



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Emma Hardy MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Water and Flooding)
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: EC15672/AL20 January 2026

Dear Emma

Re: Meeting Request with Wye MPs

Dear Emma,

We are writing to invite you to meet with us, cross-party MPs in the River Wye catchment, to discuss how we can make progress in restoring the Wye and tackling flooding.

The Wye has been in the headlines since 2020 as a leading victim of river pollution, and also for its increasingly regular and severe floods. Cleaning up the river and reducing flooding are serious challenges which require political leadership, and this is why we're appealing for your help.

The long-awaited Diffuse Water Pollution Plan for the River Wye, produced late last year by the Environment Agency, makes clear that current and projected actions will fall far short of reducing pollution to the necessary levels.

It says, especially in the Arrow/Lugg/Frome part of the catchment, that we need to reduce pollution from agriculture by 85%. It models various scenarios which show that even if we had a 100% uptake of regulatory measures, plus 100% uptake of voluntary measures, and converted 30% of arable land to zero-input grassland - we would still only get to a 60% reduction in pollution. And there's no plan to even get that far, with no timeframe or targets offered.

We can't stand by whilst the Wye continues to decline, without any plan to prevent the pollution or restore the river.

We believe the option of a Water Protection Zone (WPZ) ought to be fully evaluated, especially in relation to the worst-affected parts of the catchment, because the issues on the Wye evidently can't be resolved without special measures. We need catchment-specific regulatory action. We need to ensure this happens across the entire catchment, encompassing Wales as well as England.

For example, a WPZ could mandate larger river buffers, stop high-risk activities on high-risk land to prevent extreme soil loss, implement a moratorium on emissions from intensive livestock units, and require authorities to issue penalties when rules are breached.

One of the key threats to the Wye is soil run-off. Soil entering the river smothers gravel beds

Dr Ellie Chowns MP

Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire

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and destroys fish spawning grounds. It also carries within it nutrients, chemicals and other pollutants. Soil run-off is also contributing to catastrophic flooding, such as that seen in late November 2025 in Monmouth and Skenfrith. We need our farming landscape to have better infiltration and hold far more water, so it can function as a giant sponge. At present, we have practices which are exacerbating flooding, rather than mitigating it.

There is a real win-win opportunity to address both flooding and river pollution with one suite of actions which would keep soil on the land, bolstering our food security at the same time. There would also be a significant local financial benefit to supporting farmers to take action to reduce flooding, especially considering the economic costs currently being borne by flooded homes, businesses and infrastructure.

We are very keen to meet with you to discuss these matters. Please could you suggest a date and time for such a meeting?

We would also appreciate an update on several other related matters:

1: What is happening with the promised £1 million to fund research on the Wye?

2: Why is DEFRA enabling the government to withdraw from Landscape Recovery projects with one year's notice, when these schemes are intended to be 20-30 year schemes? We have two potential Landscape Recovery schemes on the Wye - Wyescapes and Ridge to River - and this exit clause in the contract is undermining trust for farmers and confidence for investors and risks threatening the viability of the whole scheme.

3: Why is there still no meaningful enforcement of environmental regulations and no consequences for polluting practices? The Environment Agency say they carried out 183 farm inspections in the Wye during 2024/25, of which 78 received "enforcement responses" all of which were either warning letters or site warnings. There were no penalties given out for breaches of environmental regulations, so there is still no meaningful deterrent for polluters.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are grateful for the time you've already spent on the Wye, and look forward to working with you to accelerate progress on such efforts. We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ellie Chowns MP
Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire

Jesse Norman MP
Member of Parliament for Hereford and South Herefordshire

David Chadwick MP
Member of Parliament for Brecon, Radnor and Cwm Tawe