



18th August 2021

The River Wye

Good afternoon,

Thank you very much for contacting me about Radnorshire Wildlife Trust's campaign on river pollution along the Wye River.

I was also concerned to learn that 61% of Wales's rivers in Special Areas of Conservation failed their phosphate targets and, in particular, the Wye River was found to have had widespread failures in its lower catchment area.

What was clear from Natural Resources Wales's (NRW) report into phosphates was that further investigation needed to be undertaken in certain pollution incidents – especially Dŵr Cymru's role in some of them. We are also disappointed that NRW is not ensuring that sewage overflow is sufficiently tackled, given that over 100,000 sewage discharges from combined sewer overflows went directly into Welsh rivers in 2020.

Regarding the claims about poultry units being behind the pollution incidents along the Wye, I note NRW's investigation found that the overall pattern of failures in the Wye did not support the argument that poultry units are the main reason for nutrient failures on the Wye. Therefore, NRW outlined an investigation was needed to take into account all potential nutrient sources, including smaller local sewage treatment works, which may not have been included in previous work.

As river pollution can be from multiple sources, Welsh Conservatives believe that a holistic solution is needed to restore river beds, rather than adopting stringent phosphate targets without first agreeing the best way to reduce pollution or conducting a fuller investigation into these incidents.

Finally, on farming payments, Welsh Conservatives understand that, while environmental benefits will be a vital part of future funding, food security must also be a key consideration. As such, we have been disappointed with the Minister for Rural Affairs' comments that food production will not be viewed as a "public benefit" in Wales. Welsh Conservatives feel that the failure to secure our long-term food security will cost future generations and our rural communities dearly, which is why food self-sufficiency should be prioritised.

Rest assured, my colleagues and I in the Welsh Conservatives will continue to raise concerns about river pollution with the Ministers for Rural Affairs and Climate Change, and you may also be interested to know that my colleague, Sam Kurtz MS, Shadow Minister for Rural Affairs, is putting forward a Member's Bill to improve the quality of inland waterways and I will make sure that the rivers of Brecon & Radnorshire are at the forefront of these discussions.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely



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