

River Wye Statutory Officers Group

June 2024 Meeting Slide Deck



26 June 2024

River Wye SOG

Purpose

A collaboration of the statutorily responsible organisations operating within the catchment to restore the Conservation Status for the River Wye Special Area of Conservation.

The group as a whole does not have any formal powers or resources and as such cannot make any decisions collectively but it's members can on behalf of their individual organisations and Government. The purpose of this group is for members to reach agreement (subject to ratification within their own organisations as necessary) on how they will collectively use their powers and resources to improve the catchment condition. The SOG will share this via a revised Nutrient Management Plan.

Operating Principles

- Meetings will be held quarterly (monthly initially) in order to allow the SOG to task work resulting from its discussions. Ad-hoc meetings can be called if needed.
- Meetings will be held privately with updates and progress against the plan being shared publicly – this will be reviewed after 6 months.
- The group will work openly and collaboratively with the NMB, seeking and taking into account the NMBs views in its decision making and seeking collaboratively discussion.
- Individual officers will make decisions on behalf of their organisations in line with delegated powers for specified remits and spend.

River Wye SOG

Membership

Voluntary forum made up of officers from the bodies with relevant statutory responsibilities within the catchment.

- Bannau Brycheiniog Brecon Beacons National Park
- Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales
- Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
- Environment Agency
- Forest of Dean District Council
- Herefordshire Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Natural England
- Powys County Council

SOG - Meeting Summary

Date of latest meeting: 26 June 2024

Headlines

1. High level progress review of the Nutrient Management Action Plan (NMP) included within papers. This provides an update on the status of current actions and how these will be progressed if required (see slide 5).
2. Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water investment includes 7 major schemes on the Wye (totalling £53m), which have been completed a year ahead of schedule.
3. To support alignment of numerous Wye plans, outline diagram agreed in principle (see slide 7), recognising that this will develop further as work on the NMP, Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) and Catchment Management Plan (CMP) progresses. The DWPP is progressing; the outcome of an initial Options Appraisal Workshop is ongoing (this was held post SOG).
4. Continued farmer engagement throughout the catchment, supporting regenerative farming, knowledge transfer and land management practices.

Date of next Meeting: 26th September 2024

NMP Action Plan – Progress Update

- This progress update does not seek to add or review NMP actions – this will be done through the DWPP in England, Upper Wye Restoration Project and Wye Catchment Plan (WCP) as per previous SOG update.
- This progress update does not seek to evaluate the total efficacy or impact of measures as this is being delivered through the above work.
- This progress update does provide an overview of the current situation i.e. updates against the actions contained within it but provides details of where and how these actions will be progressed if required.
- The NMB should also note that the action plan does not cover all actions delivered in the catchment. We are aware that actions/measures have been progressed but were not added to this action plan. The DWPP, Upper Wye Restoration Project and WCP Plan will pick these actions up.

1. Upper Wye Restoration Project Launched at Royal Welsh Show 22 July 2024

This 5-year project aiming to protect species and enhance habitats by addressing a range of pressures affecting the Upper River Wye.

<https://upper-wye-restoration-project-launch>

2. Amended Planning Advice now published on NRW Website (v4 28/June 2024)

This advice now covers ammonia as well as phosphorus and a move to referring to nutrient sensitive rivers. Advice on agricultural developments is also covered. [Natural Resources Wales / Advice to planning authorities for planning applications affecting nutrient sensitive river Special Areas of Conservation](#)

3. Completion of review of Environmental Permits

Our review of phosphorus limits on Environmental Permits for waste water treatment works discharges which exceed a dry weather flow of 20m³/day has now been completed – 28 of these permits are within the Welsh Wye catchment. [Natural Resources Wales / Phosphorus limits on environmental permits for waste water treatment work discharges](#)

4. Next Compliance assessment for Welsh SAC rivers

Since NRW published its compliance assessment for other WQ attributes in January this year using data up to 2019, we are working on the last 3 years monitoring results to inform the next compliance report which we are hoping to publish in January 2025.

The full and current assessment report can be accessed here [compliance assessment](#)

5. Position on citizen science data published

Following a number of requests and to provide some reassurance to all of our citizen science groups. [An assessment of the use and acceptability of citizen science data to support better water quality for Wales \(naturalresources.wales\)](#)

Last year, we published our published 'Manifesto for Rivers in Wales' outlining how we would invest to improve river water quality in our operating area. In the Manifesto, we include information on our impact on Special Area of Conservation (SAC) rivers including the Wye.

Our modelling on the Upper Wye shows that our wastewater treatment works contribute 23% of the phosphorus in the SAC waterbody, with Storm Overflows (CSOs) responsible for 2%. The remaining sources have been identified as rural land use and other sources that include private septic tanks and surface run-off.

What are we doing?

Investment in the past year includes seven major schemes (totalling £53m) to help improve the quality of the River Wye, which have been completed a year ahead of schedule.

These have followed on from a number of other schemes on the Wye in the past couple of years with a total investment in the region of £80 million.

These schemes have included the removal of phosphorous, a nutrient that can cause algal blooms, increased capacity and storm tanks to hold water during heavy rain.

Further Information on Wye projects:

Completed projects:

Norton Wastewater Treatment Works - £4 million;
Decommission wastewater treatment works and transfer waste to Presteigne Wastewater Treatment Works.

Presteigne Wastewater Treatment Works - £4 million;
Reduce phosphorus discharged from works and accommodate growth.

Weobley Wastewater Treatment Works - £3.5 million;
Reduce phosphorus discharged from the works.

Kingstone & Madley Wastewater Treatment Works - £3.7 million;
Reduce phosphorus discharged from the works.

Clehonger Wastewater Treatment Works - £1.7 million;
Increase flow passed forward through the works.

Peterchurch Wastewater Treatment Works - £0.4 million;
Increase storm storage capacity.

Leominster Wastewater Treatment Works - £12 million;
Reduce phosphorus discharged from the works.

Eign & Rotherwas Wastewater Treatment Works - £27 million;
Reduce phosphorus discharged from the works

Projects to be completed by March 2025:

Lower Cleeve Wastewater Treatment Works - £4.6 million;
Increased capacity to accommodate growth.

Monmouth Wastewater Treatment Works - £3.1 million;
To accommodate growth and reduce phosphorus discharged from the works.

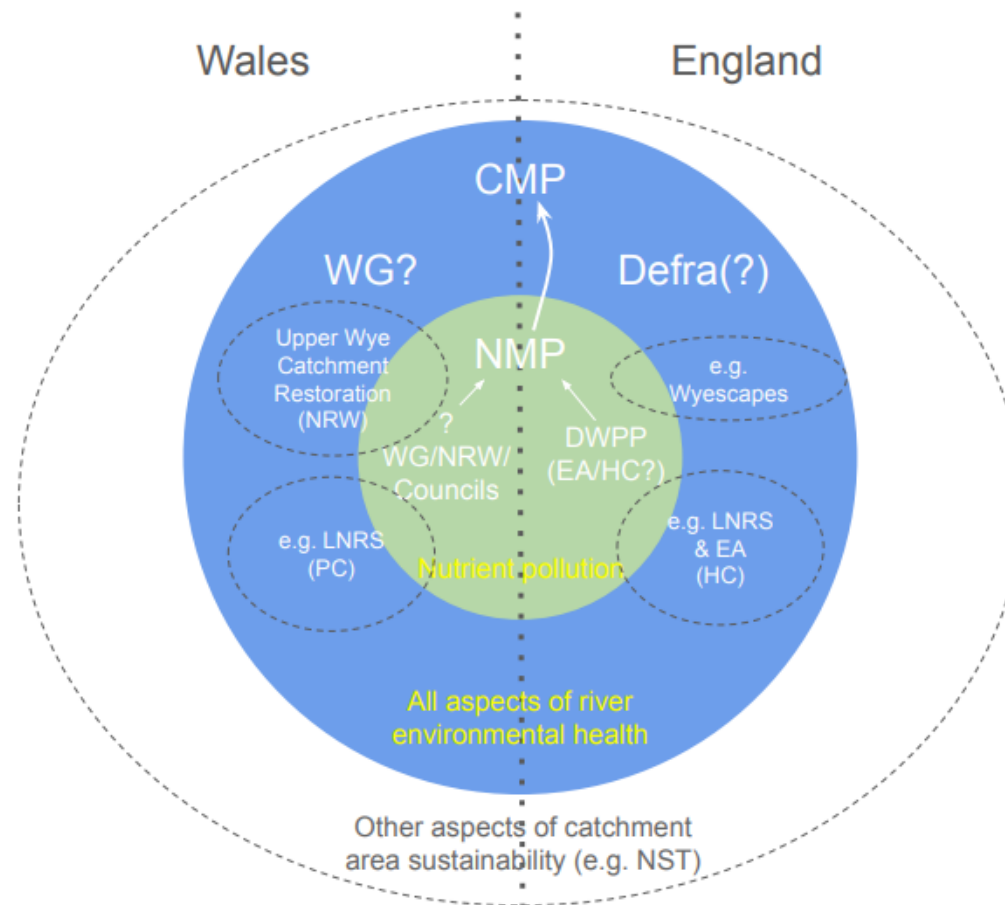
Rhayader Wastewater Treatment Works - £5.85 million (subject to costing);
Reduce phosphorus discharged from the works.

Pontrilas Wastewater Treatment Works - £7.7 million;
Increased capacity and reduce phosphorus discharged from the works.

Other work

Citizen Science fund - We have funded two citizen science groups £10k each to support them in research projects in the Wye catchment.

- Meeting with Natural England, Herefordshire Council, Wye and Usk Foundation, Citizen Science lead and Natural Resources Wales on 3 June 2024 to discuss alignment of plans.
- Following diagram agreed as follows:



Task & Finish – Nutrient Management Planning Tools (NMPT)

- Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) will serve as the review of Nutrient Management Plan for England and is on track to be completed by 31 March 2025 – this will be an iterative process after this date.

Task	Indicative timescale
Modelling (source apportionment update)	Winter – Spring 2024
Modelling of current work/measures within catchment*	Spring – Summer 2024
Review of model outputs	Summer 2024
Options appraisal of phosphate reductions	Summer - Autumn 2024
Updated Action Plan	Winter 2024 – Spring 2025
Sign-off of DWPP	Spring 2025

*England only

- The DWPP has 3 components – Evidence Base – Options Appraisal – Action Plan.
- Currently working on Evidence Base, which indicate P reductions of 85% from rural land use are required in the Arrow, Lugg and Frome. These reductions cannot be achieved with conventional measures alone (e.g. voluntary schemes, regulation).
- Initial Options Appraisal workshop scheduled for 5 July 2024 to identify suite of measures and mechanisms to take forward. Further modelling will validate their effectiveness.

Latest Update:

- To date 620 homes released in the Lugg catchment from Luston wetland via the Council's Phosphate Credit Trading Process. With further Phosphate credits released from Tarrington Wetland, it is envisaged there are now sufficient credits released to address the planning backlog.
- A planned amendment to the credit trading process will enable developers to purchase credits with a deposit only required prior to the granting of planning permission.
- Luston Wetland awarded best Environmental Services Category at the LGC Awards and Best Project at the RTPA Awards. Shortlisted for both the MJ and CIEEM Awards.
- A Luston Launch event is scheduled for 7th August, with all partners and wider stakeholders invited.
- Welsh government has notified Herefordshire Council the sum of £81,000 is due to be awarded later this year, with £70,000 allocated to progress the Welsh evidence base of the Nutrient Management Plan and the remaining £11,000 carried over from an underspend the previous year.

- **Monmouthshire Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy 2024** adopted:-
[Cabinet Decision 15th May 2024](#)

Climate and Nature Emergency Strategy



Rivers and Ocean Action Plan objectives : -

- Reduce sewage, phosphate and other chemical pollution in our rivers
- Reduce plastic and other litter pollution in rivers and coast areas
- Protect natural habitats along our rivers, estuaries and coast
- Protect communities from flooding
- Raise awareness of the importance of our rivers and coasts

Key Activities

Catchment-wide nature-based solutions and Natural Flood Management	Promoting Regenerative Farming through the Sustainable Food Partnership
Targeting litter campaigns and working with schools on litter	Coastal Capacity Building project delivery: Severn Vison
River Gavenny Catchment : Community Action Plan	Continued Partnership working

Food and Farming

- MCC Local Food Strategy adopted May 2024.
- Strategic objectives include addressing climate and nature emergencies (of which declining water quality is a major element).
- Actions include commitments to embed environmental land management practices in decision-making and across the county farm estate, and to support farmers across the county to transition to sustainable regenerative farming practices.

Examples: regenerative agriculture mentoring scheme and farm cluster, online discussion group, regular training and knowledge transfer events.

Farm Advice:

- Landscape Recovery Schemes- both schemes progressing well in the 2-year development phase, with input and advice to both. Setting up small project group to provide diffuse water advice for Ridge to River. Wyescapes had first Board meeting 4 July and are commencing baseline work.
- Continued support for farmers via 1:2:1 advice via our contract . 47 1:2: farm visits to support grants and provide advice completed in the Wye.
- Farmer event held at Craswall, attended by around 40 upland farmers to discuss positive land management practices under the new Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme.
- Proactive campaign in Wye has led to 29 visits, around 30% of these farmers no previously engaged and leading initially to:
 - 12Ha Wetland/river reconnection
 - 28.3Ha species rich floodplain to be restored
 - 3.9km River Lugg river back fenced

Planning and Consent

24 SSSI consents or advice for consents issued with proactive farm visits raising awareness

Ongoing input to planning advice for Herefordshire Council

SSSI Monitoring – Macrophyte and river habitat survey taking place July and August

Latest Information

- Continued facilitation of Farm Cymru, in partnership with Herefordshire Rural Hub. Recent discussions have prompted interest between farm schemes like SFS and 30 x 30.
- Tender process underway for:
 - Wetland feasibility study.
 - Private Treatment Works investigation / feasibility.
- The new “Powys River Special Areas of Conservation” webpage has now been published. The website is split into three sections, background, implications for development and other actions and regulations.
- [River Special Areas of Conservation](#) – PCC website link.
- Continue to play a role in collaborative working through meetings like the All-Wales SAC Rivers Planning Sub-Group and Nutrient Management Officers Meetings.
- Continue to support the Usk Catchment Partnership. Have recently worked on the draft State of the Usk report.
- Collaboration with the Ceredigion Nutrient Management Officer on water testing and data gaps.