

Rt. Hon Rebecca Pow MP
Minister for Nature Recovery and the Domestic Environment
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
CC: David Davies MP, Fay Jones MP, Jesse Norman MP, Bill Wiggin MP

28th April 2022

Meeting request from River Action

Dear Minister Pow,

I am writing to follow up on my previous letter sent on the 3rd March 2022 from [River Action](#) and over 20 NGOs, researchers and campaigners from the River Wye area. As mentioned in our previous letter we were disappointed that your visit to the River Wye earlier this year did not include meeting with representatives of the large number of local NGOs and citizen science groups that have been actively working towards resolving the pollution crisis on the Wye.

The recent [news](#) that the violations of farming rules for water last year reached their highest level since the legislation was introduced is a further blight against the Government's record on tackling river pollution. We were shocked to learn that despite these rules being in place for more than four years and a number of breaches being reported, the Environment Agency has yet to issue any fines or prosecutions.

This revelation further highlights the urgent need to implement our [Plan to Save the Wye](#), which has received widespread support. It is clear that current legislation and measures are not going far enough or are not supported with sufficient funding and resources to tackle the ever-growing issue of agriculture pollution in Britain. It is not news that runoff from agriculture is the biggest polluter of our rivers which is why it is so disappointing that polluters are still going unpunished.

We recognise that a growing number of farmers in the Wye catchment are taking the necessary measures to reduce their farms' nutrient run-off and we greatly appreciate their work. However, they make up a small number of the farmers operating in the Wye Catchment and unfortunately voluntary farmer-based initiatives implemented by this minority will not be sufficient to truly tackle the river pollution crisis facing the River Wye. I include again our Plan to Save the Wye which must be implemented on a catchment-wide basis with the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales working in close collaboration. The plan must include:

1. A **planning moratorium on the construction of new (or expansion of existing) intensive livestock production units** (poultry, pigs and bovine), and on the construction of any new anaerobic digestors (ADs) unless their digestate outputs are nutrient neutral.
2. A **requirement for all Intensive Poultry Units (IPUs) within the Wye catchment to have approved by the end of 2022 a Manure Management Plan (MMP)**, to be fully implemented by the end of 2023, whereby sufficient chicken litter, as assessed by independent scientists, is exported out of the catchment to UK locations with a phosphate deficit, to reduce the phosphate excess in both soils and rivers within the Wye catchment.
3. A **requirement for all free-range egg producing IPUs to have a Nutrient Runoff Mitigation Plan (NRMP) approved by the end of 2022**, to be implemented by the end of 2023, whereby water courses are protected from nutrient run-off from chicken ranges by nature-based solutions.

4. **A significant reduction in 'number of bird' thresholds for IPU's coming within the permitting jurisdictions of the EA and NRW** to be implemented over the next five years on a progressive sliding scale, thus bringing medium and smaller sized IPU's within the scope of environmental regulations.
5. **A requirement for all watercourses within the Wye catchment to be protected by continuous river buffers of a minimum of 10 metres**, providing a nature-based separation zone between all agricultural activities and running water.
6. **The allocation of additional funding by the UK and Welsh Governments to the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales** to a) conduct inspections of all IPU's and AD's to ensure MMP's and NRMP's are approved and implemented, and b) conduct an annual audit to ensure they are adhering to the provisions of their respective MMP's and NRMP's.
7. **Any non-compliance to result in the closure of the IPU or AD in question** until compliance is demonstrated and reapproval obtained.

It is estimated that the River Wye has just years left before it is ecologically dead, and this news of farming for water rules having little to no impact further highlights that there can be no delay in scaling up action to save this river. We again urge you to meet with local campaigners, NGOs and researchers working in the River Wye to discuss the Plan to Save the Wye and the scale of action needed to prevent the death of this iconic river and we would be happy to assist in arranging a meeting (either virtually or in person) or another visit to the River Wye.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Watson,

Chairman, River Action UK