

# Wye Agri-Food Partnership

## 2020 Newsletter

In 2019 the Wye & Usk catchments were selected to be part of a novel approach to support delivery of “collective action” in the supply chains of the Courtauld 2025 Commitment signatories. Co-ordinated by The Rivers Trust and with the support of Co-Op, Tesco and the Prince of Wales’s Charitable Fund the lead local partner, Wye & Usk Foundation have been able to:

- ✓ Convene the Wye-Agri Food Partnership to communicate the opportunities this approach provides to local suppliers, growers and processors.
- ✓ Provide support to a wide range of businesses and growers that have engaged to positively influence their impact on water.

A second meeting of the Partnership had to be postponed in the spring of 2020 and due to restrictions limiting ongoing engagement this newsletter has been produced to provide an update on what has been achieved to date.

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*The Courtauld 2025 Commitment is an ambitious voluntary agreement bringing together organisations across the food system to make food & drink production and consumption more sustainable. Signatories have made a commitment to identify priorities, develop solutions and implement changes to cut the carbon, water and waste associated with food & drink by at least one-fifth in 10 years.*



# Participating Businesses

We would like to thank the following businesses for the active role they have taken in participating in this pilot approach:



In addition to the above we would like to acknowledge the interest shown by the following businesses: Heineken, First Milk, Sainsbury's, National Trust, Randall Parker Foods, Dawn Meats, Arla, Apetito, ABP and Lidl.

# Update on Delivery & Engagement

We would like to thank Co-Op & Tesco for providing funding that supports the development of this approach in our catchments, without it the progress made to date would not have been possible. Since the launch of the pilot in the Wye & Usk catchments work focus has been in several areas:

**Objective 1: Support Courtauld signatories with interest in the Wye & Usk**

**Objective 2: Identify opportunities to collaborate and support the suppliers of Courtauld signatories**

**Objective 3: Provide advice & support to growers**

In the following pages are examples of the types of activity that are taking place for each of these broader objectives.

## Objective 1: Support Courtauld signatories with interest in the Wye & Usk:

### Business in the Spotlight: Tesco

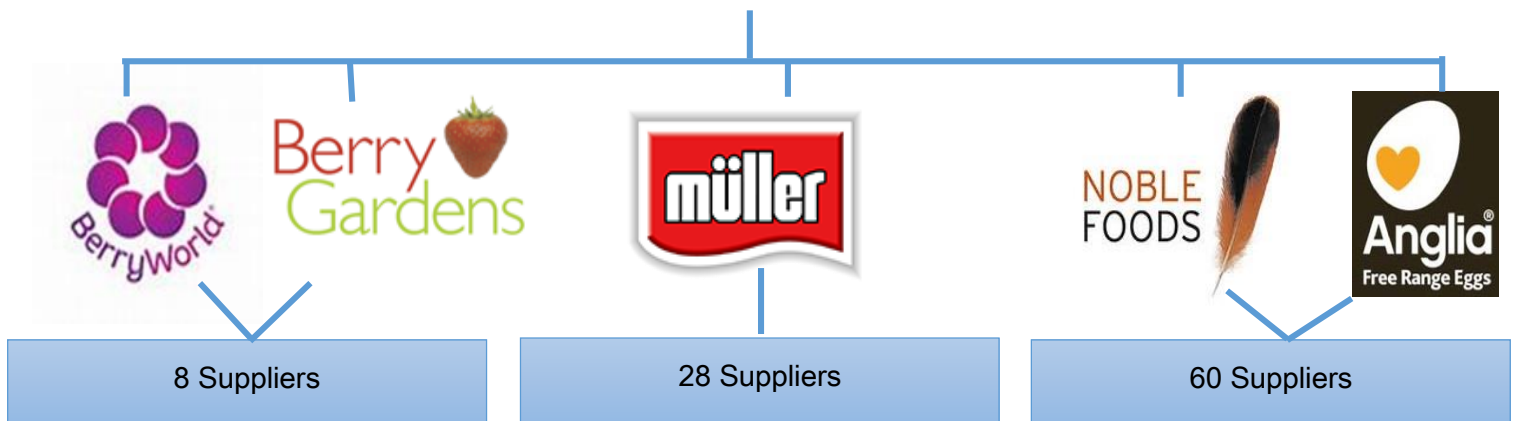
Tesco and WWF-UK are delivering a four-year Partnership with an overall ambition to halve the environmental impact of the average UK shopping basket. One of the three central pillars of this Partnership is to restore nature in food production and - using a pilot landscapes approach in some key Tesco sourcing regions – the Partnership is developing and delivering water stewardship projects with suppliers and producers that will address the impact of agriculture on water quality and availability, as well as deliver soil health, biodiversity and greenhouse gas reduction benefits. The Tesco / WWF Partnership's objective for the pilot landscapes work is for the farm advice and interventions to deliver sustainable agricultural practices at a landscape scale, which are effectively integrated with other advice provision and the enforcement of regulations.



In the UK, there are three sourcing regions participating in this approach, which includes the Wye & Usk catchments. Each area was chosen for a focus on specific products / sectors; and in the Wye & Usk the focus is on dairy, free range poultry and soft fruit.

Working with Tesco's supply chain, we are facilitating one-to-one farm advice opportunities for growers/producers, where appraisals of potential farm issues can generate targeted advice and assistance with on-farm interventions.

Working together



## Objective 2: Identify opportunities to collaborate and support suppliers

### Business in the Spotlight: Kepak

Kepak source from 5,500 beef and lamb producers across the UK, 220 of these are located in the Wye & Usk catchments. A promotional piece on the project & support available was included in their February “Producer Update” to help raise regional and national awareness of the work taking place. As a result 10 producers sought additional information on the project and support available and we are looking to identify ways to provide additional support to the Kepak producers locally in 2020.

The following 3 case studies are part of the Tesco & WWF Partnership:

Working together

TESCO



### Business in the Spotlight: Muller

Muller have 28 suppliers in the Welsh Wye & Usk catchments that are currently on Tesco contracts. They have taken an active role in promoting the advice and support available via the local Tesco WWF partnership project including hosting an event for their suppliers in Usk to introduce WWF and the types of support available. In addition to this Tesco will credit those that engage with points for Environmental Management which goes towards their “Tesco Sustainable Dairy Group” assurance scheme requirements.

70% of the farmers able to access the advice and funding support have chosen to participate in the project. They have been visited by a WWF Catchment Adviser who worked with each business to identify opportunities to make small improvements to their farm yard infrastructure to reduce slurry/dirty water production or increase storage capacity and therefore reduce risk to nearby watercourses. In addition to yard improvements an undersowing maize drill will be available for the Muller suppliers this season to help reduce the risk of soil erosion from overwinter maize stubbles. Thanks to the funding from Tesco £30k of grant support has been offered to support the improvements identified.



TESCO



### **Business in the Spotlight: Noble Foods**

Noble Foods source free range eggs from over 50 sites in the Wye catchment to supply Tesco. Their suppliers are able to access support and funding through the Tesco WWF partnership project to reduce the risk of soil and nutrient run off from their range areas. The scheme has been advertised by Noble to their growers and WUF Catchment Advisers are currently engaging with each farm to organise visits, where potential interventions are agreed and then grant offered where possible to support any work required. Interventions so far have included replanting range areas, providing greater shading to encourage better ranging of birds and also wetland type interventions to absorb nutrients draining through the soil. We are continuing these visits in 2020-21 and will report more on this project in the next update.

### **Business in the Spotlight: Haygrove**

Haygrove are a large horticultural business operating at a number of sites across Herefordshire growing a combination of Strawberries, Blueberries, Raspberries, Blackberries & Cherries. The company have a strong sustainability ethos with ambitious targets for carbon neutrality, water efficiency, biodiversity enhancement and waste reduction.

Coir compost is used as a growing medium for the potted soft fruits, but managing disease pressure from crop to crop restricts re-use of the coir and generates approximately 1200tonnes of “waste” each year. However this product can still offer significant benefit as a soil conditioner and Haygrove have been working with WUF as part of the Tesco WWF partnership project to identify how it could be reused locally to help restore soil health and organic matter levels in arable soils.

Analysis of the coir is underway to assess the benefits it can provide in terms of nutrients and dry matter but also to reassure potential users of its safety. We also worked with the local Environment Agency team to confirm the coir could be re-used under a free farm (U10) waste exemption. Once analysis is complete, the next steps are to highlight its availability to local farms that would benefit from using it – watch this space!

## Objective 3: Provide advice & support to growers

### Business in the Spotlight: Lower Hope Fruit

Lower Hope is an 1800 acre mixed farming estate in North Herefordshire which has utilised a number of schemes to deliver benefits to water, biodiversity and the business. The fruit enterprise of 70 acres consists of Sweet Cherries, Raspberries, Bramley and dessert apples supplying M&S, Waitrose and all the major UK retailers.

Working with the Wye & Usk Foundation advisers, stewardship schemes have been accessed to support:

- Cover crops and placement of buffer strips at high risk locations in the arable enterprise to help work towards the aim of enhancing soil health across the estate.
- Creation of pollen & nectar habitat within the fruit enterprises to extend foraging opportunities for stocked and wild pollinators as well as farm land birds.
- Investment in key infrastructure including 7km of trackways including cross drains to improve rainwater management to reduce erosion levels significantly.

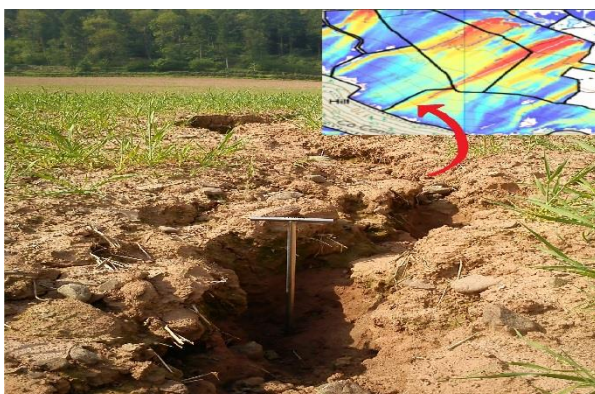


The estate is also located in a catchment trialling “Natural Flood Management” techniques to reduce flood risk to properties downstream. Through this project additional work is being undertaken to provide additional attenuation for flood water entering the winter-fill reservoirs, protecting the water supply from high sediment loads. They are also going to trial the use of an aerator to alleviate compaction in the narrow wheelings to reduce the flow of water from the polytunnels, this will encourage infiltration of rainfall and improve availability of water to the plants.

## On-Farm Support from the Wye & Usk Foundation

Each year the team of WUF Catchment Advisers support over 500 farm businesses throughout our catchments. In the English Wye this includes helping to access Stewardship Schemes that support opportunities to protect water quality and provide habitat for wildlife. Farms receive advice on the priorities for their holding, often supported with a farm plan that summarises the opportunities to protect water quality, hold more water in the soil, improve yard infrastructure, and manage or create wildlife habitats. Erosion risk maps, called SCIMAPs, are used for each farm to identify priority areas for resource protection measures like buffer strips and cover crops. Areas for biodiversity options are then identified to try a good balance for wildlife on the holding. Over two application windows (2018 & 2019) almost £9million worth of stewardship options have been secured for 140 farms delivering:

- ✓ 990ha of grassland management options including reduced input & herbal rich leys
- ✓ 100ha of pollen nectar mixes for pollinators and summer foraging for farmland birds
- ✓ 180ha of bird food mixes to provide over winter seed sources for farmland birds
- ✓ 170km of watercourse buffers to protect from soil erosion, nutrients and sprays.
- ✓ 220ha of enhanced management of priority habitats like Traditional Orchards
- ✓ 70km of management to enhance hedgerows
- ✓ 5km of guttering and 3.5km of underground drainage to separate clean/dirty water
- ✓ 140km of fencing to protect habitats like watercourses, hedgerows and woodland
- ✓ 23km of machinery/livestock tracks with 215 cross drains to reduce runoff
- ✓ 70,000m<sup>2</sup> of concrete yard renewal with 105 inspection pits to reduce loss of nutrients
- ✓ 32,000m<sup>2</sup> of roofing for manure stores, stock handling areas, sprayer handling areas and silage clamps to reduce runoff of nutrients and chemicals
- ✓ 45km of hedgerow restoration to improve condition and connectivity in the landscape
- ✓ 2100 bankside trees coppiced to create mixed habitat along watercourses





## On-Farm Support from the Wye & Usk Foundation

We regularly hold on farm events, demonstrations and facilitate discussion groups to provide farmers and land managers with the opportunity to share what they are doing with their peers. These meetings provide the chance for attendees to see new practices or approaches in the flesh and be able to ask the practical how, what, when and why questions that are often a barrier to changing practice.

Our events are nearly always collaborative with other local partners and businesses, during 2019 and 2020 they have included the following topics:

- ✓ Companion Cropping
- ✓ Compaction & Traction
- ✓ Reducing Cultivations
- ✓ Natural Flood Management
- ✓ Managing Stewardship Schemes
- ✓ Enhancing Ecosystems
- ✓ Undersowing Maize
- ✓ Alleviating Compaction in Grass
- ✓ Regenerative Grazing
- ✓ Traditional Orchard Management
- ✓ Regulatory Requirements



Event partners often include:

**Farm  
Herefordshire** 

**AHDB**  
AGRICULTURE & HORTICULTURE  
DEVELOPMENT BOARD

  
**A clear solution  
for farmers**  
CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

 **Field  
Options**  
Performance Seeds

**Rural Hub  
Herefordshire** 

 **FARMING  
connect**



**TESCO**

**co  
op**

  
THE PRINCE OF WALES'S  
CHARITABLE FUND

 **The  
Rivers  
Trust**

  
The Wye & Usk Foundation

## Future Opportunities in the Wye Agri-Food Partnership

2019 was a challenging year for many businesses and growers; in particular the uncertainties that Brexit brings, and the wet conditions throughout the autumn-winter period. Yet 2020 already appears to be giving 2019 a run for its money...

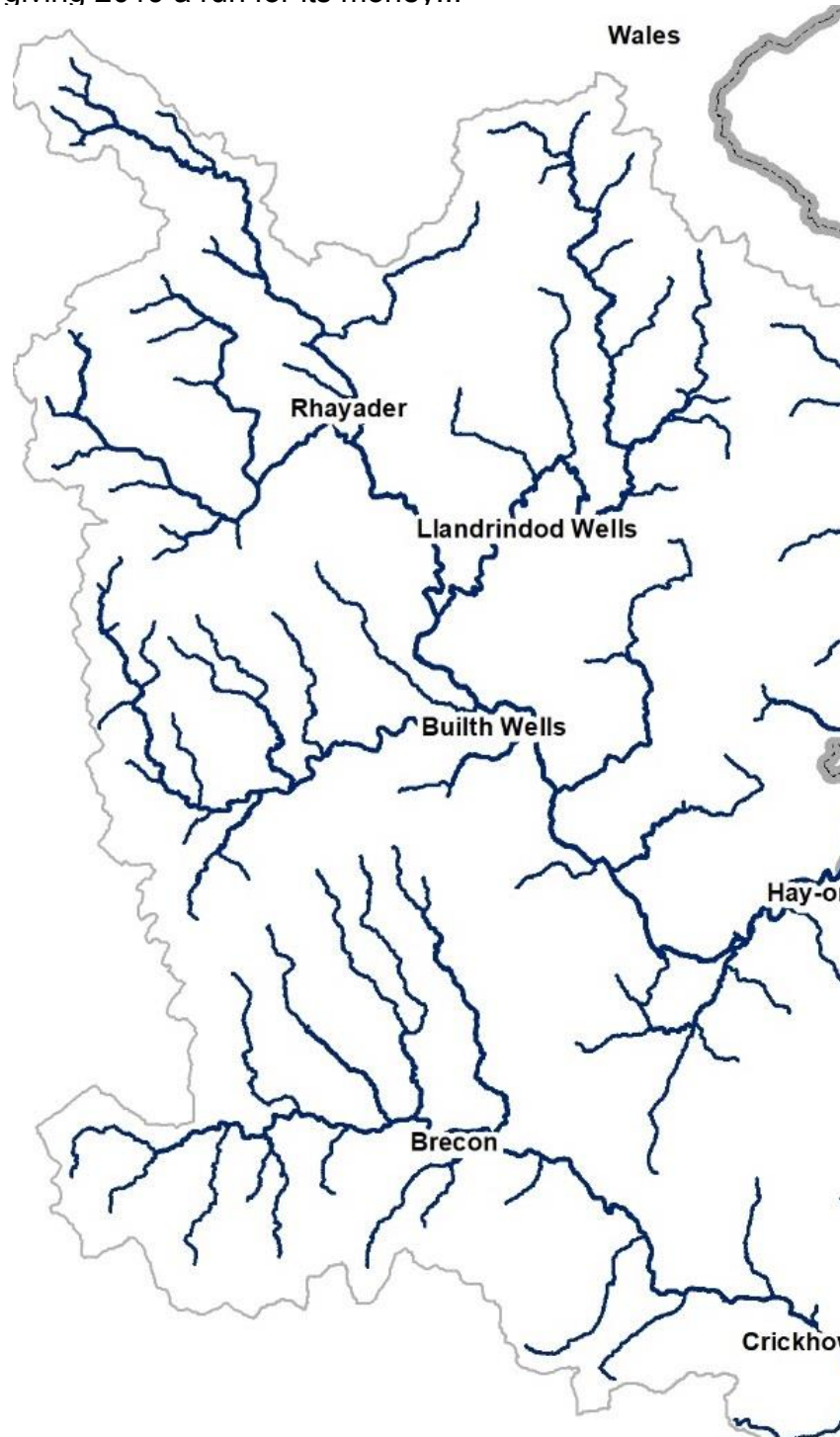
The sustainability of our domestic produce & supply chains are faced with both threat and opportunity. Our aim is to provide support and identify opportunities that can benefit the business and enhance the environment. This approach certainly aligns with the ambitions being outlined in our new domestic agricultural and environmental policies.

To progress each of our objectives for supporting the supply chains of the Wye & Usk catchments we aim to:

### Objective 1: Support Courtauld signatories with interest in the Wye & Usk

- Continue to deliver existing projects to the best of our ability.
- Identify additional collaborative approaches that could be established to deliver improvements to water in our catchments.

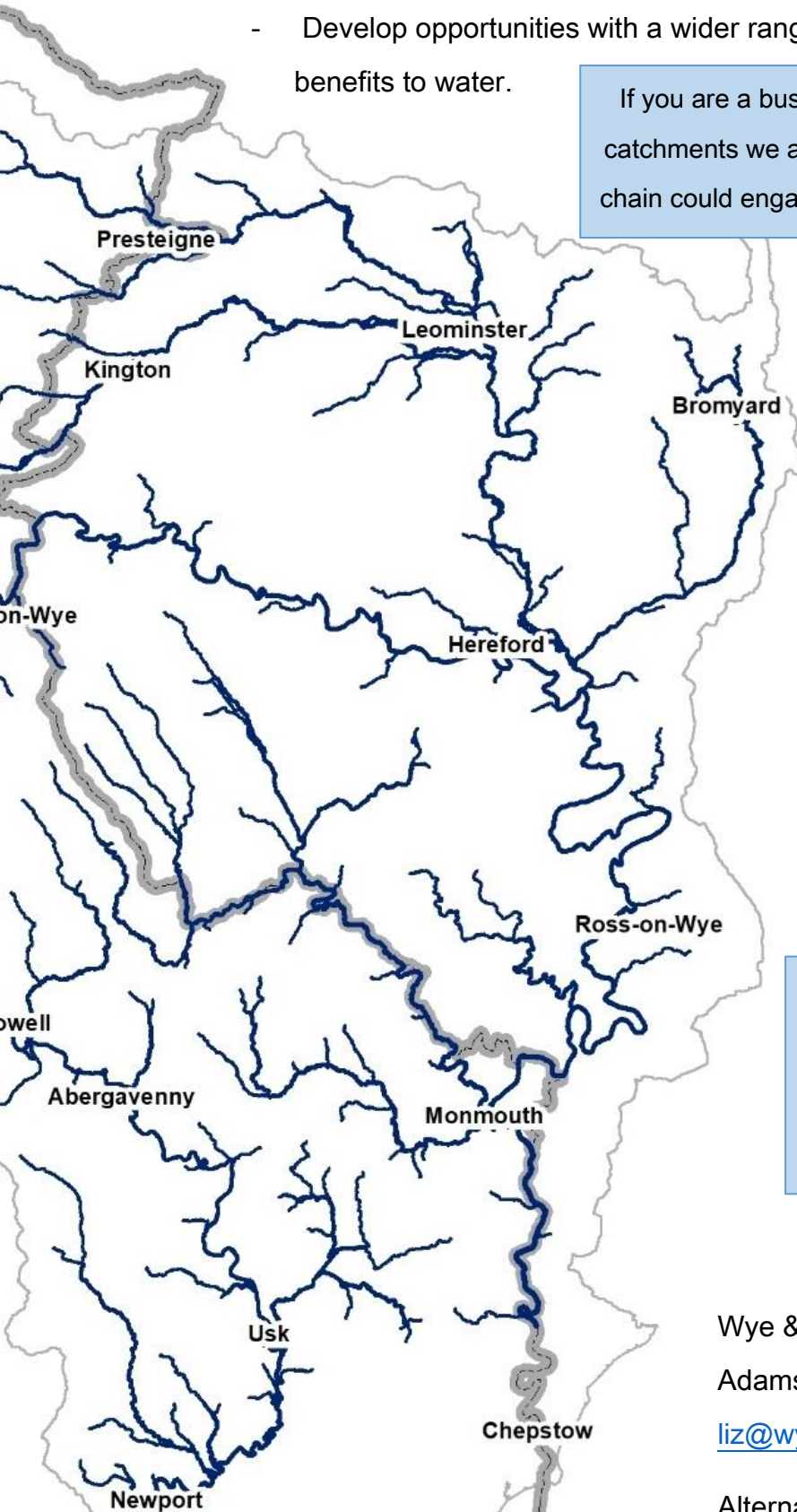
If you are a Courtauld signatory that sources or grows in the Wye or Usk catchments please get in touch as there will be opportunities to develop collaborative approaches that could help reduce the impact your supply chain has on water.



### Objective 2: Identify opportunities to collaborate and support suppliers

- Expand existing relationships with suppliers and assess effectiveness/usefulness of activity with their growers to date.
- Develop opportunities with a wider range of businesses to deliver wide reaching benefits to water.

If you are a business that sources or grows in the Wye or Usk catchments we are keen to explore how your business or supply chain could engage further in this pilot approach to protect water.



### Objective 3: Provide support to growers

- Secure funding that enables us to maintain an advisory function for farmers and growers across the Wye & Usk catchments. (Currently secured for entire English Wye and parts of the Welsh Wye & Usk until September 2021).
- Continue to develop long term relationships with growers, providing easily accessible, pragmatic advice which is aligned to future Govt priorities.

If you are a farmer/grower in our catchment we are keen to ensure you can access the advice and support available to you to help deliver benefits on your holding.

#### Key Contacts:

Wye & Usk Foundation contacts are Kate Speke-Adams [kate@wyeuskfoundation.org](mailto:kate@wyeuskfoundation.org) and Liz Price [liz@wyeuskfoundation.org](mailto:liz@wyeuskfoundation.org) .

Alternatively Alex Adam [alex@theriverstrust.org](mailto:alex@theriverstrust.org) is the Water Stewardship Manager co-ordinating the Courtauld approach for the Rivers Trust.

