

To: Wye Nutrient Management Board C/o Chair Elissa Swinglehurst
From: Wye Catchment Partnership Steering Group
Subject: Public Engagement and Technical Advisory Group working groups

Type of paper: Decision and funding

Executive Summary

The Wye Catchment Partnership Steering Group proposes to the Nutrient Management Board that the Wye Catchment Partnership takes on the following responsibilities:

- a) Education and information sharing
- b) Providing a forum for collaboration between stakeholder groups
- c) Public engagement and citizen science liaison
- d) Oversight and management of the Technical Advisory Group's working groups.

To fulfil these responsibilities, the Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) would require adequate resourcing and funding.

The adoption of these responsibilities by the WCP would allow the Nutrient Management Board to streamline its functions and to focus on the delivery of the Nutrient Management Plan. In addition, it would provide a platform for consultation on new plans and forum for dissemination of new findings and progress to date.

Introduction

The Wye Catchment Partnership (WCP) has recently relaunched with direction being provided by a re-formed steering group. The WCP is hosted by the Wye and Usk Foundation (WUF) and brings together stakeholder groups operating within the Wye catchment to deliver environmental and societal improvement. Further details on the Wye Catchment Partnership can be seen in the Terms of Reference, which are appended. It should be noted that these are currently being revised. It is important to note that the WCP does not focus solely on nutrients/phosphorus but this has become an important topic of work for many of the partners.

The WCP Steering Group is attended by members of the Environment Agency, Wye and Usk Foundation, Natural Resources Wales, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, Natural England, Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Wildlife Trusts, Farm Herefordshire and Farming Connect (Wales).

The Environment Agency, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales are working with Herefordshire Council to form a revised Wye Nutrient Management Board (NMB). A key consideration is the role of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and how we support improved engagement.

The Wye Catchment Partnerships proposition

The WCP steering group proposes that from Q3 2023, the WCP would become the umbrella organisation to oversee:

- a) Education and information sharing
- b) Providing a forum for collaboration between stakeholder groups
- c) Public engagement and citizen science liaison
- d) Oversight and management of the Technical Advisory Group's working groups.

The Catchment Partnership already has responsibility for points a) and b) above.

The adoption of functions c) and d) would require additional funding and resourcing.

C) Public engagement and citizen science liaison

The WCP proposes to hold two public engagement events per year to create a space for improved collaboration and engagement, to provide:

- updates on projects and delivery within the catchment,
- discuss and explain new research findings, and
- the provision of a platform for citizen science groups to engage, recruit and resource.

The WCP would intend staging public events in a conference/seminar style, with registration required, guest speakers, research stands and Q&A/Panel sessions.

The public engagement section of the Wye Catchment Partnership would provide a new platform to ask many of the public questions currently raised at the Nutrient Management Board. Key themes or topics would be escalated to the NMB through the formal route. The WCP would provide information proactively and from a number of different stakeholder bodies.

D) TAG working groups

The WCP proposes taking on responsibility for the working groups that currently sit under the NMB Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The current list of working groups is:

- Evidence
- Regulation
- Farm advice
- Poultry
- Projects.

The WCP proposes to:

- Review the working groups, whether they are correct, necessary etc.
- Establish the working groups, populating them and agreeing work plans,
- Coordinate the working groups, ensuring they complement each other,
- Assist working groups with reporting, against an Action Plan and to the NMB.

If this proposition is accepted in principle, then further discussions will be required. This would include the role and relationship with TAG and the that of the working group chairs.

Bringing the working groups under the umbrella of the Wye Catchment Partnership would enable a closer relationship between the working groups, stakeholders and the public. This would provide greater transparency and structure for reporting into the Nutrient Management Board. The WCP has the connections needed to make the working groups a success.

Recommendations

The Wye Catchment Partnership submits this paper to the Nutrient Management Board for its consideration.

If this proposition is accepted in principle, then further discussions will be required. However, we consider that the work programme outlined could potentially necessitate a full-time role, on top of the existing secretariat provided to the Wye Catchment Partnership by the Wye and Usk Foundation.

END

Appendices: WCP Terms of Reference (Annex 1)

WCP Terms of Reference Annex 1 2020

Wye Catchment Partnership

Terms of Reference

The aim of the Wye Catchment Partnership is to bring together a wide range of stakeholders to secure better outcomes for the environment throughout the group of river catchments.

The Host Partners

1. The Wye Catchment Partnership will be hosted jointly by the Wye and Usk Foundation and National Resources Wales and supported by a steering group which includes the Environment Agency, Farming Connect, Herefordshire Rural Hub, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Wye Valley AONB, DCWW and Natural England.

The Partnership can co-opt stakeholders on a long term or short-term basis that are not part of the regular Partnership but have experience or resources to contribute to the objectives of the working group.

The Geographical Scope

- The Wye Catchment Group will cover the hydrological catchment of the river Wye.

Project “drivers”

- The primary driver for the Catchment Based Approach is the need for the UK to meet its water quality obligations under the Water Framework Directive.
- The programme is also driven by Defra’s *Catchment Based Approach Policy Framework* (May 2013), the *Guide to Collaborative Catchment Management* (August 2013) and the pressing need to develop further opportunities and markets for paid ecosystem services.

The Thematic Scope

- Water quality improvement will be the principle thematic focus. However, the Partnership’s scope will also embrace the whole range of benefits derived from the river catchments including: Food production, Drinking water, Waste disposal, Wildlife habitats, Flood regulation, Recreation & sport, Culture & heritage.
- The group will provide some central internal communication and coordination role for catchment related projects in the Wye.

Host Partners: Operating Principles

- **“Subsidiarity”**. We will commit to supporting local initiatives, actions and collaboration operating at the lowest appropriate level, and only address issues at a river catchment or operational catchment scale where this is needed to secure better outcomes.
- **Integrity, honesty and openness**. We commit to building trust and confidence between the partners and the wider community and stakeholders, through openness and honesty in our dealings.
- **Inclusiveness**. We will work in a way that is community-led, and promotes a “bottom up” approach to identifying issues and solutions.
- **Managing expectations**. We commit to make clear what we can and cannot do, both within the partnership and in our external relationships, in order to avoid raising expectations that cannot be fulfilled.
- **Fairness and balance**. We will act impartially, as an “honest broker” when seeking solutions to problems and conflicts.
- **A “learning community”**. We will promote the exchange of learning and good practice both at a local level and with other catchment partnerships.
- **Effectiveness**. We will avoid creating duplication and bureaucracy and strive to promote tangible benefits for the environment.

Host Partners: Organisational Arrangements

- **Host Partners Partnership Agreement**. We will maintain a host partnership agreement and review it annually.
- **Lead contacts**. We will each nominate a principal contact for project management purposes. These will initially be:
 - Wye and Usk Foundation: Simon Evans
 - National Resource Wales: Chris Rees
 - Environment Agency: Dane Broomfield
- **Host Partner Co-ordination Meetings**. We will meet initially every month to review progress and to plan and co-ordinate future work.
- **Steering Group**. We will aim to recruit a small steering group of key players who will form the project team to guide the development and actions of the Partnership.

- **Internal communications.** We will use a range of communications media to keep each other in touch to ensure that each lead partner is aware of the actions and activities of the others.
- **Work programme.** We will agree an annual work programme, and review and amend it as required.

Communications – external

- We will agree and adopt a set of agreed communications “scripts” to be used in external communications such as publications, leaflets, press releases, website content etc. This will ensure that we present a consistent and coherent message about the Catchment Partnership and its work.
- Press releases will be subject to prior agreement between the Host Partners before release.

Finances

- We will agree and adopt an annual programme budget, setting out the resources (staff and money) that each Host Partner will contribute to the work and how any external funding will be distributed and used.
- Where an arrangement is made to transfer funding between us, this will be formally set out in writing as a separate binding contractual agreement.

Duration

- It is a clear aspiration that we seek to maintain the Wye Catchment Partnership for the long term. However, given the rapidly changing financial, legislative and organisational environment we operate in, we will provide a clear framework of phases and review points within which we can give commitments.
- We will therefore agree and communicate a programme of commitments annually.
- We will undertake a review process, with any further action or progress beyond the current financial year subject to securing additional resources.

Termination

- Any Host Partner may withdraw from the Partnership subject to two months’ notice in writing to the other Host Partner. It will then be for the remaining Host Partner to decide whether and how to progress the Catchment programme.
- Alternatively, the Host Partners may resolve at any time to dissolve the Partnership by mutual agreement.
- Any financial or contractual agreements still outstanding at the time of withdrawal or dissolution of the Host Partnership will be honoured where possible but failing that, any funds received in advance and not used for the agreed purposes will be returned to the funding body.

Succession Strategy

- In order to maximise the durability of the Catchment Partnership, and to minimise its vulnerability to loss of external funding, we will aim to build the skills, knowledge and capacity within the communities and stakeholder groups we engage with, to help to sustain the catchment-based approach in the long term.

Limitations

- This Agreement does not create a legally binding contract or legal Partnership.
- The Host Partners will not seek to impose obligations on each other except where these are mutually agreed.

- The Host Partners will not seek to represent each other except where this is clearly set out as an agreed position for the purposes of the Wye Catchment Partnership.
- Any financial arrangements will be subject to separate written agreement.

Risk Management

There are significant risks involved in this programme as set out in the table below and we will work together to manage and control these risks.

Nature of risk	Level of Impact	Likelihood	Overall seriousness	Control measures
Lack of resources to sustain the Partnership	High	High	High	Manage the programme in clear deliverable phases with review points. Promote the “succession strategy” to build skills, knowledge and capacity within the Partnership.
Reputational damage arising from controversy with external stakeholders	Medium	High	High	Adopt a clear communications framework that sets out expectations, roles and limitations. Prepare for external meetings and events to ensure good facilitation. Host Partners to give early notice of any impending problems.
Breakdown of Host Partnership	Medium	Low	Medium	Host Partners will need to work closely to manage the project and build a lasting and positive relationship.
Stakeholder fatigue and unwillingness to engage	High	High	High	Initiate action through Partnership at earliest stage Engagement will need to be very carefully targeted to make best use of the stakeholders’ time and input.

Principle activity strands

- **Co-ordination:** Reinforce and engage the current catchment-based activities across the area to establish the linkages between groups and undertake an “audit” of:
 - Stakeholders – what groups are affected by or can affect catchment management;
 - Current Projects – what projects are currently being delivered to improve catchment management;
 - Data – what data exists on the catchments (biodiversity, soil, topography, land use, water quality, water levels, tourism, etc); and

- Plans – what past and current plans are in existence over the area.
- **Mapping and data:** Map the goods and services we derive from our catchments. These maps can then be used to show where there is overlapping interest, conflicts and synergies. From this, future projects and activity plans can be developed.
- **Public engagement:** Engage not only with the stakeholders and interest groups in the area, encouraging them to become involved in this process, but also with the wider community.
- **Deliver change:** Deliver environmental and economically sustainable improvements to the Wye catchment and the quality of life of the people that rely on it. Establish the catchment-based approach as a method for delivering this change and improve linkage between organisations and sectors and so by stimulate and facilitate delivery of identified and agreed improvements.