

Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme

What is the Scheme?

Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme (PHNMS) is a whole catchment approach that brings together all the farmers in the Poole Harbour catchment under one entity. It will provide the tools and support for reducing nitrates and delivering additional environmental benefits for agriculture and other sectors especially the water company and new development. The scheme has a vision; **the farmers in the Poole Harbour catchments are the most nitrogen efficient in the world.**

This approach already has support from a majority of farmers in the area and will prevent the use of new regulations enabling them to maintain their businesses and to develop new market opportunities.

The scheme was initially developed by the National Farmers Union (NFU) in 2018 as a response to the threat of a proposed Water Protection Zone for the whole of Poole Harbour which under the Water Framework Directive is a designated a 'transitional water body' and a 'special protected area'.

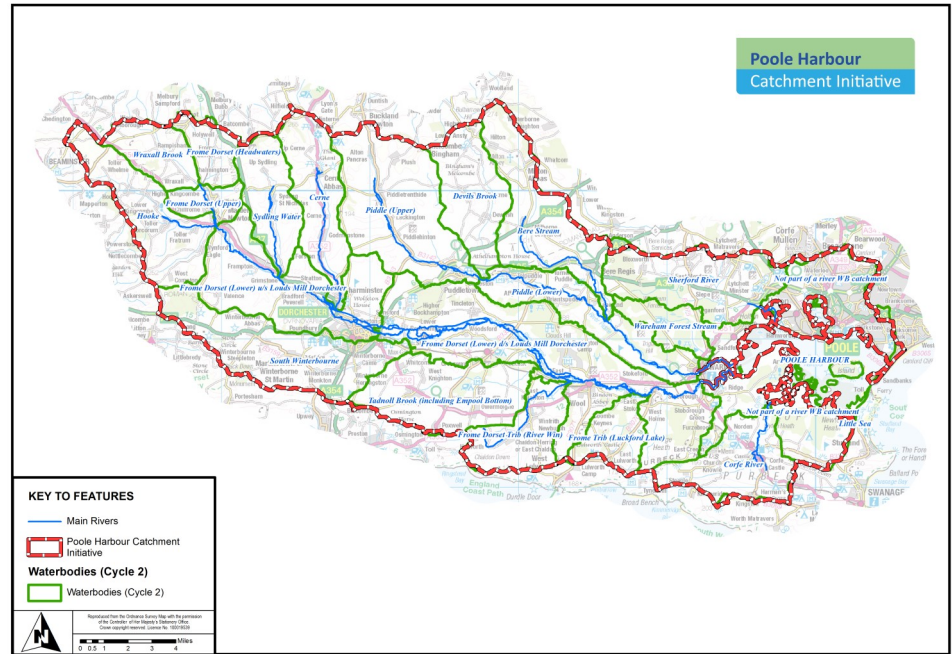


Fig 1: Map showing the whole Poole Harbour Catchment area and its waterbodies



What is a Water Protection Zone?

A Water Protection Zone (WPZ) is a geographical area where the water within is protected by a number of conditions over and above existing regulation. These could limit or stop certain activities that are thought to be causing pollution in the area. Each WPZ has an individual set of conditions and can include both surface and ground water. Defra has the power to establish a WPZ with the Environment Agency then responsible for its regulation. The only WPZ in the UK is in the River Dee catchment but the conditions applied do not include agricultural activities.

The creation of a WPZ in Poole Harbour is assumed to have a hugely negative impact on the ability of many farmers in the catchment to maintain their existing business models.

Who is involved?

There are a number of different individuals and organisations involved in PHNMS making it a brilliant example of partnership working. Sitting at the heart of it all are the farmers, who have been on board since the beginning. The governance structure below illustrates how the different groups sit within the wider remit. The NFU are currently the responsible accountable body and will be looking to recruit a dedicated PHNMS Project Manager to oversee the coordination of the scheme.

For the delivery element of the schemes, there are three groups. There is a dedicated **Poole Harbour Agriculture Group (PHAG)** made up of NFU members who have regular meetings to discuss how the scheme is developing and how individuals can play their part. This is currently chaired by Wakely Cox.

There are two further groups to coordinate and push the scheme forward:

- **The Delivery Team** including farm advisors and representatives from Wessex Water, Catchment Sensitive Farming, the Environment Agency and Natural England
- **The Partners Group**, chaired by Paul Cottingham of the NFU, where experts and stakeholders from various organisations sharing knowledge and agreeing commitments.



Wakely Cox, Chair of PHAG

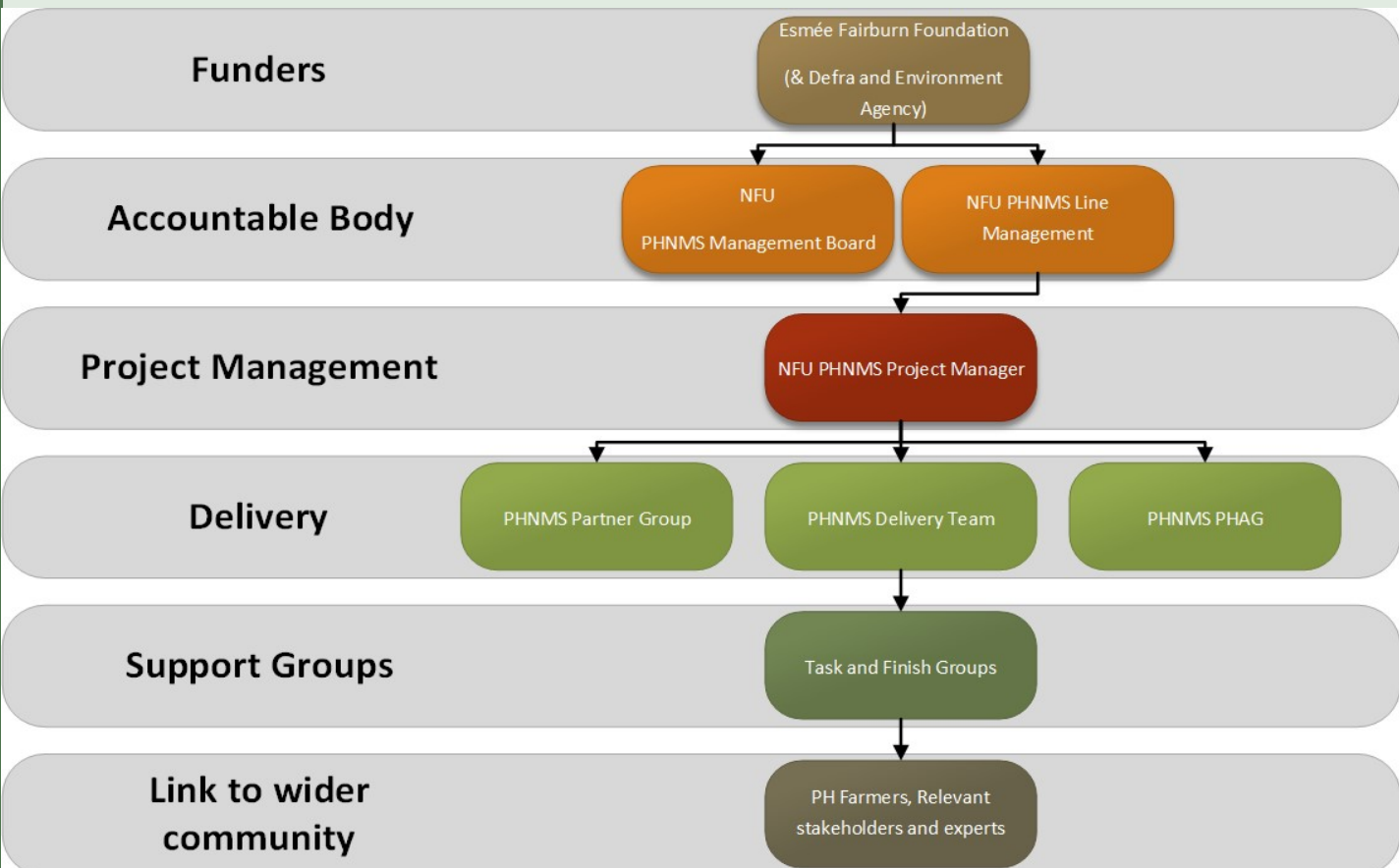


Fig 2: PHNMS Governance Structure

What's the plan?

The Scheme has been divided into several separate phases with future developments being made beyond 2023. The initial phase was to develop a business case for the scheme and to engage with the farming community. During 2019 the farmer group, supported by partners and led by the NFU, worked up the funding application which was submitted in September 2019.

Now that funding has been awarded by the Esmée Fairburn Foundation, work will commence on Phase 2, the development stage of two 'tools' in order to make the scheme investment ready and user friendly:

1. The development of a farm level nutrient accounting tool which will allow farmers to calculate their nitrogen losses. Knowing the amounts being lost will help identify ways to minimise the use of nitrogen allowing more targeted applications. This in turn will reduce the amount of runoff into water courses. This reduction will also have a cost benefit to the farmer. This platform needs to work for all those using it and allow for updates and future changes.
2. The development of a trading platform in which buyers can bid for offsetting nitrogen. This will allow overperforming farms to be able to sell nitrogen credits to buyers looking to offset.

This phase of the scheme is the most important in terms of developing the right tools for the job. This development stage requires input, advice and guidance from all three working groups and will enable the delivery of significant reductions in nitrate leaching into Poole Harbour. The project is appointing a dedicated manager to co-ordinate this stage. The NFU are currently the accountable body who are responsible for the funding, in the near future the aim is that the PHNMS will become an independent organisation.

A full role out of PHNMS is set for 2021-2022 and will be the first opportunity to acquire baseline data which will be essential in evaluating the success of the tools and their impact on the nitrogen levels entering Poole Harbour.

What does success look like?

The real success of PHNMS would be not only to see an environmental and biological improvement in the water quality of Poole Harbour, but also to see the scheme replicated across other catchments around the UK. Farmers in the Poole Harbour catchment will be recognised outside of the region as having made significant and foresighted impact and being the driving force for leaving the best possible legacy in water quality improvement, showing others what can be done.



Paul Cottington, NFU lead



An initial Farmer meeting, Moreton Village Hall April 2019

Where can I get more information?

To opt in to find out more information about the PHNMS project, or how to get involved, please contact the Poole Harbour Catchment Initiative team at info@pooleharbourcatchment.co.uk. Your data will only be used by us so we can email, call, write or text you about the PHNMS project. You can change your communication preferences by emailing us at the above address at any time.