



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Emma Hardy MP  
Minister for Water and Flooding  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)  
Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

11<sup>th</sup> September 2025

Dear Emma,

I am writing to invite you and/or Farming Minister Angela Eagle to visit the Wyescapes Landscape Recovery Project in North Herefordshire and to ask for a discussion on the funding needed to roll out the practical measures this farmer-led initiative is ready to deliver.

Wyescapes is a long-term, farmer-owned landscape recovery programme for the Wye and Lugg river corridors. It already brings together 49 land holdings between Leominster and Symonds Yat, covering some 5,125 hectares and 80 kilometres of riverbank. The project is about restoring nature-rich habitats, protecting soils, reducing polluting run-off, and restoring the natural exchange of water between land and river to “slow the flow” during heavy rains and provide reserves in drier periods. It will also deliver carbon sequestration, improved flood resilience, and benefits for wildlife, food production, and local communities.

The need for urgent action is clear. In 2023 the River Wye and River Lugg were downgraded by Natural England from “unfavourable–improving” to “unfavourable–declining.” The catchment faces excess nutrients from intensive agriculture, untreated sewage impacts, and climate pressures that are already harming salmon, crayfish, and aquatic plants. Wyescapes offers a practical, locally- owned route to tackle these pressures at scale, but it cannot be delivered without sustained funding to support the land-use changes and long-term management this recovery requires.

I would be grateful if you and/or Farming Minister Angela Eagle would accept an invitation to:

1. Visit Wyescapes on the ground to see the farmers’ plans and pilot measures in person;
2. Meet with Wyescapes farmers, project coordinators, and local community partners; and
3. Discuss a clear funding pathway and timeline to enable the project to implement all proposed measures at scale, including consideration of landscape recovery, catchment-scale funding, and any ministerial intervention that could unlock or accelerate support.

A visit would allow you to see first-hand how farmers are prepared to adopt nature-friendly practices, but need government backing to make those changes viable and long-lasting. It

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**Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire**  
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would also offer an opportunity to discuss how national policy can support scalable, farmer-led river recovery across other vulnerable catchments.

Please let my office know a few dates in the coming weeks that would suit your diary and we will coordinate with Wyescapes and local partners to make the arrangements. This project is a clear example of practical, pro-nature solutions that protect biodiversity, secure sustainable food production, and reduce flood and drought risk—but it needs ministers to back it now.

I look forward to hearing from you and very much hope you can visit the Wyescapes project soon.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Chowns', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dr Ellie Chowns MP  
Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire