



BRIEFING: River Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP)

Statement of Intent and Implementation Plan

The River Wye is one of the UK's most iconic rivers, but its long-term health has come under increasing pressure, and there is widespread concern about its declining condition. We recognise those concerns and share the ambition of communities, environmental organisations, farmers and partners to improve water quality and support the long-term recovery of this nationally important river system. We are committed to playing our part through evidence-led action, effective regulation and collaboration with others.

In November 2025, the Environment Agency developed the River Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan (DWPP) for the River Wye Special Area of Conservation. The plan sets out five strategic priorities to improve water quality and help support its long-term recovery.

We are now sharing a Statement of Intent and an Implementation Plan to accompany the DWPP. The Statement of Intent sets out how the Environment Agency, working with Natural England, will take forward the plan's strategic priorities, while the Implementation Plan explains how progress will be reviewed, reported and informed by emerging evidence.

These documents build on significant work already underway across the catchment. This is not a new programme of work, but a framework for building on action already taking place, combining regulation, evidence gathering and partnership working. Since 2022, we have carried out more than 1,246 farm inspections and issued over 1,183 improvement actions to farmers in the English Wye catchment. We have also strengthened our regulation of water companies through increased resource, better use of data and tougher enforcement, while continuing to work with partners to improve our understanding of the catchment and deliver practical action on the ground.

We know there are no quick or simple solutions to improving the health of the River Wye. Progress will require sustained effort over time and no single organisation can achieve this alone. Farmers, regulators, water companies, public bodies, environmental organisations, supply chains and local communities all have an important role to play. Through the DWPP, we will continue to focus action where the evidence shows it can have the greatest impact.

As part of the DWPP, the Environment Agency has committed to completing a detailed assessment of the Water Protection Zone (WPZ) option by the end of 2028. A WPZ is a regulatory tool that can be used to control activities that pose a risk to water quality within a defined area. The assessment will consider whether a WPZ could provide additional environmental benefits in the River Wye catchment, alongside other interventions already underway. This reflects an existing commitment within the plan and will strengthen the

evidence base used to inform future decisions. It is important to note that this is a commitment to complete an assessment, not a decision to introduce a WPZ. Any future regulatory decision would need to be supported by robust evidence and consideration of the most effective approaches to achieving environmental improvements.

Through the DWPP Implementation Plan, progress will be reviewed and reported regularly, helping ensure transparency and accountability as delivery progresses. We will continue to work openly with stakeholders and partners across the catchment, using emerging evidence and learning to inform future decisions and actions.

The publication of the Statement of Intent and Implementation Plan is an important milestone in establishing a transparent, evidence-led framework for delivering the DWPP and supporting the long-term recovery of the River Wye. We recognise the scale of the challenge and the strength of stakeholder concern, and we will continue to work with partners across the catchment to turn the plan's priorities into sustained action and demonstrate measurable progress.

Supporting documents:

Statement of Intent and Implementation Plan- [River Wye Water Quality- Engagement latest news](#)

[River Wye Diffuse Water Pollution Plan](#)