



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

**Rebecca Pow MP**  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Seacole Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577  
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk  
[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

Caroline Dinenage MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Our ref: MC2020/07007/AJ

20 April 2020

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your email of 20 March on behalf of Cllr Allan Glass of New Forest District Council, Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, about the impact of nutrient discharge on house building across South Hampshire. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I am very much aware of this issue and the concern it is causing across the Solent catchment. The Government is keen to help developers achieve 'neutrality', recognising that this may be especially challenging for small builders and urban sites.

I welcome all the work that the Partnership for South Hampshire (PFSH) has carried out to develop short and medium term solutions to this issue. Below I have set out how the Government is supporting the PFSH's work regarding the matters you raise in your letter.

The Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE) have been working together to establish whether there is sufficient evidence available to justify a Permit Review of Solent wastewater treatment works. It is not for the Government to commission the review, but for the EA to determine if one is necessary based on environmental evidence it receives and in line with the Environmental Permitting Regulations.

Defra is continuing to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the EA and NE to map out the practical mitigation options available and to consider how we can assist stakeholders in the development of a strategic mitigation approach. It is Local Planning Authorities' (LPAs) responsibility to lead and secure funding for strategic mitigation solutions, such as by identifying suitable agricultural sites that could be used to offset the impact of additional nutrients from new housing developments. To support this, Defra and MHCLG are exploring funding options to pilot a nutrient credit scheme in the Solent.

We welcome Cllr Glass's proposal of a dedicated officer to provide strategic oversight and management of the nitrates issue across the Solent catchment. We recommend that LPAs work together to explore funding opportunities. Whilst it is not the Government's role to fund such local posts, Defra and MHCLG are looking into other potential funding sources that could support this.

Water efficiency measures may form a helpful part of an overall approach to tackling this issue. The Government does not directly fund water efficiency measures in local authority properties. However, there are other potential funding options that may be considered. Local authorities could approach water companies operating in their areas to see if they can provide support for improving domestic water efficiency. Alternatively, funding could be secured for this form of mitigation via developer contributions.

In addition to the support outlined above, Defra, MHCLG, the EA and NE have provided a joint position statement clarifying EA and NE's respective roles in managing impacts on habitats through the planning and permitting regime. NE has also published its revised Nitrate Neutrality Methodology. Both are available on the PfSH website. A summary version of the Nitrate Neutrality Methodology with a calculator tool to help smaller developers assess and calculate nitrate mitigation needs for their development will also be available soon.

We will continue to be responsive to further requests for guidance, information and support. We are confident that with the support of NE and the EA, local authorities will be able to find a pragmatic way forward in the short term, while work continues on wider solutions.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact us about this important issue.



**REBECCA POW MP**