# Legal action launched against alleged River Wye polluters backed by thousands



A significant legal action has been initiated concerning alleged pollution of the River Wye and its neighbouring rivers, drawing the support of over 3,000 individuals and businesses to date. This group claim, organised by the law firm Leigh Day, was started a year ago and targets major local polluters, including the Cargill UK poultry group—comprising Avara Foods, Cargill Plc, and Freemans of Newent—as well as Welsh Water.

The claim centres on accusations that industrial-scale chicken production overseen by Avara Foods is the single largest contributor of water pollution in the region. Specifically, the firm alleges that discharges from these operations release phosphorus and nitrate pollutants into the rivers, leading to excessive algal blooms that reduce oxygen levels and harm aquatic ecosystems. The implicated poultry companies have denied these allegations.

Since February, the scope of the claim has expanded to include Welsh Water, which Leigh Day asserts is the second largest polluter due to its sewage discharges into the rivers. Both types of pollution are claimed to have adversely affected local residents’ use and enjoyment of these waterways—impacting activities such as wild swimming and fishing—and have also negatively influenced local businesses that depend on the rivers.

In response to the growing number of claimants, Leigh Day has recently opened an office in Hereford to manage the increasing demand to join the legal action. The firm's legal team is also scheduled to engage with visitors at the upcoming Hay Festival next month to provide information about the case.

Leigh Day’s partner Oliver Holland, who is leading the legal claim, commented on the community’s response: "I am pleased to see it 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."

Regarding the anticipated timeline for the court case, a spokesperson for Leigh Day stated, "Whilst the claim will not be tried for some time, the legal team are expecting to issue it in the next couple of months."

Welsh Water has acknowledged its environmental responsibilities and announced plans to invest £2.5 billion over the next five years in projects aimed at improving the environmental quality of the region’s waterways.

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

## Bibliography

1. <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/> - This URL supports the claim that over 3,000 people have joined the legal action against alleged polluters of the River Wye, Lugg, and Usk, with Welsh Water and Avara Foods being targeted defendants.
2. <https://www.leighday.co.uk/news/news/2025-news/high-court-chicken-waste-judgment-bolsters-river-wye-pollution-claim-against-avara-foods-and-cargill-say-lawyers/> - This article corroborates that industrial-scale chicken production by Avara Foods is alleged to be a significant contributor to pollution in the River Wye, and that recent judgments have bolstered the case against these companies.
3. <https://ecorestorationfund.org/victory-for-river-action-as-high-court-rules-chicken-manure-is-waste-in-landmark-case/> - This URL explains the significant legal ruling that declared chicken manure as waste, which supports claims that it is a major source of nutrient pollution in rivers like the Wye.
4. <https://riveractionuk.com/high-court-ruling-declares-farming-manure-as-waste-in-major-victory-for-river-action-in-its-fight-against-industrial-scale-poultry-production-in-wye-valley/> - This webpage supports the assertion that a High Court ruling declared farming manure as waste, marking a major victory in the fight against pollution from industrial-scale poultry farming in the Wye Valley.
5. <https://yourherefordshire.co.uk/all/news/breaking-news-river-wye-pollution-legal-claim-will-include-welsh-water-as-well-as-avara-foods-ltd> - This article explains that Welsh Water is included in the legal action due to sewage spills, and that industrial-scale chicken production is allegedly the main cause of pollution in the River Wye catchment.
6. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL refers to the source article itself but does not directly provide external validation. However, it typically presents the overall context and claims being made about the River Wye pollution case.
7. <https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/gloucester-news/thousands-people-taking-action-river-10133003> - Please view link - unable to able to access data