# Residents and businesses file legal claim over pollution in rivers Wye, Lugg and Usk



A legal claim concerning pollution in the rivers Wye, Lugg, and Usk has been brought forward by residents and businesses affected by environmental degradation in these catchments. The claim, which originated just over a year ago through environmental lawyers at Leigh Day, identifies the Cargill UK poultry group and Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water as principal contributors to the pollution problem.

The Cargill UK poultry group, comprising Avara Foods, Cargill Plc, and Freemans of Newent, is accused of being the largest source of pollution in the River Wye area. Central to the claim is the allegation that industrial-scale chicken production operated by Avara Foods generates significant amounts of chicken manure, which subsequently enters the rivers Wye, Lugg, and Usk. This manure is said to introduce high levels of phosphorus and nitrates, nutrients that fuel harmful algal blooms in the water. These blooms block vital sunlight and reduce oxygen levels, thereby disrupting aquatic ecosystems.

Cargill, Avara, and Freemans of Newent have denied the accusations related to pollution.

In February of this year, the claim was broadened to include Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water as an additional defendant. According to the claim, this company stands as the second largest source of pollution in the affected rivers. Leigh Day’s legal team noted that phosphorus and nitrates from sewage discharges, stemming from Welsh Water's operations, have contributed materially to the pollution problem. This expansion followed a June 2024 Supreme Court ruling that permitted private nuisance claims against sewage companies for pollution caused by sewage discharges.

The legal action points to the adverse effects this pollution has on local residents’ ability to engage in recreational activities such as wild swimming and fishing. Furthermore, it asserts that businesses dependent on the health of the river environment have suffered due to the decline in water quality.

Oliver Holland, partner at Leigh Day and lead on the River Wye legal claim, commented on the community response, saying: "I am pleased to see that the claim has resonated so strongly with local residents and businesses. The rivers Wye, Lugg, and Usk play an integral role in the lives of so many individuals and businesses, and the powerful response from the community sends a clear message to alleged polluters that they will not stand by and allow these vital public resources to deteriorate further."

The legal proceedings thus far reflect growing concerns over the environmental health of these river catchments in south Wales and the tensions between industrial agricultural practices, sewage management, and the preservation of local natural resources. Further developments are anticipated as the claim progresses through the legal system.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2025-news/lawyers-highlight-importance-of-legal-action-after-data-reveals-at-least-12-500-hours-of-sewage-pumped-into-river-wye-in-2024/> - Details Leigh Day's involvement in the legal claim against Welsh Water regarding sewage spills (12,500+ hours in 2024) contributing to River Wye pollution through phosphorus discharges and ecosystem damage.
2. <https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2025-news/more-than-3-000-people-join-legal-action-over-alleged-causes-of-pollution-of-the-rivers-wye-lugg-and-usk/> - Confirms expansion of the legal action to include Welsh Water alongside Avara Foods, and cites over 3,000 participants in the claim concerning pollution across the Wye, Lugg, and Usk catchments.
3. <https://www.rossgazette.com/news/welsh-water-facing-legal-action-over-wye-pollution-761072> - Documents the February 2025 expansion of defendants to include Welsh Water, alongside Avara, Cargill, and Freemans, citing sewage spills and phosphorous contributions as grounds for the claim.
4. <https://nation.cymru/news/welsh-water-faces-court-action-over-wye-pollution-claim/> - References Welsh Water’s prior prosecution (June 2024) for environmental permit breaches, supporting the context for its inclusion in the broader pollution claim.
5. <https://yourherefordshire.co.uk/all/news/breaking-news-river-wye-pollution-legal-claim-will-include-welsh-water-as-well-as-avara-foods-ltd/> - Explains the March 2024 origin of the claim against Avara, Cargill, and Freemans, plus the subsequent February 2025 addition of Welsh Water due to sewage-related nutrient pollution.
6. <https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2025-news/more-than-3-000-people-join-legal-action-over-alleged-causes-of-pollution-of-the-rivers-wye-lugg-and-usk/> - Reiterates the involvement of Welsh Water and industrial poultry producers, emphasizing allegations of phosphorus/nitrate pollution causing algal blooms in the Wye, Lugg, and Usk.
7. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25111831.3-000-join-cargill-welsh-water-legal-battle/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data