



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Firstly, can we apologise for the delay in responding. The Authority is involved in supporting various activities to secure water quality improvements for the river SACs and at the same time to find solutions for enabling relevant development to proceed in compliance with the Habitat Regulations:

- SAC Rivers Oversight Group – this group is led and chaired by Welsh Government and is currently focussed on developing the 8 interventions advocated by the First Minister:
Written Statement: River Pollution Summit at the Royal Welsh Show (1 August 2022)
| GOV.WALES An officer from Powys County Council is currently a member of the Oversight Group.
- SAC Rivers Planning Sub-Group – this is a sub-group of the Oversight Group and is attended by all Welsh Local Planning Authorities with River SAC catchments as well as others from across the development sector in order to co-ordinate and share experiences and actions. It is currently chaired by an officer of Powys County Council.
- Nutrient Management Boards – part of the structured response across Wales has been the establishment of Nutrient Management Boards for individual river SAC catchments which, in time, will prepare Nutrient Management Plans. These mostly follow the model of the River Wye Nutrient Management Board, which the Authority has been active participant in since its formation, and is chaired by Herefordshire County Council. The River Wye Nutrient Management Board includes representatives from the Environmental Regulators (NRW, Environment Agency, Natural England), water companies, etc.
- Restoration of the River Wye Cabinet Commission – this is recent joint initiative involving Cabinet members from the Authorities of Herefordshire, Powys, Monmouthshire and the Forest of Dean and its aim is to develop a strategic plan to restore the River Wye Catchment to favourable conservation status in support of the River Wye Nutrient Management Board.

Accompanying NRW's compliance report, NRW published planning advice to Local Planning Authorities across Wales to apply when determining relevant planning applications within the river SAC catchments which for Powys includes the rivers Wye and Usk:

Natural Resources Wales / Advice to planning authorities for planning applications affecting phosphorus sensitive river Special Areas of Conservation

The planning advice requires development proposals (planning applications) in river SAC catchments to demonstrate that they would achieve **nutrient (phosphate) neutrality or betterment**. Powys Local Planning Authority, in complying with its duties under the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended), is unable to support applications which do not demonstrate nutrient (phosphate) neutrality or betterment with certainty due to the adverse effect they would have on River Special Areas of Conservation.

In addition, the preparation of Powys Replacement Local Development Plan will need to demonstrate that it achieves nutrient neutrality in order to comply with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations.

Furthermore, the Council plays an active part on the Powys Nature Partnership. There is formal representation on the Partnership by Councillor Adam Kennerley; the Biodiversity Officer, whose post is hosted by the Council, supports and facilitates the Partnership's work. The Powys Nature Partnership has been instrumental in producing the Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan (Powys NRAP) which can be found at: [Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan - Powys County Council](#)

Delivery against the Powys NRAP will be through organisations represented on the Partnership, as well as by many other organisations and businesses. It is fundamental to understand that the Plan is not and cannot be the sole responsibility of one organisation; success in a task of this scale can only be achieved through collaboration. Attached is the Freshwater and Wetland Habitat Action Plan which forms part of the Powys NRAP, which is of direct relevance to this question. It notes pollution from sewage, agricultural run-off, industrial processes, and other urban land uses as a risk to freshwater and wetland ecosystems; it sets out key actions that the Powys Nature Partnership will be promoting for delivery in relation to wetlands, including rivers. The Partnership has an ongoing role in monitoring delivery against these actions over the next 10 years.

Access to staff with specialist biodiversity knowledge is essential to achieve the change needed to address the Nature Emergency. Accordingly, to support the areas of nature recovery work that are outside the remit of the Biodiversity Officer role that is funded under the Local Places for Nature grant, the Council is actively seeking external funds for a new Nature Recovery Officer post.