

Briefing Note

Citizen Science - How the Environment Agency will use Citizen Science monitoring information, working in Partnership

This briefing note will help to clarify how Environment Agency resources will be used to support Citizen Science (CS) projects in the Wye Operational Catchment

Who will use it?

This is for CS groups and other partner / volunteer groups involved with CS monitoring working with Environment Agency staff. It clarifies how and when monitoring information should be reported and actions the Environment Agency will then take.

Background

There has been a rapid increase in the number of people wishing to engage in CS work. This is due to the increasing awareness of phosphate issues in the Wye Operational Catchment. Consequently, community groups and other partners have been keen to get involved, taking positive steps to support improvements to their local environment.

There are now several, well established CS groups working in the Wye Operational Catchment in both England and Wales. A support network has been developed, led by Cardiff University, providing training, guidance, tools and equipment to these groups. As an active partner, the Environment Agency has provided additional support to these groups, including funding, to help establish the CS group network under the Catchment Based Approach.

The work of CS groups is evolving and we are pleased that many are beginning to report additional information – such as where phosphate is exceeding the expected range or locations for diffuse and point sources of pollution through real time observations and records. With the continued development of the groups, we are likely to see an increase in, and improvement to, the level of data and information being submitted.

How the Environment Agency will use the CS data?

A considerable amount of data and information is now being collected and reported by the CS groups. All of the information is being recorded and downloaded onto the EPICOLLECT tool where the data is currently stored. The Environment Agency require access to the raw data to enable integration with existing datasets for the catchment.

The data obtained by CS groups will complement existing Environment Agency monitoring and data. Quarterly reports will be produced by the Environment Agency, incorporating the CS data with other datasets. This information will inform how we plan and prioritise activity across the entire catchment and will determine the locations where our resources are most needed and can have the most impact.

Where CS groups identify pollution incidents (other than high Phosphate readings) these should be reported to the Environment Agency via the 24hr [Incident Hotline: 0800 80 70 60](tel:0800807060).

Please note the Environment Agency will only attend incidents which are categorised by the Common Incident Classification Scheme (CICS) as serious/significant. Less severe environmental incidents will be recorded on our data systems and used to target investigations, regulation, campaigns, water quality planning, projects and partnership working.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

A standardised approach

In order to deal with the potentially large volume and types of monitoring information being collected, a standardised approach will be used. This approach outlines how different categories of water quality information will be used:

Category	Citizen Science Response	Environment Agency Response
Water Quality data that exceeds the expected Environmental Quality Standard (EQS) / WFD target for that waterbody (thresholds to be determined)	Data recorded on EPICOLLECT. CS groups will continue to log this information making note of the higher than expected values.	Raw data shared with EA. All data will be stored and analysed quarterly by EA in conjunction with other datasets to target investigations, regulation, campaigns, water quality planning, and partnership projects.
Pollution incident other than elevated Water Quality reading: e.g. water discolouration, odour, foam, oil, sewage fungus, wildlife in distress. (refer to CS training aides / examples)	Information to be reported via EA Incident Hotline (0800 807060)	EA determine appropriate response based on categorisation of incident (CICS). Incident reports which we are unable to attend will be used to target investigations, regulation, campaigns, water quality planning, and partnership projects.
Water Quality data that falls within the expected Environmental Quality Standard (EQS) / WFD target for that waterbody (thresholds to be determined)	Data recorded on EPICOLLECT. If location consistently falls within EQS then transfer monitoring to a new site.	All data stored on EPICOLLECT will be analysed and shared by the Wye Catchment Partnership in discussion with the EA.

When Taking Samples

Please ensure all samples are taken at a standardised distance downstream from any pipes or points of discharge. To ensure consistency in methodology, the distance between the discharge and the sample must be at least 10 x the width of the watercourse. Samples taken closer to the discharge will not provide valid data.

Where can I get further information?

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