

# Plan for our rivers: Greens say privatise water companies, invest in sewage infrastructure and give regulator real teeth

- Greens highlight poor health of River Wye to argue for “drastic change”
- £12bn infrastructure fund for sewage and water
- £1.5bn boost to environmental regulator Environment Agency
- Cast-iron commitment to renationalise water companies
- Near triple support for farmers for transition towards nature friendly methods

TV personality Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and the Green Party parliamentary candidate for North Herefordshire, Ellie Chowns, will today be testing the River Wye for phosphate levels alongside a group of local campaigners and wild swimmers. The duo will outline The Green Party plan for rivers that will include the nationalisation of our water companies, investing £12bn into our sewage and water infrastructure and to boost the Environment Agency a £1.5bn boost to better regulate.

The River Wye’s ecological status was recently downgraded by Natural England from “unfavourable-improving” to “unfavourable-declining” – evidence, Greens say, that “drastic change” is needed. [Government figures](#) say that 72-74% of the phosphate pollution in the Wye comes from agriculture. According to [CPRE](#) there over 20 million chickens in the river catchment at any one time. Phosphates at unnaturally high levels alongside other nutrients in rivers can result in algal blooms and the death of many species in the river including fish, birds, invertebrates and plants that are vital to the river ecosystem.

The Green Party is calling for a Water Protection Zone around the river to give it a fighting chance to recover.

In addition, The Green Party is calling for a £12bn investment in water and sewage infrastructure to prevent sewage being dumped into our rivers and seas, and a cast iron commitment to nationalise water companies.

The Green Party is also committed to almost tripling support for farmers over the next 5-year parliament to support the transition to nature-friendly farming.

**Ellie Chowns, the Green Party Parliamentary Candidate for North Herefordshire** will today say that:

“We are reminded of just how much this shared resource means to the community and why drastic change is needed. The decline in the Wye’s ecological status is a stark warning that has been ignored for too long. The river has no

voice, but it does have a political manifesto that puts its priorities front and centre. We are here both demand a Water Protection Zone around the River Wye and to put forward a bold vision for how we can protect all of Britain's rivers. We need to tackle sewage pollution through real investment in water infrastructure and putting people before profit by taking water companies back into public hands. And we need to tackle agricultural pollution through proper support for farmers to transition to nature-friendly farming, plus giving the Environment Agency the funding and teeth it needs to enforce the polluter pays principle. With these measures, we can restore our rivers back to health."

**Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall will add:**

"Ellie and I are clear that the only way to end the scandal of our filthy water is to tackle the pollution at source. For the Wye this means addressing the factory farmed elephant in the room, and working closely with farmers to give them the support they need to grow food locally, and in a way that protects the environment. Nationally we need to be bold, and bring to an end the disastrous and unfair experiment with privatisation of a basic human right – clean water. We cannot allow shareholders to profit by extracting money from these disgraceful businesses which completely fail to deliver their obligations to society. And so I fully support the Green Party policy of bringing the water companies back into public ownership."

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