

Collection: Nitrate vulnerable zones

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution. They include about 55% of land in England.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) reviews NVZs every 4 years to account for changes in nitrate concentrations.

This collection of guidance explains:

- how to find out if your land is in an NVZ
 - transitional arrangements until 31 July 2019 (if your land was in an NVZ for the first time in 2017)
 - NVZ rules
 - NVZ and cross-compliance requirements
 - how to prevent water pollution from your farm
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Press release: Environmental farming scheme given green light

The Environment Secretary has today announced that the Payment by Results (PBR) project will be the first agri-environment scheme directly funded by the UK.

In future, all the funding for the Payment by Results (PBR) pilot will come from Defra, with a £540,000 boost announced today to pay farmers according to the environmental outcomes they achieve over the next two years.

The project is paying participating farmers in two areas – Norfolk and Suffolk in the East of England and Wensleydale in Yorkshire – for work that is specifically tailored to the environmental needs of their area. For example, in Norfolk and Suffolk farmers are benefitting from planting nectar plots for bees and other pollinators, while those in Wensleydale are focused on managing species-rich meadows.

Today's announcement follows the government's [public consultation](#) on future farming policy which set out plans to move towards a system where farmers are paid according to the public goods they provide. As we leave the EU, there will be further trialling work to reach a model where profitable farm businesses and environmental land management can co-exist and complement one another.

Secretary of State for Defra, Michael Gove, said:

Under the CAP, agri-environment schemes have been overly bureaucratic and inflexible. This has impeded innovation for farmers who are passionate about the environment and want to see real change.

The Payment by Results pilot marks a shift in how we think about rewarding farmers for their work. This approach signals how we see the future of farm payments, where farmers deliver public goods for the environment which we all enjoy.

I am delighted to extend this scheme and look forward to seeing further evidence of its success as we plan for our future outside the EU.

The PBR project had been due to conclude at the end of this year, but Defra's new funding will enable participating farmers to deliver environmental benefits for an additional two years.

The trial is focused on providing training and guidance for farmers so they are empowered to create their own management plan for their land, and feel more knowledgeable about what they want to achieve, and why. This flexibility has meant participants have become more engaged in the wildlife they want to see on their land and think more creatively about how to achieve these results.

In Wensleydale, the PBR pilot is delivered by Natural England in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority. It has proved popular with participating sheep and cattle farmers managing grassland in the area, who have been rewarded for producing habitat suitable for breeding waders, or for managing species-rich meadows.

Arable farmers in Norfolk and Suffolk have been paid for their management of plots that provide winter food for farmland birds during the "hungry gap" when natural sources of seed food have been depleted. They have also planted and maintained flower-rich foraging habitat for pollinators, protecting this hugely important part of the ecosystem.

Chairman of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Carl Lis, said:

I am delighted that the Government has funded an extension and expansion of the Wensleydale payment by results pilot scheme. The pilot scheme has been a hit with farmers because it has been designed and delivered locally – and because it puts the farmer back in control of how the land is managed, rather than having to follow very detailed and rigid prescriptions.

With support from our farm team advisers, and the Natural England Project Manager, the 19 farmers in the scheme have produced some excellent environmental results in a short time. They have received payments for making their pastures into good habitat for wading birds, or for restoring and conserving species-rich hay meadows –

which are no doubt the jewel in the crown of the Yorkshire Dales National Park's farmed landscape. The better the environmental results, the more they get paid.

News story: Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) recognises safety performance

LLWR's exceptional health and safety performance has again been recognised in the annual RoSPA awards.

The organisation has earned its fourth President's Award in recognition of securing a 13th consecutive Gold Award for its performance in 2017.

Elaine Burrage, LLWR's Safety Manager, said: "We are thrilled to receive recognition for our safety performance and acknowledge all the hard work everyone in the organisation has put into us earning it."

Awards are based on an organisation's individual occupational health and safety performance assessed against specific criteria.

Entrants must provide evidence of a good health and safety management system by answering key performance questions and submit accident, ill health and enforcement data.

Winners receive a framed certificate and are entitled to use the award logo on their organisation's letterhead and website and to fly the RoSPA Awards flag.

Press release: Environment Agency announces support for farmers during dry weather

Following the driest June since 1925 and a dry July, farmers have reported water supply concerns which could affect the irrigation of crops and welfare of livestock. Ahead of the National Farmers Union's drought summit today (Wednesday 1 August), the Environment Agency issued guidance to farmers

detailing options to flex abstraction licences in serious cases.

The arrangements will allow farmers to trade water allowances – as set out in their abstraction licence – on a short-term basis, without the need to change their licence. The EA will fast-track the process to enable farmers to act quickly and arrangements will be agreed locally where the EA is satisfied that there will not be any adverse effects on the environment or the rights of other lawful water users. The EA also monitors river flow and will maximise access to water when it is available, such as following heavy rain.

In severe cases where there is a real or imminent threat to crops and livestock, the EA may temporarily allow additional, emergency abstraction. Each case will be assessed to minimise impacts to the environment or the rights of other water users.

Paul Hickey, head of water resources, Environment Agency said:

We know that farmers are facing considerable pressures in responding to drought conditions and we want to support them by allowing them to flex their abstraction licences in the most serious cases to safeguard food production and animal welfare.

We must also balance farmers' needs with those of wildlife and other water users so we will only allow these arrangements where we are satisfied there won't be any adverse effects on the environment.

As the hot, dry weather is set to continue we urge everyone to use water wisely to protect the environment and help prevent the need for water restrictions.

The Environment Agency will continue to carry out compliance checks on abstraction licences to ensure that abstractors keep to their licences and any agreed flexible arrangements.

The temporary arrangements do not apply to water companies as they are able to use a variety of drought measures defined in law to manage droughts and public water supply. The Environment Agency works closely with water companies to ensure they are following drought plans and implementing actions to conserve water in a timely way.

Notes to Editors

It is up to abstractors to ensure that they use water wisely, efficiently and have sufficient water for their needs.

Any flexible arrangements will be one-off, limited to this event. If any abstraction outside a licence is likely to need to re-occur, licence holders must apply to vary the licence at the earliest opportunity.

It is important that water abstraction licence holders check their licence

details – licence holders can now view and [manage water abstraction licences online](#)

The Environment Agency can review hands off flow conditions more frequently to allow abstractors to take advantage of any peak flows when significant rainfall occurs.

Use of water company headroom by other abstractors where this is sustainable. Southern and Anglian Water have said that in principle this can be provided and we are awaiting details from the companies on their proposals.

Press release: Go on a coastal adventure with The Snail and the Whale

This summer sees the launch of a unique partnership between the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Natural England and Macmillan Children's Books, celebrating 15 years of The Snail and the Whale, Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's classic tale of adventure and friendship.

First published in 2003, The Snail and the Whale tells the story of a tiny snail who hitches a lift around the world on the tail of "a great big, grey-blue humpback whale". Together they go on an amazing journey, past icebergs and volcanoes, sharks and penguins. The little snail feels so small in the vastness of the world but when disaster strikes and the whale is beached in a bay, it's the tiny snail's big plan that saves the day.

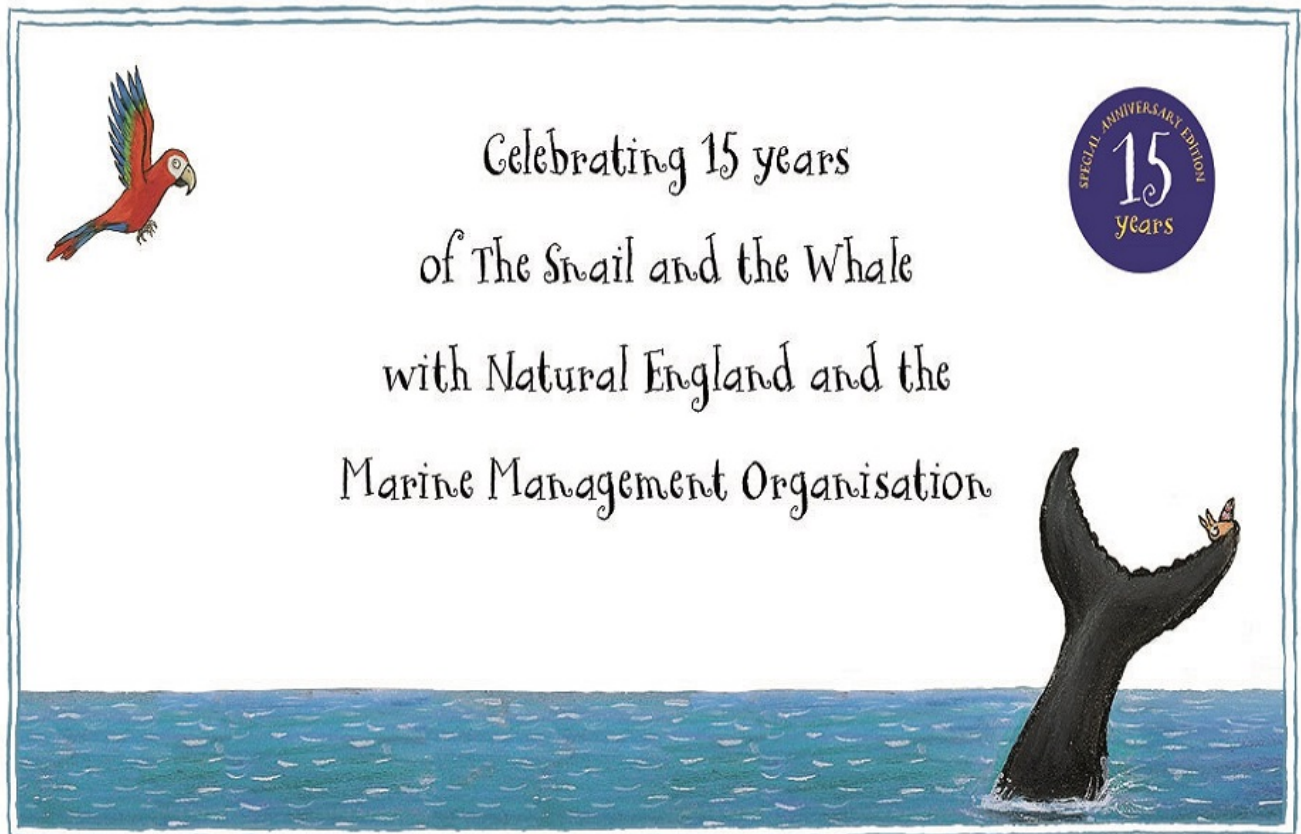
Macmillan Children's Books, MMO and Natural England want to encourage families to go on their own big adventures this summer, exploring The England Coast Path. While visitors might not see icebergs, sharks and penguins, with the help of their 'The Snail and the Whale Coastal Adventure' booklet they will have all the tools and information they need to explore their coast – from matching animals to their coastal homes and learning fun marine animal facts to advice about keeping our coasts free from marine litter.

The booklet is available to download now from the [MMO website](#) and also at special events celebrating The Snail and the Whale and this fantastic partnership throughout 2018.

Julia Donaldson said:

I am delighted that fifteen years after Axel and I created The Snail and the Whale our story continues to encourage young readers to get out and engage with nature and the world around them. I hope that children exploring the England Coast Path can gaze "at the sky, the sea, the land, the waves and the caves and the golden

sand” and be just as amazed as the snail.



The Snail and the Whale © Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler 2003 — Macmillan Children's Books

The MMO licenses, regulates and plans marine activities in the seas around England so that they're carried out in a sustainable way.

Gareth Hern, MMO Communications Advisor, said:

We are delighted to be involved with this partnership. The Snail and the Whale is a tale of exploration and we want to encourage people to explore our beautiful and diverse marine areas.

In the story, the snail feels small and insignificant but does something amazing in the end. Children and young people will have a huge part to play in protecting our marine areas so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Natural England is the government's independent adviser on the natural environment. Their work is focused on enhancing England's wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public.

Neil Constable, Natural England Programme Manager for England Coast Path said:

The England Coast Path is playing a valuable role in opening up access to our nation's remarkable coastline. Whether you are taking

a short stroll or embarking on your own long distance adventure, it provides the perfect opportunity for everyone to explore the coast's beauty and diversity.

Belinda Ioni Rasmussen, Macmillan Children's Books Publisher, said:

We are proud to be the publisher of Julia and Axel's classic story of friendship and teamwork, and thrilled to be partnering with Natural England and MMO, bringing this favourite family story to life for a whole new generation of intrepid young explorers.

It is wonderful that fifteen years after this picture book was first published the tiny snail and the grey-blue humpback whale continue to have new and exciting adventures.