



Lower Wye Internal Drainage Board

Conservation Policy

The Drainage District

The Caldicot and Wentlooge Internal Drainage Board administers the 2630 hectare Lower Wye Drainage District on behalf of the Lower Wye IDB, carrying out drainage and flood management work on 32 km of its rivers and ditches.

The drainage district runs through parts of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire down two main catchments. One runs southwest from Hereford picking up the River Monnow at Pontrilas and thence to the River Wye south of Monmouth. The second runs eastwards from near Abergavenny down the River Trothy to the Wye at Monmouth.

The Drainage Board carries out three intensities of management on its adopted watercourse in different areas. In the flood-prone area south of Hereford, watercourse banks are regularly flailed and sometimes a limited amount of (biodegradable) spraying is undertaken to help in flood control. Blockages, including dumped rubbish, are regularly cleared. The Board's adopted watercourses at Pontrillas undergo particularly intensive maintenance, as this is a high flood-risk area. On the R. Monnow from Pontrilas downstream less intensive management is needed, involving some handwork and dealing with blockages. On the Trothy catchment work is limited to clearing major blockages and very occasional riverbed work where bank erosion or flow restriction is seriously threatened.

The Board aims to do the least work necessary to maintain flows or prevent erosion and tries to leave undisturbed as much river and bankside habitat as possible. It recognises the great importance of these rivers for wildlife and regularly liaises with conservation agencies to avoid environmental damage.

Wildlife

The Board's regular liaison with conservation agencies seeks to ensure that its essential management avoids damage to wildlife. It also actively seeks ways in which its operations might be able to be used to enhance wildlife habitat.

The River Monnow is of major importance for the native freshwater crayfish. This protected species is now very scarce and endangered. Eroding, vertical riverbanks, bankside trees (especially whose roots go into the water) and a mixture of shallows and deep pools are important to crayfish and the Board tries to leave these features where it can.

The district's watercourses are important for the River Wye's internationally important salmon populations. The Board appreciates the potential conflicts between river management and possible damage to spawning beds or interference to migrating fish and works to avoid such problems by seeking expert local advice.

The well wooded, rural landscape of the district supports very good otter populations, and the Board's management tries to preserve the continuity of wooded banks. This allows the otter to move freely up and down the rivers and have safe, undisturbed breeding and lying-up places.

Landscape and History

The Lower Wye Drainage District runs through some of the most beautiful parts of the Welsh Marches and it is important that river management does not detract from the area's wonderful scenery. There are also a good number of archaeological and historical sites associated with the river systems and the Board works with appropriate agencies to help to protect them.

Conservation Objectives

The CWIDB will, where compatible with its drainage remit:

- Undertake its work in a way that respects relevant environmental legislation, and use its statutory powers to further the conservation aims of the district.
- Identify all conservation and heritage features within the district to enable its operations to have the minimum impact.
- Continue to develop its working practices to improve the district's conservation features.
- Work in partnership with all relevant agencies and organisations to optimise the effectiveness of conservation work, including the development of special conservation projects.
- Continue to develop its operations in ways that are both sustainable and use environmental best practice.