

Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme

Stakeholder update: Winter 2021

Image: Wessex Water

Spring Trial coming soon

The Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme (PHNMS) continues to develop well, with the various aspects needed for a robust and easy-to-use system now falling into place, thanks to our partners' hard work. To ensure everything will run smoothly when the scheme is rolled out in full, as the spring approaches we are planning a small-scale trial to test and refine the scheme's processes, and local farmers are being invited to take part.



The trial will test the processes needed to calculate and trade nitrate credits from a range of farming practices. Image credit: Poole Harbour Catchment Partnership with land access permission from Wakely Cox.

The trial will involve around 20 farms from across the catchment, who will be asked to road-test the scheme and give honest feedback so adjustments can be made where needed. Poole Harbour Agricultural Group Chair, Wakely Cox, explains 'We're working hard to make sure the farms taking part in the trial give a good representation of farming practice across the Poole Harbour catchment, with different types and sizes of farms on different soil types all in the mix, so we'd like to hear from anyone who'd like to be included'.

Farmers involved in the trial will receive full training and support and, if they prove eligible to, may be able to trade credits (sell benefits) as they would in the final scheme, providing opportunity for income even at this trial stage.

All information gathered within the scope of the trial will be anonymised and used solely for the purposes of improving and fine-tuning the scheme ready for a pilot roll-out in October 2021. If you are interested in finding out more about the trial, please contact Project Manager Tess Tidman at tess.tidman@nfu.org.uk.

Farmer case study: meet Will Hyde

Will Hyde's family farm 800 acres at Wool, Dorset. The farm has been certified organic for over 20 years and comprises a mixed arable and sheep system. Will describes how the Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme (PHNMS) will have a huge impact on the farm and its ability to operate sustainably in the future:

"We hope PHNMS will be valuable to the business; our organic crops and extensive sheep system are not major contributors to nutrient loss, so the scheme could enable us to trade any surplus nitrate credits with surrounding farms, generating useful additional income."

"PHNMS is a great example of a modern, farmer-led initiative. The risk of a Water Protection Zone is real, the results of which could be disastrous for our industry, so I believe PHNMS offers a real alternative. It will enable us to keep farming and in a more responsible way. Being a voluntary scheme it means that members will have real ownership, the scheme is designed by farmers, for farmers meaning that it is user friendly, workable and the benefits stay within the scheme and the membership."

"I would urge all farmers in the Poole Harbour catchment to join the scheme, the more people who are part of the scheme the greater the results will be. Collectively we are all responsible in reducing excess nitrogen making its way into Poole Harbour and helping to maintain farming as we know in in this part of the county."



Image credit: Will Hyde



Wessex Water outlines Poole Harbour environmental investment commitments to 2025

Wessex Water has an ongoing programme of investigations and environmental investments across its region, which aligns with each business plan period. The current business plan runs from 2020-2025, and the company is already making headway in delivering the commitments approved by regulator OFWAT, to better understand and continue to reduce the environmental impacts made by the company's operations. In the Poole Harbour catchment, these investments include:

Water Recycling Centre improvements: Increased Phosphorus removal at Cerne Abbas, Piddlehinton, Corfe Castle and Dorchester, and Nitrogen removal at Wareham. UV disinfection at Corfe Castle.

Nutrient investigations at Holes Bay, River Frome, Dorchester, Poole Harbour & Poole Water Recycling Centre (options appraisal)

Other investigations: water quality for shellfish across Poole Harbour; reviewing storm storage options for Rockley Sands Bathing Water.

Catchment management: Continue 40 tonnes pa nitrate offsetting against Dorchester Water Recycling Centre, and meet a voluntary commitment of an additional 51 tonnes pa nitrate offset by 2025.

Deliver 80ha biodiversity improvements.

Some of the catchment management commitments outlined here may be delivered through the PHNMS scheme. For more information, please visit www.wessexwaterebooks.co.uk/businessplan-2020-2025/.



*Nutrient sampling in Poole Harbour being carried out by Titan Surveys as part of Wessex Water's investigations.
Image credit: Wessex Water*

Councils offer parallel opportunity for farmers

The PHNMS scheme is being developed to provide a farmer-led, voluntary means for directly reducing agricultural nitrate losses to Poole Harbour. However, it's not the only opportunity being developed which could benefit farmers by paying for changes to land management practice.

Dorset Council and BCP Council are both partners in PHNMS and actively support its work. The Councils are required to achieve nitrate neutrality for housing and other development by the relevant Local Plans and are therefore actively looking for sites where farmers are open to permanently changing management of land within the Poole Catchment.

To qualify for this funding opportunity, the land use would need to be changed from standard agricultural management to a low nitrate input use for a minimum of 80 years. This might include land for planting trees, for natural regeneration into scrub and woodland or for wetlands. The Councils would be able to offer grant funding linked to a simple legal agreement for this change of use. Alternatively, they would also be interested in land purchase to achieve this.

This Council opportunity complements the PHNMS scheme and participating in one does not prevent a farm from participating in the other (as long as the same land isn't double counted).

If you are interested please contact Lyn Cooch, Nitrate Mitigation & Compensation Officer: lyn.cooch@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or 01305 228955.

Where can I get more information about PHNMS?

To opt in to find out more information or how to get involved, please contact the Poole Harbour Catchment Initiative team at info@pooleharbourcatchment.co.uk. Your data will only be used by us so we can email, call, write or text you about the PHNMS project. You can change your communication preferences by emailing us at the above address at any time.