

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 22 October 2025 at 2.00 pm

Chairperson:

Councillor Elissa Swinglehurst Herefordshire Council

Voting members present in person:

Merry Albright	Herefordshire Construction Industry Representative
Gordon Green / Stuart Smith	Wye Salmon Association
Andrew McRobb	Council for Protection of Rural England

Voting members in attendance remotely:

Liz Bickerton	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
Louise Bodnar	Voice of the River
Councillor Jackie Charlton	Powys County Council
Nick Day	The Friends of the Lower Wye
Christine Hugh-Jones	Council for Protection of Rural Wales
Sarenta King	Radnorshire Wildlife Trust
Councillor Catrin Maby	Monmouthshire County Council
Councillor Andrew McDermid	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
Bradley Willson	Herefordshire Council

Other participants in attendance remotely:

Emma Guy	Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
Ethan Hamer	Powys County Council
Craig O'Connor	Monmouthshire County Council
Alicia Parker	National Farmers Union
Ann Weedy	Natural Resources Wales
Martin Williams	Farm Herefordshire

Support officers:

Ben Baugh	Herefordshire Council
Donna Thornton	Herefordshire Council

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were recorded from: Jamie Audsley, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust; Helen Dale, Country Land and Business Association; and David Gillam, Save the Wye, with Ian Hague in attendance online as a substitute.

14. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the previous meeting held on 16 July 2025 were agreed.

As a matter arising, there was a brief discussion about the appropriateness and ability of local authorities to monitor manure management plans, particularly once manure left premises. It was commented that the issue had been raised with Welsh Government. It was also commented that applicants could be required to provide evidence which could then be assessed by planning authorities using external expertise. The Chairperson requested that the board be informed as discussions progressed.

15. UPDATES FROM LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES ON CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Further to a question received for the 30 July 2025 meeting about how planning authorities record and assess the cumulative impacts from intensive livestock farming developments across the catchment, it was noted that responses from the planning authorities were awaited; once received, responses will be published in [\(post-meeting\) Supplement B \(link\)](#).

16. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A document containing questions received for the meeting from Dr Christine Hugh-Jones was included in [Supplement 1 \(link\)](#). In addition to the statutory agencies and planning authorities identified in the question document, it was requested that the Environment Agency also provide a written response; once received, responses will be published in [\(post-meeting\) Supplement B \(link\)](#).

A board member commented on the need for more information and guidance given potential 'grey areas' around permitting, approvals, management, and monitoring.

A board member commented on the submission of complex questions shortly before meetings and the difficulties for the relevant bodies to respond in a timely manner. The Chairperson suggested that substantial issues should be notified to the Chairperson sufficiently in advance of each meeting, so that consideration could be given to the inclusion of an item of business on the agenda. It was noted that as much notice as possible would be beneficial to statutory agencies, as input may be required from national technical teams.

17. UPDATE FROM THE RIVER WYE STATUTORY OFFICERS' GROUP

The River Wye Statutory Officers' Group (SOG) Update slide deck was provided in the agenda.

The Chairperson drew attention to the SOG Meeting Summary of 24 September 2024 (agenda page 18) and expressed concern that the limited text did not provide the Nutrient Management Board (NMB) with sufficient information to undertake its agreed role to both advise and 'challenge decision makers on their proposals, plans and decisions/actions', nor did it demonstrate the SOG operating principle of working 'openly and collaboratively with the NMB, seeking and taking into account the NMBs views in its decision making'; [River Wye governance, October 2023: SOG terms of reference \(link\)](#).

Other board members commented on the need: to understand who was participating in SOG meetings; to provide keys to graphs and photographs included in the update; to identify definitive actions / outcomes; and for open collaboration, with the SOG being explicit about the support that the NMB could provide to the responsible bodies in their work to protect and restore the River Wye.

Dan Humphries commented on delays in the Diffuse Water Pollution Plan and Welsh Evidence Base. Martin Quine acknowledged the potential to review the governance arrangements but emphasised the need to manage expectations, particularly in terms of progress between quarterly meetings. Ann Weedy commented that the delays in the key documents limited the scope of the recent SOG meeting.

There was a discussion about the contents of the SOG Update going forward, with comments made about: the potential for benchmarks; the need for detailed SOG meeting minutes; and the need for additional narrative to aid understanding for non-professionals.

Noting a reference in the Natural England slides, 'Ongoing advice to the planning department regarding the need to demonstrate that growth proposed in the new local plan and related plans can be accommodated without causing nutrient targets on the River Lugg and the River Wye to be exceeded', the Chairperson commented on the need to take account of the Cardiff University report on the role of phosphate and other nutrients on water quality in the River Wye.

The Chairperson provided a brief overview of the Welsh Government Water Summit (25 September 2025), chaired by the Deputy First Minister with responsibility for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, and commented on the positive input from the agricultural sector and the clear sightedness about the challenges.

18. DIFFUSE WATER POLLUTION PLAN (DWPP)

Further to minute 6 of the 16 July 2025 meeting, [Diffuse Water Pollution Plan progress report \(link\)](#), Martin Quine advised that the Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) was nearing finalisation. It was reported that the DWPP had been delayed due to a peer review process and the need to share it with the claimant in a judicial review; no further details of the implications of the latter could be provided in the meeting. It was anticipated that the DWPP would be available by the time that the contractor was appointed for the catchment management plan. The board was advised that there would not be a public consultation, but the DWPP would be publicly available. It was suggested that a separate session to explore the contents of the DWPP could be arranged.

With comments made by board members about the background to the DWPP, assurance was sought about the timeframe; the potential to write to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Water and Flooding was briefly explored. Martin Quine expected that the DWPP could be shared in the next few weeks.

The Chairperson noted the position of the Environment Agency but commented on the potential benefits of sharing draft documents openly and collaboratively with key stakeholders.

19. UPDATE ON THE WELSH EVIDENCE BASE

Gemma Dando reported that the Welsh Evidence Base document had been circulated for peer review with the statutory agencies and local authorities, with responses due back by the end of the week. A further iteration would then be circulated to board members.

20. NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (NMP) DELIVERY

The Chairperson noted that the River Wye Statutory Officers' Group was responsible for producing a publicly available Nutrient Management Plan but considered that a degree of collaboration through the draft stages would be beneficial.

Martin Quine said that, once the Diffuse Water Pollution Plan and the Welsh Evidence Base were finalised, work could be progressed on a bridging document. The Chairperson highlighted the importance of identifying and tracking actions.

There was discussion about the gap between the outputs of the measures and mechanisms modelled and the target. Martin Quine acknowledged that the agencies did not have all the answers currently, referenced the Welsh and UK government joint research initiative, and emphasised that there was a significant volume of work being undertaken in the catchment.

A board member commented on the significant roles of regulatory bodies and the farming community in the delivery of meaningful outcomes. A remote attendee commented on the need to consider emerging issues, including the ramifications of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

21. PROJECT TARA

Martin Quine advised that there were resourcing challenges with project TARA (Testing Approaches to Regulation of Agriculture) but the Environment Agency was still committed to producing it; it was anticipated that a summary of findings would be available towards the end of 2025 or in early 2026.

There was a brief discussion about the value of data sharing with stakeholders in a timely and effective manner, supporting transparency and accountability in the spending of public money.

22. LEGACY PHOSPHORUS (P) STUDY

Martin Quine reported that this study had been commissioned by the Environment Agency national team, working closely with Lancaster University, and an update on its publication would be shared with the board in due course.

23. WELSH AND UK GOVERNMENT JOINT RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Garrett Dunstall and Mark Richardson from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) attended remotely for this item only. Garrett Dunstall provided a brief update on the joint research initiative, the principal points included:

- i. The project remained a top priority for both UK and Welsh Governments.
- ii. Steps were being taken to accelerate research on both sides of the border, including the procurement of third party services; the contractors would help to define the scope of the research and undertake a gap analysis / literature review.
- iii. There was a need to avoid duplication and build on existing research and stakeholder contributions, with a strong data and evidence led approach.
- iv. The importance of involving stakeholders in the process was emphasised, with a workshop being planned for early 2026.
- v. It was noted that prioritisation would be given to an on farm, living labs approach.

In response to questions from board members, Garrett Dunstall advised that:

- the approach sought to ensure that learning and evidence gathered could be used in a practical way;
- the stakeholder list had not been confirmed but it would include a broad range, such as farming interests, environmental groups, and citizen scientists;
- it would be sensible to look at good practice and learning from across the UK;

- the need to cover the robustness of agriculture statistics, including livestock figures, was recognised; and
- the piece of work would prioritise value for money and impactful interventions.

The Chairperson welcomed the update and suggested the circulation of information around timelines.

24. RIVER WYE LAND USE MODELLING PROJECT USING FARMSCOPER

The formal publication of the '[River Wye Land Use Modelling Project using Farmscoper - Version 2](#)' ([link](#)) by Natural England on 17 July 2025 was noted.

A board member commented on some of the limitations of modelling and considered that differentiation between pig and poultry farms would be helpful.

There was a brief discussion about the length of time that it took for final reports to materialise from some agencies. It was noted that resourcing challenges within small teams could affect project delivery.

25. CORRESPONDENCE WITH WATER COMPANIES ABOUT BIOSOLIDS

The Chairperson reported that, arising from recent media coverage of the extent of leachate spreading on English farms, correspondence had been sent to the principal water companies to gain an understanding of biosolids coming into the catchment. It was noted that a response from Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water was included in [Supplement 1](#) ([link](#)).

The Chairperson commented that it would be helpful to share appropriate data arising from the soil sampling being undertaken with appropriate bodies, anonymised as necessary and in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation; a response from Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water was published after the meeting in [\(post-meeting\) Supplement A](#) ([link](#)).

It was reported that United Utilities had advised that it did not sell biosolids into the catchment. A response from Severn Trent was awaited; this was published after the meeting in [\(post-meeting\) Supplement A](#) ([link](#)).

A remote attendee commented on the intrinsic value of farm data.

A board member commented on the differences in distance factors to water sources or water courses for the purpose of spreading on fields, as compared to domestic outputs.

26. WIDER UPDATES FROM MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

The principal points included:

- i. Attention was drawn to the film 'A story of one British River – The River Wye' by documentary filmmaker Mykyta Osadchy.
- ii. There was brief discussion about the challenges around obtaining position statements on court rulings from responsible bodies. A board member suggested that an open discussion with representatives of planning / legal teams may enhance understanding of the approaches being taken by planning authorities.

- iii. In response to a question about the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) press release 'Environmental permit change consultations launched', as referenced at the previous meeting, Ann Weedy said that a written update would be provided; this was published after the meeting in [\(post-meeting\) Supplement A \(link\)](#).
- iv. Updates were provided on CPRE's Hedgerow Heroes Herefordshire campaign and the Mud Spotter initiative in conjunction with the Environment Agency.

27. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 15 January 2025, 2.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 4.15 pm

Chairperson