

Phosphate Newsletter No. 1

30 July 2021

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

Welcome to the Council's first Phosphate Newsletter which we hope will help to keep you informed about the actions we are taking to try to address the problems created by the phosphate enrichment issue on the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site.



Council leaders seek Government help on phosphates

The leaders of all five affected Councils in Somerset have called on the Government to urgently address water quality issues impacting International and European sites including the Somerset Levels and Moors, and to work with them to help unlock much needed housing development.

They have written a [letter, dated 23 July 2021](#), to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, saying the issue requires urgent attention if they and other affected authorities are going to be able to help address the national housing crisis.

This follows an earlier [letter sent in December 2020](#), which sought Government support following the [advice from Natural England](#) concerning unacceptable levels of phosphates in the Somerset Levels and Moors RAMSAR site.

The Council leaders are requesting that the Government works proactively with the Somerset authorities to deliver a clear investment strategy to address water quality issues impacting the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site.

They are asking the Government:

- For publication of the affected local authority areas, the quantum of housing development on hold as a result of [Natural England's advice](#), and information as to whether water quality issues are affecting other areas in England
- A commitment to influence further investment and upgrades in the wastewater treatment works to address this national water quality issue
- To work proactively with the Somerset authorities to deliver a clear investment strategy to address water quality issues impacting the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site, to help unlock much needed housing development
- To make capital funds available to assist the delivery of strategic scale nature-based solutions where the cost of delivery would otherwise negatively impact on much needed developer contributions for social and community infrastructure improvements (i.e., transport improvements and the provision of new education and health facilities) for which no alternative funding source is available
- For confirmation that current infrastructure and affordable housing funding programmes in Somerset will not be placed at risk by the phosphates issue and that extensions to spend programmes will be permitted where necessary
- For confirmation that relevant Government regulators (OFWAT, Environment Agency and Natural England) will be addressing the major contributory polluters responsible for the discharge of nutrients into the water courses that feed into the protected sites in England

Strategic solutions – The Somerset wide Nutrient Strategy

On behalf of the Somerset Local Planning Authorities, Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) has commissioned and appointed consultants, Royal Haskoning to support the delivery of a Somerset-wide Nutrient Strategy.

The strategy will focus on the development of medium- to long-term strategic solutions for the 4 river catchment areas which feed into the Somerset Levels and Moors. A [Position Statement](#) about this workstream is available on our website.

A draft report by the consultants was considered by the project team on 30 June 2021 and whilst this work is still in progress, one of the initial findings is that constructed wetlands downstream of Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW's), represents one of the most effective and important medium- to long-term solutions being considered in Somerset.

The consultants will be discussing their draft findings with stakeholders over the summer period via a series of workshops (see below for how to book onto one of these events). The work is scheduled to be completed in Autumn 2021 and should help identify a package of measures required to unlock current and future developments impacted by the phosphates issue.

Dates for your diary

The following dates have been agreed for the workshops with Stakeholders:

- Developer / Landowner Stakeholder event – 10am to 12:30pm, Wednesday, 11 August
- Technical Stakeholder event – 10am to 12:30pm, Thursday, 12 August
- Summary Presenting the findings from all the events – 10am to 12pm, Thursday 26 August

As a stakeholder you can register for any of the events by clicking the following link:

[Register for Stakeholder workshops](#)

Following the completion of the report by Royal Haskoning on the assessment of mitigation solutions options, the Council will publish the findings.

Frequently Asked Questions

To help answer the many questions raised by developers and their agents, we have published a series of [FAQs](#).

How can I as a stakeholder help?

You can support us in expressing your concerns and explaining how phosphate enrichment is impacting on you and your business by contacting:

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP (Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)

george.eustice.mp@parliament.uk

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government)

robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk

And finally...

To find out more about other actions and support regarding Phosphates on the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site, visit our [Phosphates webpage](#), which includes information on:

- Legal and technical information for applicants
- The Phosphate Calculator which we have developed
- Map of the area of Somerset impacted by phosphate enrichment
- How we are working with other partners
- Our lobbying of Government
- Stakeholder engagement
- Webinars