



Office for Environmental
Protection
County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP
T: 03300 416 581
www.theoep.org.uk

David Hill
Director-General for Environment, Rural and Marine
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Date: 22 June 2022

Sent by email to: David.Hill@defra.gov.uk

Dear David

Delay in meeting statutory requirements

We write to express our concern regarding ongoing delays to the adoption of updated River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), and the potential risk of delays in meeting other statutory requirements.

With respect to RBMPs, regulation 31 of the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 requires that the Secretary of State (in some cases jointly with the Welsh Ministers) ensures updated RBMPs are published by 22 December 2021. These RBMPs have not yet been published and today marks six months since that statutory deadline passed.

Updated RBMPs have not been published for any of the seven river basin districts (RBDs) that are solely within England. Whilst we understand from the Natural Resources Wales website¹ that an updated RBMP for the cross-border Dee RBD is set to be published on 18 July 2022, there is not yet an updated RBMP for the other cross-border RBD, the Severn.

This delay is extremely regrettable, given the pressing environmental concerns at issue. However, we are also concerned that the failure to publish the updated RBMPs on time may signal that other statutory deadlines are also at risk. There are other important statutory deadlines pending, as you know, not least that environmental targets must be adopted by 31 October 2022.

These deadlines are designed to ensure that action to protect and improve our environment happens at pace as it must. We appreciate there have been exceptional pressures (including a pandemic) in recent times, but nevertheless we would expect

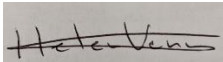
¹ <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/research-and-reports/water-reports/river-basin-management-plans/river-basin-management-plans-2021-2027-submitted-to-welsh-ministers/?lang=en>

Defra to give priority to the work necessary to meet statutory deadlines, as parliament intends.

We would therefore be grateful if you could please provide an explanation of the reason for the ongoing delay and an update which sets out when the outstanding updated RBMPs will be published. If you are able to confirm that the department is on course to meet the 31 October deadline for the adoption of statutory targets, that would ease our more general concern.

We have copied into this letter the office of the Minister for Nature Recovery and the Domestic Environment's as the minister responsible for the OEP as well as Ella McCall, our relationship manager. In addition, we have copied in relevant Welsh Ministers, the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales given their roles in the RBMP process.

Yours sincerely



Helen Venn

Chief Regulatory Officer | Office for Environmental Protection Tel: +44 7887 313888 |

Email: Helen.Venn@theoep.org.uk |



Office for
Environmental
Protection

www.theoep.org.uk

Cc. Defra

- Office of the Minister for Nature Recovery and the Domestic Environment (ps.rebecca.pow@defra.gov.uk)
- Ella McCall (Ella.McCall@defra.gov.uk)

Welsh Ministers

- Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change (PSMCC@gov.wales)
- Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change (PSDMCC@gov.wales)

Environment Agency

- Harvey Bradshaw, Executive Director of Environment and Business (Harvey.Bradshaw@environment-agency.gov.uk)
- Jo Melanophy, Executive Support and Correspondence Team Leader (jo.melanophy@environment-agency.gov.uk)
- James Pritchard-Evans, (james.pritchard-evans@environment-agency.gov.uk)
- Karen Wood, OEP and Complaints Advisor (karen.wood@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Natural Resources Wales

- Claire Pillman, CEO Clare.Pillman@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk
- Ruth Jenkins, Head of Natural Resource Management Policy (Ruth.Jenkins@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk)