

Water Targets Expert Advisory Group: Agriculture

Meeting notes, Tuesday 25th May 2021, 10:05-12:00 on MS Teams

Defra and Environment Agency (EA) attendees

Expert Attendees: Kevin Hiscock, Paul Withers, Paul Whitehead, Penny Johnes (Chair), Joseph Holden, Nicci Russell, Rob Lawson

1) Defra Presentation

Defra presented the proposed metric for the water agriculture target highlighting different outcomes and potential impacts.

2) Discussion

Discussion between Defra and members of the Water Expert Advisory Group focussed on the following topics:

- Analysing the total nutrient load as total N and total P, and not focusing on only a subset of the nutrient fractions exported from agriculture to water (e.g. total nitrogen rather than just nitrate; total phosphorus, not phosphate).
- Sources of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution as they vary between different farming systems (including livestock versus arable systems) and their apportionment.
- The importance of capturing organic and particulate forms of nutrient pollution, particularly from livestock farming systems.
- The adverse impact of all nutrient forms on freshwater ecosystems.
- The adequacy of Farmscoper modelling and the need for additional nutrient inventories and model development to build a better evidence base.
- The potential to use indicators to assess if and how farm practice has changed.

A summary of the advice and discussion from the Water Expert Advisory Group has been incorporated into the Detailed Evidence Report which accompanies our Environment Act 2021: environmental targets.