to March) 17 out of 41 large sewage treatment works in Herefordshire Wye catchment were inspected, as well as 20 out of the 54 smaller descriptive sewage treatment works. The inspections showed no significant issues with their operation
- 2020 was the first year that the EA collected Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) data related to the performance of storm overflows.
- 2021 and 2022 EDM data will be reviewed in 2023 and going forward we will use data from the new inlet flow monitors and storm EDM monitors installed to assess compliance with sewage treatment works discharge permits. More information on EDM can be found here: [Environment Agency publishes Event Duration Monitoring data for 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-agency-publishes-event-duration-monitoring-data-for-2022)

### **EA Funded Projects**

During 2022-23 we worked with key stakeholders on various projects aimed at improving water quality in the Wye. We also partner funded several projects that covered research, education, collaboration and delivery across the catchment to improve water quality.

We are now in the final development phase with partners for 2023-24 partnership projects. Below are the projects we have been working on:

- Wye P (Agri P) with the Wye and Usk Foundation - Focusing on several interventions considering diffuse pollution and its effects on the water environment. More information can be found here: <https://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/the-wye-agri-food-partnership>
- 'Resilient Wye Water' with Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - Focusing on water resources. More information can be found here: <https://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/lower-wye-catchments-project/>
- Wye SASS with Farm Herefordshire - Developing evaluation methods and supporting the development of a website for dissemination of best practice, developing a community, and supporting event booking and evaluation.
- Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) with Herefordshire Rural Hub CIC - Focusing on delivering a project promoting soil testing and compliance with the regulations.
- 'Restoring our Amazing Rivers' with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (HWT) - The project has been to upskill and support development of capacity in HWT looking at farm advice, surveying and GIS skills on land app. More information can be found here: <https://www.herefordshirewt.org/blog/claire-spicer/restoring-our-amazing-rivers>
- FCRM Natural Flood Management (NFM) project (until 2027) Delivered by Herefordshire Council. More information can be found here: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/flooding-2/flood-management/5>

### **Citizen Science (CS)**

The EA, NRW and DCWW continue to support CS and their monitoring across the Wye catchment. The data is being shared across the monitoring groups and helps us to plan our future work and target our regulatory effort. Their data has also been used in our recent River Wye Data Analysis report.

Further information on Citizen Science can be found at the top right hand of the ['EA Actions in the Wye Catchment'](#) section.

## **Actions from the NMB meeting held in December 2022**

### **Fair share & Polluter Pays**

The concept that polluters are responsible for removing or reducing their impact on the environment is a well-established principle in environmental management. This principle is commonly known as the 'Polluter Pays' principle (PPP). Pollution into the water environment originates from many sources. These are generically classified as point or diffuse, indicating their physical origin, and by the sector from which they originate. Water Industry, Agriculture and atmospheric deposition are examples of sectors.

Where the current pollution is above Environmental Quality Standard (EQS), then steps to reduce pollution must be considered. This revised PPP procedure adopts a more holistic approach by reviewing the improvement actions required across all sectors rather than looking at each one separately. This is essential for improving compliance with water quality standards. To help with this, a couple of new concepts, Planning Assumptions and Gap-Filling have been introduced. We are currently reviewing the approach to gap-filling, and will be having a project running to do this over this financial next year.

You can view a presentation that was given in 2022 that explains the Polluter Pays process: [Polluter Pays update 2022](#)

### **Harris Judgement**

- At the last meeting, the EA were asked for its opinion on a recent court judgement relating to abstraction licences impacting the Norfolk Broads. It was the finding of the court that the review from 2010 which was used to inform the EA's decision was not acceptable. We were asked whether this judgement would change our approach to the Wye. Information on the Norfolk Boards can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/habitats-protected-in-norfolk-through-stricter-abstraction-limits>.
- Our response is that each site will be fact specific, and it does not necessarily mean that other Review of Consent (RoC) decisions are incorrect, including the Wye.
- The RoC was a programme undertaken by the EA from 2002-2010. We reviewed all permits, licences and consents issued by us and assessed the effects on the Habitat Regulations, such as the River Wye SAC; affirming or changing those permissions accordingly.
- With regards to the Wye we are still awaiting the inspector's decision on the abstraction license appeal.
- Each case is considered on its own merits, and we did not believe it was appropriate to delay decisions on New Authorisation abstraction licenses in the Wye.