



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

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JNPHOS180602  
18th June 2021

Dear Marian, Clare and James

### **PHOSPHATE POLLUTION IN THE RIVER WYE**

Thank you for your agencies' joint response to my April 12<sup>th</sup> letter to you. I welcome your commitment to tackling phosphate pollution in the River Wye, in conjunction with the Nutrient Management Board and other partners. As you will be aware, staff from your agencies have helpfully supported the Wye Phosphates Working Group that I set up last year to press for an integrated plan to tackle this issue.

You rightly say in your reply that pollution in the Wye is a "pressing issue". You emphasize your "strong desire... to give coordinated or joint support on this issue" and the need for it to be "solved... in a coordinated and cross-border way."

But I am sorry to say that I regard the substance of your reply as seriously inadequate.

You say "there is no lead agency"--why not? This issue requires public leadership. The NMB is highly worthwhile, but it functions as a partnership forum, not as a high-level executive agency. It is not acceptable for your organisations, as the three public bodies charged by law with preservation of the environment and our natural resources across England and Wales, not to take a leadership role and to abdicate responsibility for this very serious issue.

It is also not enough for you to "offer support". To whom? To achieve what goals? On what timeline? With what budget? There is, as far as I can see, no public accountability here.

What is required is a named individual to lead a taskforce charged with working across your three agencies to solve the problem, with clear lines of responsibility, covering the whole river. You are



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responsible--and if you are not willing to take responsibility then that responsibility should be required of you.

Yes, it may involve overlapping responsibilities and require some mutual coordination, but these are issues for you to solve. Yes, it may need additional budgetary support, but with a Spending Review in prospect I and my parliamentary colleagues have already offered, and continue to stand ready, to support a high quality co-ordinated and realistic plan in any discussions you may have with the Welsh and UK governments.

In light of this, and considering the urgency of the situation, as we have discussed, I am proposing a meeting with the Secretaries of State at DEFRA and MHCLG, you as the CEOs of all three agencies, and myself, Bill Wiggin MP, Fay Jones MP and David Davies MP, the leaders of Herefordshire, Powys and Monmouth County Councils, and representatives of the NMB and of Welsh Water.

I should stress the seriousness of this letter. I want you to come to that meeting with a clearly designated, accountable and responsible cross-agency taskforce; and an agreed approach which we can review and I hope endorse before beginning detailed engagement with the Welsh and UK governments.

Yours ever,

**Jesse Norman**  
**Member of Parliament**  
**Hereford and South Herefordshire**

Copies to:

CLlr David Hitchener, Leader, Herefordshire Council

CLlr Richard John, Leader, Monmouthshire Council

CLlr Rosemarie Harris, Leader, Powys Council

Steve Wilson, Welsh Water

Bill Wiggin MP

David Davies MP

Fay Jones MP

Lesley Griffiths MS, Welsh Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

Rebecca Pow MP, Minister, DEFRA

Rt Hon George Eustice MP, Secretary of State, DEFRA

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State, MHCLG