

Agenda – Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Meeting Venue:	For further information contact:
Committee room 4 Tŷ Hywel and video Conference via Zoom	Marc Wyn Jones Committee Clerk
Meeting date: 27 March 2025	0300 200 6565
Meeting time: 09.30	SeneddClimate@senedd.wales

Hybrid

Private pre-meeting (09.15–09.30)

Public meeting (09.30–11.45)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions, and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 General scrutiny of the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

(09.30–10.35)

(Pages 1 – 34)

Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Claire Bennett, Director, Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability – Welsh Government

Gian Marco Currado, Director, Rural Affairs – Welsh Government

Attached Documents:

Research brief – General scrutiny of the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Paper – Welsh Government



Break (10.35–10.45)

3 Storm response inquiry – evidence session with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

(10.45–11.45)

(Pages 35 – 73)

Huw Irranca–Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

Clare Fernandes, Deputy Director Water and Flood – Welsh Government

Claire Bennett, Director, Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability – Welsh Government

Andy Fraser, Deputy Director, National Security & Resilience – Welsh Government

Attached Documents:

Research brief – Storm response inquiry

Engagement findings – Storm response inquiry

4 Papers to note (11.45)

4.1 Meeting of the Inter–Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(Page 74)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in relation to the Inter–Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

4.2 Bus Services (Wales) Bill

(Page 75)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee to the Chair in relation to the Bus Services (Wales) Bill

4.3 Legislative Consent: Bus Services (No. 2) Bill

(Pages 76 – 77)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales in relation to the Legislative Consent: Bus Services (No. 2) Bill

4.4 The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024

(Pages 78 – 79)

Attached Documents:

Letter from Asthma and Lung UK to the Chair in relation to air quality and smoke control

4.5 Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure

(Pages 80 – 81)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee to the Chief Executive of Irish Ferries in relation to the Committee's inquiry on the Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure

4.6 Storm response

(Pages 82 – 83)

Attached Documents:

Follow up letter from SP Energy Networks to the Chair in relation to the Committee's storm response inquiry

4.7 Halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

(Page 84)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration

Committee to the Chair in relation to the Committee's inquiry on halting and reversing the loss of nature by 2030

4.8 Restoration of opencast mining sites

(Pages 85 – 86)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs in relation to the restoration of opencast mining sites

4.9 Scrutiny of Natural Resources Wales

(Pages 87 – 90)

Attached Documents:

Letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee to the Acting Chief Executive Officer of Natural Resources Wales in relation to P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve and P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

Response from the Acting Chief Executive Officer of Natural Resources Wales to the Chair of the Petitions Committee in relation to P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve and P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) and (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and from the meeting on 30 April

(11.45)

Private meeting (11.45-13.00)

6 Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill – Consideration of the Committee's Stage 1 draft Report

(Pages 91 – 168)

Attached Documents:

Draft Stage 1 report – Disused Mine and Quarry Tips (Wales) Bill

7 Consideration of evidence received under items 2 and 3

8 Bus Services (Wales) Bill – Consideration of scope and approach to Stage 1 scrutiny

(Pages 169 – 178)

Attached Documents:

Paper – Approach to scrutiny of the Bus Services (Wales) Bill

9 Restoration of opencast mining sites

(Pages 179 – 185)

Attached Documents:

Paper – Ffos-y-Fran Opencast Site

10 Forward work programme

(Page 186)

Attached Documents:

Forward work programme – Summer 2025

Document is Restricted



Evidence paper for Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs for General Scrutiny and Flooding at CCEI Committee

27/03/2025

Information provided to aid the Committee in advance of the Cabinet Secretary's attendance at General Scrutiny and Flooding on 27 March.

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1. Waste including Deposit Return Scheme

In working to deliver on our commitment to securing a stronger, fairer and more sustainable future for Wales, we have been working to develop a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for drinks containers in line with the commitment to bring forward a scheme in *Beyond Recycling*, our circular economy strategy, and *Net Zero Wales*, our emissions reduction plan.

On 18 November 2024, the Welsh Government announced that, following discussions with the other governments in the UK, Wales was not able to proceed with the joint process to establish a Deposit Management Organisation. As such the process to do so as part of the wider implementation of the DRS - including the engagement with producers, retailers and wider stakeholders, standing up of the Deposit Management Organisation and oversight of the scheme - will be undertaken by the Welsh Government.

The DRS in Wales will cover PET plastic, steel, aluminium, and glass drinks containers. The timetable for the introduction of the Welsh scheme will be finalised in the next Senedd term.

Since the November 2024 announcement by the Deputy First Minister, policy officials have been meeting regularly with industry and sector representatives. The team has also been actively preparing for continued engagement with stakeholders, taking place across Wales. The sessions will address a range of discussion topics and include myth-busting elements to facilitate constructive conversations that will inform the development and design of a public consultation scheduled to launch this summer. The team is also continuing to engage with activities to develop DRSs in the other UK nations to facilitate interoperability.

Existing Welsh Government resources from within the circular economy and resource efficiency budget will continue to be used to bring forward proposals and the development of a bespoke DRS for Wales.

There will be a consultation on proposals for the scheme during 2025-26. Any additional resources needed to implement a scheme for Wales, which delivers in that context of Wales, which is very different from the rest of the United Kingdom, will be considered, then, in the budget rounds for the future years.

Building on our success to date, we are committed to continuing our journey, recognising both the environmental imperative of the climate and nature emergency and the economic importance for resilience and competitiveness in a decarbonising global economy. Following the recent introduction of our Workplace Recycling Regulations, the implementation of a DRS for Drink Containers in parallel with the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging is an important next step.

2. Net Zero Plan

Wales' journey to net zero is mapped out by a series of legislated five-yearly carbon budgets and decadal interim targets. When the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 was passed, it set a target for at least an 80% reduction in emissions in Wales against the baseline¹ by 2050 and a duty to set interim targets for 2020, 2030 and 2040.

In 2019, the Welsh Government published Prosperity for All: A low carbon Wales, which set out how Wales aimed to meet the first carbon budget (2016-2020) and the 2020 interim target.

In 2021, the Senedd amended the 2050 emissions target to net-zero (100% reduction in emissions) and increased the ambition of the 2030 and 2040 targets to reductions of 63% and 89% respectively. The Welsh Government published Net Zero Wales: Carbon Budget 2 which sets out how Wales will meet its second carbon budget (2021-25).

About 60% of the emissions reductions required in Wales by 2050 occur in sectors for which policy is largely reserved to the UK Government. Welsh targets are therefore largely dependent on UK policy and supporting infrastructure delivering sufficiently at scale and to time, alongside Welsh Government action. Close cooperation with UK Government counterparts is essential for Wales to meet its emission reduction targets. Likewise, UK targets are dependent on action in devolved policy areas.

Carbon budgets

Wales outperformed its first carbon budget with an average emission reduction of 28% against the baseline, greater than the 23% goal. Wales's interim 2020 target for a 27% reduction was also exceeded with 2020 emissions being 39% against the baseline, with emissions falling sharply as a result of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The current Welsh Government has responsibility for delivering the second carbon budget, which is set in regulations at an average reduction of 37% against the baseline. Internal analysis suggests that **Wales is on track to meet its second carbon budget**.

Achieving the third carbon budget will be extremely challenging and will require difficult decisions across all ministerial portfolios. Out-performing the statutory second carbon budget target would be advantageous for meeting future targets; we accepted the Climate Change Committee's 2020 recommendation to out-perform the 37% target for this reason. Wales' third carbon budget (2026-2030) requires an average 58% reduction in emissions and a 2030 target of 63% reduction in emissions against the baseline. Work is underway to develop a draft plan to deliver the third carbon budget – the next Net Zero Plan – which must be published by the end of 2026. It will be the responsibility of the next Welsh Government to agree the plan and deliver the third carbon budget.

Achieving the third carbon budget will require action from all sectors of the economy, including the public sector, businesses, communities and the general public, with policy stimulus from both the UK and Welsh governments. Targets must be met in a cost-effective way, which shares the burden, maximises the benefits fairly and mitigates the

¹ Carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide use a 1990 baseline. All other greenhouse gases use a 1995 baseline.

risks. Currently, work is focused on developing the cost-effective pathways for decarbonisation and marrying that with carbon-quantified policies that will deliver the pathway for the third carbon budget. It is our intent to publish carbon and economic data with the next Net Zero Plan, to aid Senedd and public scrutiny. We are also currently considering options for engagement with stakeholders, the general public and Senedd in the development of the Plan, or more broadly on topics linked to the longer-term transition to a net zero economy.

Cross-portfolio policy coordination through regular meetings between the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs and relevant Cabinet Secretaries, the Director General-led Climate Change Portfolio Board, national climate communications, stakeholder and public engagement (through activities such as Wales Climate Week and the Climate Conversations Fund), and internal capability building are all supporting planning efforts for the third carbon budget. Central coordination is also supported by sector-level plans and cross-cutting strategies, such as the Climate Adaptation Strategy published in October 2024.

On 14 May 2025, the Climate Change Committee will publish advice to the Welsh Government on the level of Wales's fourth carbon budget (2031-2035) and a recommended high-level policy framework to deliver the target, in ways which are cost-effective and will enable a just transition. The Climate Change Committee advice will be drawn from analysis which will inform advice to the UK Government on their seventh carbon budget (2038-42) and was published on 26 February 2025. Following the Climate Change Committee's fourth carbon budget advice, **the Welsh Government will lay regulations for its fourth carbon budget before the end of 2025** and in line with duties contained within the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Further key information

Decarbonisation poses a range of challenges for society. The Welsh Government is committed to a **just transition** to help ensure actions to reach net zero create a more balanced and inclusive economy that avoids creating new or exacerbating existing inequalities. Just transition principles will underpin the plan to deliver the third carbon budget.

The Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru commissioned an independent group to explore potential pathways to achieve Net Zero by 2035. **The Net Zero Challenge Group** reported on its findings in September 2024, exploring how the country can speed up its transition to net zero. The Group's recommendations are being assessed and considered as part of the development of the third carbon budget plan.

Wales is a founding member of the **Under2 Coalition**, the largest global network of states and regions committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. The network is central to sharing good practice and maximising the Welsh Government's voice on the international stage, particularly with regards to the UN Climate Change Conferences, with **COP30 taking place in November 2025** in Brazil.

3. Sustainable Farming Scheme

The Welsh Government published the **Sustainable Farming Scheme: proposed scheme outline (2024)** on 25 November which is being used to carry out an economic analysis and impact assessment. This will include an assessment of the proposals against the four Sustainable Land Management objectives and the impact, for example on farm business income for a range of different farm types and sizes so that we can understand what the Scheme will mean for farmers and wider society.

The positive response from stakeholders - as included within the **press notice** - on the Scheme Outline demonstrates the considerable work which has taken place during 2024 to get us all to this positive outcome.

Working with stakeholders we have reduced the overall number of Universal Actions from 17 to 12, and have made significant amendments to the majority of the remaining 12.

The Scheme will support all farmers in Wales through a Universal Payment, based on the completion of a set of Universal Actions. These Actions will be familiar to farmers in Wales, whether beef, dairy, arable, upland, lowland, extensive or intensive. They are actions many of them already take on a day-to-day basis. Some actions will not apply to every farm - for example, Universal Action 15, Animal health and welfare would not apply to arable only farms.

There will be additional support for farmers through the Optional and Collaborative Layers of the Scheme which build on the foundation provided by the Universal Layer. This support will be a combination of capital and revenue grants, alongside effective advice, guidance and knowledge transfer. The range of Optional Actions available will include, for example, actions on productivity, sustainable farm practice, habitat restoration and continued small grants support.

We will continue to work with the Officials Group and Ministerial Roundtable to ensure the Scheme truly works for farmers and helps support meeting our nature and climate objectives. It is important to highlight that the outline scheme published is not the final Scheme and Welsh Ministers have not made any final decisions on it. The economic analysis and impact assessment will be provided alongside the final scheme detail to enable Welsh Ministers to make an informed decision on whether the scheme is appropriate for farmers in Wales.

The final Scheme will be published in Summer 2025, ahead of the Scheme year starting on 1 January 2026.

Nature and climate considerations

Food production is and has always been the cornerstone of the SFS proposals. However, the ongoing impacts of climate change - including greater frequency of flood and drought are the greatest risk to food production. Investing in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change is vitally important, and our ecosystems are our best tool to adapt to climate change. For this reason the design of SFS has nature and the environment at its heart.

We have retained the scheme requirement for 10% habitat on farms in the Scheme. This recognises the positive relationship nature and the environment has to profitable sustainable food production.

We will include management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the Universal Baseline Payment. This will recognise farmers' efforts in managing these areas, for all our benefits and ensure these sites are integrated within wider farm management, balancing food production and actions that improve the prospects of nature and freshwater habitats.

We are also developing Optional and Collaborative Actions, many of which will be available from 2026 to support those farmers who want to do more. Officials are currently discussing the range of Optional and Collaborative Actions to be made available in 2026, but these are likely to include opportunity to progress with additional economic, environmental and social actions. The Scheme will provide additional opportunities to undertake actions at a farm and landscape scale to enhance these habitats and ensure they are brought into effective management whilst also providing opportunities to create new and improve the connectivity between habitats.

The most contentious issue with the SFS has been the Scheme Requirement for at least 10% tree cover on each farm. The proposed Requirement has been removed. However, we have not moved away from tree planting entirely. New trees and hedges must be part of our response to adapting and mitigating to climate change. The 10% tree cover requirement has been replaced with a 'Tree Planting and Hedgerow Creation Opportunity Plan', so farmers can identify new trees and hedges which can be integrated and add value to the farm. Subsequent planting would be supported through Optional Actions. See Woodlands Section below for more detail.

4. Woodlands for Wales Strategy

Woodlands for Wales (WfW) is the Welsh Government's 50-year overarching strategy for woodlands and trees. It's four strategic themes are responding to climate change; woodlands for people; a competitive and integrated forest sector; and environmental quality.

The last Action plan covered the 5-year period from 2015-2020. This was followed, in June 2021, by the then Deputy Minister for Climate Change's **Trees and Timber Deep Dive exercise**. During the deep dive, a task force of experts worked together to develop the **Trees and Timber Task Force: recommendations** to drive change. **These contributed towards the delivery of the WfW strategy.**

The **Woodlands for Wales indicators** are currently being updated to ensure they remain relevant and fit-for-purpose. The revised indicators will be used to inform areas of land-use policy in Wales, such as the development of the **National Forest for Wales (NFFW)**, to ensure that these meet the requirements of the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** and the **Environment (Wales) Act 2016**.

Theme 1: Responding to climate change

WfW committed to achieving a tree planting rate of at least 2000 ha per year. We are also working towards the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) recommendation that Wales should achieve 43k hectares of tree planting by 2030 and 180k hectares by 2050 to ensure Wales can deliver its net zero pathway. Average woodland creation figures over the last four years have seen positive progress and are c.700ha per annum, but planting remains significantly below where we need to be.

To help improve this situation we consulted farmers on proposals to make the Woodland Creation Grants more attractive and flexible. We are introducing these changes from March 2025. With the SFS minimum tree cover Scheme Rule now removed, farmers will need to complete a tree planting and hedgerow creation opportunity plan and demonstrate progress in delivering their plan by 2030. Scheme level targets for additional tree cover and hedgerow creation will also be agreed.

To oversee and support tree planting and hedgerow creation, the Trees and Hedges Stakeholder Delivery Group was established and first met on 6 February. Comprising government, farming, forestry, and eNGO representatives, the group advises the Deputy First Minister on setting targets and monitoring progress, recommending actions if targets are not met. Initially focused on the SFS, the group's priority is tackling barriers to tree planting more broadly.

Theme 2: Environmental quality

Environmental quality is embedded in how we deliver the Woodlands for Wales strategy. Funding provided for tree planting is compliant with the UK Forestry Standard, ensuring that sensitive features including deep peat, priority habitats, acid sensitive catchments and historical features are protected. This ensures that woodland creation, essential to mitigation of climate change, is also supportive of our policies to tackle our nature crisis.

We amended the Forestry Act 1967 to allow environmental conditions to be added to felling licences, providing better protection for wildlife and the environment during felling operations.

Appropriate woodland management is important in improving the condition and resilience of our woodlands. We are examining how woodland management can be supported in future schemes, particularly through the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

We are considering our approach to strengthening the protections for ancient woodlands as part of our Programme for Government. NRW have reviewed their prioritisation of ancient woodlands and remain committed through their Corporate Plan to 2030 to gradually restoring ancient woodlands on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate.

Theme 3: Woodlands for People

The National Forest for Wales (NFFW) includes over 100 sites totalling over 68,000 hectares. This includes 0.4ha of new planting at Oakfield Primary School in Barry up to large areas of forest like Wentwood, one of the largest ancient woodlands in Wales. There is a potential pipeline of 156 prospective sites that Forest Liaison Officers are engaging with.

Future work includes planning and feasibility assessments for a National Forest Trail and developing a landscape scale approach to expansion of the NFFW with over £500,000 of funding having been provided to trial 12 collaborative projects.

The National Forest programme has funded the creation of three Commemorative Woodlands to remember those that lost their lives to Covid -19.

The Woodland Investment Grant (TWIG) has awarded £7,168,766 to 41 NFFW projects so far to create, restore and enhance woodlands, including ancient woodlands.

Theme 4: A competitive and integrated forest sector

The **Trees and Timber Deep Dive** identified priority areas for a timber industrial strategy that can develop and sustain the high value production and processing of Welsh wood. A **Consultation document** was launched on 22 Jan 2025, closing on 16 April 2025. The proposals seek to deliver against the priorities set out in Woodlands for Wales, with a particular focus on supporting a competitive and integrated forestry sector, supporting thriving forest and wood-based industries. The consultation outlines six priorities: increasing timber supply; increasing resilience in our forests; resource efficiency and circular economy; instilling confidence in demand; developing sector capacity; and behaviour change. The Timber Industrial Strategy will be published summer 2025.

In November 2024, Welsh Government added the Forestry and Timber sectors to their **Flexible Skills Programme**. Revenue grant support is currently available to businesses for training and skills development for their employees, supporting the development of forestry and timber related skills across Wales.

We are currently developing a successor scheme to the Timber Business Investment Scheme (TBIS) and the Forestry Industry Recovery Scheme (FIRS). This will build on the success of previous schemes in improving the capabilities of the timber sector in Wales, focussed providing capital grants to support forest planting and management activities, timber harvesting and/or timber processing.

The **Agricultural Diversification and Horticulture Scheme** is a capital grant scheme available to farmers in Wales. The objectives of the scheme are to support the establishment of new viable agricultural diversification enterprises on farms. This includes support for the processing of farm-produced timber and/or non-wood forest products.

5. Agricultural Pollution Regulations

The 4-year review of the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations has effectively concluded and is expected to be published by the 31 March. As part of the review process, Dr Susannah Bolton, appointed to independently oversee the review, has been engaging with a wide range of stakeholders across the agricultural and environmental sectors, to complement the analysis of the technical evidence underpinning the review.

In April 2024, the Welsh Government confirmed that £20m has been committed for two schemes to further support farmers reach compliance with the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations. The Nutrient Management Investment Scheme and the Small Grants – Yard Coverings scheme application windows opened during summer 2024. Both schemes are designed to support Welsh farms to improve nutrient management. The Yard Coverings Scheme supports roofing over existing yards to separate rainwater from slurry. The Nutrient Management Investment scheme supports a range of capital investments which contribute to pollution prevention, including slurry and manure storage. The Nutrient Management Investment Scheme received 485 full applications, worth potential grant funding of £18.2m. Further information on the contracts awarded will be available in April, once the appraisal and contract award process has been completed. Since the regulations were introduced, a total of £52m has been committed by Welsh Government to support on-farm infrastructure investments.

A further £1.58m has been agreed in principle to support Natural Resources Wales' delivery of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) on the enforcement of the Regulations for the financial year 2025/2026. The compliance data collected to date is concerning. However, the SLA represents a step-change in the approach to enforcing agricultural pollution regulations, which have a long history of limited enforcement and high levels of non-compliance. The delivery of the SLA is key to ensuring farmer engagement with the regulations and, therefore, to the intended outcomes. We are already seeing improvements in compliance as a result of implementing the SLA.

To complement the current review of the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs has initiated a review of the broader regulatory regimes governing the spreading of all types of organic material to identify how these arrangements could be made more effective. This wider review is expected to provide recommendations in the Autumn of this year. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs will decide on the actions to be taken following the completion of each review.

6. Air Quality Targets

A key commitment under the National Air Quality Strategy (the Clean Air Plan for Wales) and the Programme for Government was to introduce a Clean Air Act for Wales, consistent with World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines and extend air quality monitoring. This has been delivered through the introduction of the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024 (the Act), which gained Royal Assent on 14 February 2024. The Act includes powers and duties for Ministers to set legally binding air quality targets for the protection of public health and the environment in Wales. New targets are important to achieve sustained improvements in Wales' air quality and associated public and environmental health outcomes over the long-term.

The Act contains two duties on Welsh Ministers to set targets for pollutants:

- a duty to set a target for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) within 3 years of Royal Assent (February 2027); and
- a duty to set a target within 6 years of Royal Assent (February 2030) for one of the following: ammonia; particulate matter (PM₁₀); ground level ozone; nitrogen dioxide; carbon monoxide; and sulphur dioxide.

In setting new targets, the Act requires Welsh Ministers to seek independent expert advice, have regard to scientific knowledge on air pollution, have regard to the most recent WHO air quality guidelines, and to be satisfied that any targets set can be met. Independent and expert advice is being provided by Welsh Government's Clean Air Advisory Panel (CAAP) which receives input from other multi-disciplinary UK experts with subject matter expertise such as health, transport, climate change etc.

The target setting process is being informed by several sources of evidence including scientific data and modelling, historical datasets, and assessments of what is feasible from a socio-economic perspective.

The development of targets is being delivered in two phases. As PM_{2.5} is the pollutant for which there is the greatest body of evidence of harm to public health, the first phase is focused on the development of the draft PM_{2.5} regulations prior to consultation in autumn 2025. Work is on track to meet the statutory deadline for their introduction by February 2027. The assessments and development of expert advice is an iterative process. The modelling assessments of PM_{2.5} target options are currently being analysed and reviewed to ensure alignment with the target metrics advice received from CAAP, and costed options for the assessment of progress made towards the target metrics are being commissioned prior to Ministerial consideration.

The second phase is currently being worked on alongside the work on PM_{2.5} target development. This work is focused on the development of options to underpin the duty to set an additional target within six years of Royal Assent (February 2030). It is intended that Ministers will consider advice on the options and associated next steps later in 2025, although this is subject to the development of independent expert advice and associated technical assessments of options based on that advice.

Indicative costs and timings anticipated at the time of the introduction of the Bill were described in the Explanatory Memorandum. Work is ongoing to refine the costs and timelines associated with pollutant-specific targets based on the independent and expert advice and assessments informing the development of the targets policy and regulations.

7. Flooding

This year (2024-2025), we have maintained our record levels of funding for flood risk management at £75 million, through our Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Programme. The 2025-2026 FCERM Programme will be announced in Spring 2025.

Improving flood resilience for communities across Wales requires not just significant investment but also constant evaluation of resilience processes, knowledge and frameworks; especially following storm events as significant as Storms Bert and Darragh in November and December. The Welsh Government is pursuing several overarching workstreams with this objective:

Emergency Alerts

The emergency alert, issued jointly by the UK and Welsh governments, on Friday 6 December informed approximately 3 million people about the impending Storm Darragh. This was the most significant use of the emergency alert capability since the UK-wide test of the system in April 2023.

The Welsh Government is of the view, having consulted with local partners, that the actions of the public in heeding the warnings and the emergency alert, which gave advice on how to stay safe, truly helped the emergency services in responding to the significant impacts of the storm across Wales and to reduce the risks of injury to the public.

Every effort is made to ensure the functionality of the alert system. All Mobile Network Operators run regular testing of the system to provide appropriate levels of assurance there will be no issues with the alert if activated. Where some people may not have received an alert or it was delayed, this may have been because of factors such as network coverage, as the alert is not compatible with 2G/3G network or Wi-Fi only devices. Other potential factors include handset problems, handset airplane mode and the manual disabling of the functionality on the handset.

The Welsh and UK governments are conducting a review of the use of the emergency alert system in relation to Storm Darragh, which will explore any technical issues or lessons identified. A UK-wide test of the emergency alert system is planned for later in 2025.

Emergency alerts have been subsequently deployed in Northern Ireland and Scotland in relation to Storm Eowyn. The decisions of the Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive to issue alerts were informed by Welsh Government officials' advice given the learning during Storm Darragh.

Natural Resources Wales' new Flood Warning Information Service

In July 2024, Natural Resources Wales launched their new Flood Warning Information Service for Wales (FWISfW). This was a significant business critical capital investment project which received almost £6 million funding from the Welsh Government and has enabled NRW to provide a service tailored to the needs of customers in Wales. The new

service has delivered improvements to warning message content and process efficiencies that lessen the pressure on the duty officers during flood events, allowing them to focus on the big risks.

Storms Bert and Darragh were the first significant storm events to occur since the roll-out of the new service, issuing approximately 343,000 warning messages to 40,000 people. NRW are undertaking an evaluation exercise to establish any necessary improvements to the service.

Learning Lessons

Learning the lessons from disruptive challenges is a fundamental component of our broader effort to strengthen Wales' resilience. The Deputy First Minister has led debriefs with emergency responders following major incidents, including the recent flooding during Storm Bert. This gave an early chance for reflection from responder leaders to help identifying what worked well and where improvements need to be made.

A key priority for the Welsh Government is to learn the lessons from exercises and emergencies, and to help us, and the responder community, prepare for future incidents. It is also important we learn from past mistakes.

To support our approach to the implementation of lessons identified from inquiries, exercises and incidents, we are developing a new internal lessons management system, which enables improved prioritisation, coordination and monitoring of implementation. By introducing this new management system, we aim to close the loop between identifying lessons and achieving positive, lasting, improvements in practice.

As part of the development of the Wales Resilience Framework, we will also work with partners in Local Resilience Forums to develop pan-Wales lessons management system, which will support us in providing clear and auditable evidence to show how lessons have been learned and how and where that learning has been applied at all levels.

Communities and Third Sector

Welsh Government recognises that working with local and national partners and the people in communities is crucial. We will continue to iterate the multi-agency JIGSO system to ensure that partners can identify our most vulnerable citizens in times of an emergency. We will continue to engage with equality and community groups to develop the data available, in line with data protection legislation.

Our whole of society approach to resilience means it is essential for communities and individuals to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to support resilience at a local level. We are committed to building our knowledge and understanding of the underlying vulnerabilities within our communities, including ensuring we, and our partners, are better able to identify vulnerable and at-risk groups to ensure more specific and tailored support can be prioritised in any incident.

In the context of flood risk management specifically, community engagement is a key aspect of building community flood resilience and many at-risk communities own and develop their own flood plans. There are currently at least 76 community flood plans

across Wales; namely in 35 communities in South Wales, 14 in Mid Wales, and 27 in North Wales taking action to understand, prepare for and manage potential flood risks in their area.

We are also exploring whether the National Flood Forum (NFF) can help us to engage with at-risk communities in Wales. We know from meeting with affected communities that this is a greatly valued resource and appreciated form of support. For example, we are currently funding the NFF to support the residents of Clydach Terrace in Ynysybwl who were particularly affected by Storm Dennis in 2020.

Where incidents of significant flooding have occurred, we have been quick to operationalise local financial support. We provided emergency support payments of £500 and £1000 to households impacted by Storms Bert and Darragh through the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme. This was to assist them in their recovery following the significant impacts associated with two major storm events.

Preparation and Response

As part of the Welsh Government's new Wales Resilience Framework, which is due to be published in May 2025, significant work has been undertaken to review our preparedness and response processes and structures including both external and internal governance arrangements.

During 2024-25, Welsh Government provided funding to our four local resilience forums (LRFs), and we will continue to provide further funding to support the vital work undertaken by our LRFs in supporting multi-agency planning and preparedness across a range of risks and ensure any capability gaps are addressed.

Over the last two years, work has been undertaken on creating a suite of risk evidence documents to provide an improved risk evidence base for Welsh responders and the Welsh Government. Our risk register is a classified assessment of the most significant risks to Wales over the medium term (next two to five years). This Wales-specific evidence base provides:

- Higher quality information to raise awareness and collective understanding of short, medium and long-term civil protection risks and to inform emergency preparedness and response and recovery capability building work.
- Identification and assessment of concurrent risks to help inform preparedness and consequence management planning.
- An assessment of preparedness of each of the four Local Resilience Forums in Wales against the common consequences that could arise should any given risk materialise in future, and specific preparedness assessments against each system-wide disruptive challenge identified in the UK National Security Risk Assessment. This preparedness element of the risk register is unique in terms of national risk assessments in the UK and contributes to the development of our capabilities programme.
- Help to inform the Welsh Government's risk management and preparedness work while complementing emergency responders' work at

the local level by supporting them in fulfilling their statutory risk assessment and emergency planning obligations.

The Welsh Government's restrengthened and simplified response structures were tested significantly as a result of the impacts of Storm Darragh in early December 2024. This was the most significant national test of Wales' resilience since the Covid pandemic in 2020-22.

With the Met Office forecast highlighting red warning for wind and amber warnings for rain, the Welsh Government preparedness structure transitioned swiftly to response, with activation of First Response, to complement the activation of response structures of Wales' four LRFs. This initial response helped with mutual aid, the issuing of an emergency alert, warning and informing arrangements, including a statement from the First Minister, and coordination into UK Government including power supply restoration. Given the severity of the situation, this was escalated to a Level 2 response, as set out in the Pan Wales Response Plan, convening the Wales Civil Contingencies Committee to bring together leaders from the responder community and senior officials from the Welsh Government and UK Government's COBR unit.

Maintenance of Flood Risk Assets

Storms Bert and Darragh highlighted the particular importance of resilient infrastructure to minimise storm impacts, including landslips, culvert damage and sinkhole formation. Welsh Government provided emergency capital funding of up to £8.1 million to Risk Management Authorities to repair damaged infrastructure in the wake of the storms.

It is vital that we understand where our flood assets are located in order to maintain them to a sufficient standard. Flood Risk Management Authorities have a duty to maintain a register of flood assets under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Local Authorities and NRW already have their own detailed records of their assets in different formats, but Welsh Government has worked with NRW, WLGA and Local Authorities to bring everything together in one public facing platform. The National Asset Database is available on NRW's website and ensures that consistent information is gathered, stored and displayed on our flood and coastal assets. It will increase our resilience to flooding by improving our understanding of flood assets and eventually their condition.

There are several significant workstreams which Welsh Government is progressing to inform our longer-term flood policy priorities. For example, in August 2023 Professor Elwen Evans QC published her independent review of Section 19 flood investigation reports, and in October 2024 the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales (NICW) published their report assessing how flooding in Wales can be minimised by 2050. These, together with NRW's Long Term Investment Requirements report published in January 2024, will inform the longer-term direction of policymaking over the coming decades. Welsh Government will provide a formal response to the NICW report later in the spring but we are currently considering the findings of all three reports together to inform our decision-making.

Document is Restricted

2024 Storm Response Inquiry

Engagement Findings

March 2024



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1. Engagement Summary

The following engagement summary offers an overview of the engagement programme design, delivery, and key findings.

Background

1. The Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee is reviewing several key areas of the 2024 winter storm response, including the adequacy of preparation, forecasting, and alert systems, as well as the resilience of critical infrastructure like water, sewerage, electricity, and transport networks to storm impacts such as flooding and landslides.
2. The Committee sought to hear directly from those impacted by the recent winter storms. To facilitate this, the Citizen Engagement Team conducted interviews with individuals from communities across Wales who were affected by either or both Storms Bert and Daragh.

Objectives

3. The engagement programmed focused on the following terms of reference in relation to the inquiry:
 - **Alerts and forecasting:** whether preparation, forecasting, warning, and alert systems were adequate.
 - **Infrastructure resilience:** the resilience of water and sewerage systems, electricity distribution infrastructure, and transport networks to storm impacts, including flooding landslips, culvert damage and sinkhole formation.
 - **Community impact:** the role of landowners, community groups, and third sector organisations.
 - **The response of public and private authorities.**
4. The objective of the interviews was to gather firsthand insights and experiences from individuals directly affected by the recent winter storms. This

aimed to better understand the impact of Storms Bert and Daragh on communities across Wales, and to identify key challenges, needs, and areas for improvement in storm response and preparedness.

Methodology

5. The engagement comprised of eight telephone interviews with participants.
6. Interviews were conducted to gather in-depth insights from individuals who live in communities directly impacted by storms Bert and Darragh. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the nuanced impacts on communities across Wales and allowed participants to share their personal stories and perspectives.
7. Interviews also allowed for detailed qualitative data to be captured that highlighted the emotional, social, and economic consequences of the storms. By engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds, the interviews provided a rich variety of experiences and viewpoints, helping to identify common themes as well as unique challenges faced by different communities.
8. Additionally, the interviews facilitated a better understanding of local responses to the storms, including coping mechanisms, community resilience, and the effectiveness of emergency services and recovery efforts. Overall, this qualitative approach contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term effects of the storms on individuals and communities in Wales.

Participants

9. Contributions were made by members of storm affected communities in Carmarthenshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Powys and Wrexham.
10. Participants were recruited from a wide variety of sources to ensure diversity in perspectives and include vulnerable residents, business owners, home owners and a sports club administrator.

Ethical Considerations

11. All methods used in this project adhered to the standards set out in the Market Research Society Code of Conduct and complied with relevant data protection and safeguarding legislation to ensure the ethical treatment and privacy of all participants.

Key Findings

- 12.** Participants highlighted the ineffectiveness of some alert systems or communication channels, and showed concerns about the generalised nature of warnings.
- 13.** Infrastructure vulnerabilities are also a significant concern, with mentions of ineffective storm defences and the need for more resilient infrastructure. Additionally, there are challenges with preparedness and response from authorities, with some participants feeling abandoned by local councils and emergency services. This has added to the psychological and emotional toll of storms, with some participants highlighting the mental and emotional distress experienced.
- 14.** The financial impact and recovery challenges are also emphasised, with long-term financial strain and disparities in support between storms and between residents and businesses.
- 15.** Lastly, participants expressed a desire for long-term resilience planning, with calls for better preparedness strategies to address future climate risk.

Thank you to all the participants who contributed to the engagement findings.

2. Engagement Findings

This section outlines the key themes, views, and solutions expressed by the people interviewed.

Ineffective alert systems and communications

16. Many participants mentioned that warnings they received were often too general and untimely, failing to effectively reach those who needed them.

17. Those affected most by flooding feel that the warnings, particularly flood alerts, are too often generalised and do not cater to specific geographic locations, which makes it difficult to anticipate when to take action. For example, one participant noted that they regularly receive notifications of flooding which cover the whole of Powys, which often doesn't affect them directly. This therefore leads to a lack of trust in the alert system.

"We get regular warnings which often don't even affect us. We get warnings for the whole of Powys. If I took notice of every time it went off, I'd never be opening my shop."

18. It was also remarked by some participants that they felt let down by the flood alert systems which they were promised had been improved since the "failings" of Storm Dennis in 2019. Having been told that "fantastic things had been put in place" since this storm, they were disappointed to have encountered the same challenges, such as delayed alerts and inadequate support.

"We have a National Resources Wales (alert), which is your yellow warning which goes off at two meters. I have to be honest when you flood at five metres you don't take much notice of it"

19. Participants also highlighted the disparity they experienced in the alert and warning systems of storms Bert and Darragh. Those impacted by storm Bert noted that the warnings for Storm Darragh were clearer and issued in a timelier manner, therefore enabling the possibility of more effective preparation in advance. This was despite Storm Bert causing significant damage to areas such as Rhondda Cynon Taff.

“No, we didn’t receive a warning about the storm (Bert). I know it’s difficult to predict a landslide, but it was a lot worse than the storm that came afterwards (Storm Daragh). There was a lot more warning about Storm Darragh than Storm Bert”.

20. Some individuals who experienced damage during Storm Darragh felt that the alert system effectively notified them of the storm's arrival, and the extensive news coverage kept them informed. However, others pointed out that despite receiving the warnings, the system did not provide sufficient lead time for them to prepare adequately for the severity of the storm, leaving them with little time to act before the storm hit.

“We got the warning, and we were worried, but we didn’t have much time to prepare. We weren’t able to prepare much. We weren’t expecting it to be so bad and that we’d lose power.”

Community support and resilience

21. Across interviews, there is a strong theme of community support, where neighbours and local groups played a crucial role in helping one another. Many noted that a strong sense of community resilience was vital in helping people cope with the immediate aftermath of the storms and in the longer-term recovery process.

“It’s only through crisis that you come together as a community.”

22. Where there was a lack of official support during and after the storms, participants noted that it was their communities who came together to provide assistance to one another, especially to more vulnerable individuals.

“The community certainly are the ones who helped us the most. The tractors took us from our house to the village pub. Within half an hour the pub was full. People had brought us clothes and toys for the children. A local company who owns the house we are now living in. They came down with keys for the house. Local people and tractors and diggers were out helping clear the mess.

We would have been lost without our community.”

23. Elderly community members in particular relied heavily on local support during the storms. One interviewee for example noted that their neighbours were able to provide them with lamps and lanterns after they lost power during Storm Darragh. Their reliance on neighbours and community members was emphasized due to the inability of carers to reach them due to the storm's impact.

"Our neighbours had to come over to us with lamps and lanterns to provide light in the evenings. We had a lamp and torch. Without that we would have had no light at all.

All our neighbours came together to help each other."

24. Community networks, including WhatsApp groups and social media sites, were highlighted as a key source of information sharing, communication and support. Where communication from official channels or authorities was lacking, it was through these communication channels that residents and business owners received information.

"We're just here helping each other."

"The roads were all blocked around us, but it was the farmers who went out in their tractors to help clear roads. They were ready and prepared to help."

"If it wasn't for the guys in the street and family we wouldn't have had hope in hell chance. It would have gotten in the house long before. We kept it (the water) away for as long as we could."

Infrastructure vulnerabilities:

25. Across interviews, many participants noted the lack of infrastructure resilience, mentioning the ineffectiveness of current storm defences. Those affected by flooding in Storm Bert for example, highlighted the weakness of flood

barriers, as well as the council provided floodgate and sandbags that did not function as expected.

“Our neighbour had started to put his flood gates on, and they had used sandbags which they were given. They are inflatable bags which are supposed to act as proper sandbags in water. Except they floated away. You could see them floating around in the water.

The water broke through the floodgates. I question the suitability of them and still haven't had a response from the council on this.”

26. One participant noted that their street was flooded from within the flood barrier due to an ineffective storm drainage system, which creates further challenges when the area encounters heavy rain.

“The problem you have is, when the river reaches four meters the pipe becomes blocked and there's nowhere for the water to go. So, we get flooded from inside the barrier. The water comes up through the drains.”

27. Other participants noted the adverse effects of losing power for a significant amount of time during Storm Darragh. One interviewee described being left without power for “six or seven days”, whilst another elderly participant described being without electricity for two days.

“What we were worried about was the stairlift. We didn't know if it would work. We worried that the (backup) battery would run out. We would go downstairs first thing in the morning and upstairs last thing in the evening.

The electricity company provided food for the village. They brought a chip van from Manchester. But they didn't tell us that was happening – we heard from neighbours who got us food. We didn't have any warning or notice about when the power was coming back – we didn't know when it would return at all.”

28. One participant from a rural area described how Storm Darragh damaged the local mobile phone mast, causing the entire community to lose phone signal for over a week. Along with power outages, this made communication extremely

difficult and worsened the lack of landlines, leaving residents feeling isolated and frustrated. Access to phone signal was crucial for receiving information and support through online community WhatsApp groups and mobile phone messages.

"There's no way of reporting that the mobile phone mast isn't working. They will say they know it's not working but there seemed to be very little urgency in coming to get the mobile signal working again."

Challenges with preparedness and response from authorities

29. Interviews revealed a disparity in the support provided by local authorities. While some participants felt "abandoned" by officials, which hindered their ability to recover from the storm's impact, others believed that local authorities responded quickly and effectively.

"I've reached out to the local council and feels like no one cares. I've been looking for help in any way shape or form. The response was not helpful. The response was 'we'll see what we can do' and haven't heard anything."

"The word is abandonment".

30. Multiple interviews reflect on how inadequate preparedness and slow responses to the storms hindered recovery. Those affected by flooding during Storm Bert in particular, felt that they had been left to manage the short- and long-term impacts of the storm damage alone. They felt that there "could have been more help" from authorities.

"The first time I saw someone from the council was about 11 o'clock and I spoke to him. I asked is there any chance you can help us clear the water? He said no. He'd just come to have a look to report back. Couldn't talk to us about sandbags or any other help. I said we needed help, and he said we had to wait until the river levels dropped."

They were claiming they (council) were overwhelmed and said they weren't anticipating the bad weather. But I know there was going to be bad weather because they'd cancelled all the rugby fixtures that I organise. I think they're being disingenuous. It's not good enough.

It took over a week before they tried to clear the drains. All the muck is still down the bottom of the street now."

31. Despite assurances from local authorities that lessons had been learned from Storm Dennis, many flood-affected participants expressed frustration that local authorities and emergency services were still unprepared to support residents during the storms. For instance, one local authority established a 24/7 emergency flood hotline to provide support and advice. However, the line became overwhelmed with calls during the storm, preventing participants from reaching assistance. One resident who eventually got through was informed that the local authority had been cut off from the depot storing sandbags and was instead advised to "purchase sand from B&Q" and fill pillowcases to create their own makeshift flood defences. This created frustration amongst residents who felt isolated in their attempts to protect their homes and did not know if "anyone was going to come help or do anything."

"If we're going to be abandoned at least we can get on and make our own informed decisions. We know that if no one else is going to come then we can get on with it."

"I was told after Storm Dennis that they were going to try and set up a flood warning scheme. Like a neighbourhood watch but you'd have a central flood warning person who could assess the situation and be in contact with the council maybe, and help prepare people more. That never came of anything.

32. Some participants also expressed frustration with the response and involvement of the emergency services. One participant was stranded in a house affected by a landslide in Storm Bert and was told by the fire service they would have to wait four to five hours to receive assistance. Despite repeated calls, "they

still didn't come". They did however appreciate the kindness of police officers who visited them with toys they had collected for the children personally.

"I don't think they realised how bad it was. My sister was calling them and once they heard everyone in the house was safe, I don't think they felt it was urgent. But it was because we couldn't get out of the house. They came after an hour in the end. Then they couldn't get us out because of the water. It was the tractors that took us out of there."

33. Another participant was surprised that police officers did not step in to help them during the storm's impact.

"By 9:30 we were about thigh deep in flood water because we were trying to keep an eye on the river. A police van turned up, stopped, put the van in reverse and drove away. Didn't stop. We were all in the street - they could see it. Our reaction was to laugh rather than to turn around and get angry. Just shows we can't get any help from anyone. And that's that."

34. There were however some participants who hadn't directly tried to engage with the council, but felt that their local authority were "prepared and ready" and that "as soon as the storm happened, they were out and about clearing roads."

Disparity in support

35. One interviewee also noted the disparity in support between floods and how they felt that they weren't receiving consistent support each time their business was affected. For example, the participant struggled to dispose of the waste created by the storm damage due to the fees of commercial waste disposal sites.

"In the first flood, I was given support to get into the dump free to get rid of waste. This time there was none of that. There's inconsistency in support between floods."

36. A sense of unfairness is echoed in the broader discussions around both storm's recovery and support processes, with people feeling that some groups or areas received more attention than others during recovery efforts.

37. Some participants, as residents, felt they received an unequal distribution of resources and support compared to the businesses affected in their area. One interviewee felt that the council was more “focused on business recovery”, getting high streets looking “beautiful” again.

38. One participant also mentioned that big businesses who were affected by Storm Bert were able to bring in external help, which allowed them to reopen more easily. In contrast, their smaller, independent business took longer to recover from flooding impact due to a lack of external support.

“The big businesses around here were able to get outside firms in to deal with it and could reopen when they were ready. Whereas with me, I was left to deal with it all on my own. It was just my family helping out.

People were supportive online, but nobody came to help in person. I can't say they weren't supportive, but I didn't see much of it in action.”

Financial impact and recovery challenges

39. Several interviews mentioned the financial strain caused by storm damage, including damage to property, sports equipment and loss of earnings.

“I lost about 20% this time of what I ran out of time to save. Everything I pay out of my own pocket, and I've estimated I've lost £15,000 in terms of stock loss, loss of earnings and cleaning etc. This time round had to get an electrician in to rewire everything. That's a big cost I had to find. The main thing for me is not the actual flooding that's the annoyance - it's the weeks and months afterwards trying to get the shop back together. That's the biggest impact - having to close to clean up.

40. One interviewee emphasized the urgent need for accessible recovery funding, noting the significant positive impact that receiving financial assistance had on their ability to promptly and effectively repair damaged sports equipment and storage following Storm Darragh. With support from a grant by Sports Wales and contributions through a GoFundMe campaign, their sports club was able to recover the financial losses incurred. However, they also expressed

disappointment at the lack of financial support from their national affiliated clubs, despite their members paying an annual membership fee.

“We heard about the (Sports Wales) grant and put a bid in.... it was quick, effective and settled very quickly. I was not expecting the full amount. Without the grant we would have been scrabbling around to find extra storage. Can’t say thank you enough to Sport Wales.”

- 41.** Another participant was very pleased to have received a surprise cheque for £640 for disrupted electricity service in their area which they “weren’t expecting at all.”
- 42.** Some interviewees affected by flooding also received financial aid from the local authority but claimed that £1,000 “doesn’t scratch the surface” when it comes to damage repair.
- 43.** Those participants who have been repeatedly affected by flooding because of storms also stressed the financial implications on their ability to sell property, affecting their ability to recover financially.

Psychological and emotional toll

- 44.** Several participants spoke about the emotional toll caused by the storm damage they endured. Multiple interviewees highlighted the ongoing challenges posed by repeated flooding, particularly the strain it places on both businesses and residents. They described the mental burden of coping with the aftermath of the damage and the persistent uncertainty surrounding extreme weather events, especially for those who face these disruptions time and again.
- 45.** One participant stressed the toll the flood damage from Storm Bert had on them, and their partner’s, mental health. They emphasized the need for better mental health support for those whose homes are repeatedly damaged.
- 46.** Two participants also described the emotional distress felt by their children because of the storm impact and damage.

“My little boy was crying his heart out. My eldest boy was very distressed after Storm Dennis because he lost all his toys. They don’t understand – they don’t know if they’re going to have to leave the house.”

“To start with (after the storm), even putting the kettle on frightened them. My middle child who’s six was in the kitchen when the wall came down so she’s been really frightened. They still don’t like being in rooms by themselves.”

Need for long-term resilience planning

47. Several interviewees stressed the importance of long-term planning to prepare for future storms to address the issues raised during Storms Dennis, Bert, and Darragh. This includes improving physical infrastructure as well as strengthening community resilience. Several participants noted their concern around the uncertainty of the response and support that will be available to them in the future.

“I’ve noticed in the three times I’ve been flooded the water has gotten higher each time. It’s definitely getting worse. The water is getting higher and higher every time we get flooded. They used to dredge the river every year. Prior to the first flood there hadn’t been a flood in 35 years and they’ve stopped dreading the river. Is there anything else that can be done to stop flooding? Raising banks, fortifications. I don’t feel anyone’s looking at it.”

48. One participant stressed the need for overhead cables to be placed underground to avoid the risk of power outages and highlighted the importance of ensuring infrastructure is adapted for more extreme weather.

“We had huge areas without electricity because we’ve got the cables overhead on poles. As we see more and more weather as a result of the climate crisis, we need to be thinking about cables underground. That will be far more beneficial as we get more and more storms.”

49. This participant also emphasised the need to build community resilience to better equip businesses and residents with the knowledge and understanding of how to handle more extreme weather. “Spreading more information about who the right people to contact are” is one way of ensuring better preparedness strategies that account for worsening climate conditions

"It made me realise that we need to be much more resilient....The way I see it - as the climate catastrophe gets worse, we're going to have to rely more on each other and less on the council because it's going to be too big a problem for local authorities or the Senedd to deal with. So, we need to have built community hubs to deal with it and to know who the right people are who can help. I don't know how you build community resilience, but we need to be more prepared - not sure how we do that. Maybe build community hubs."

3. Solutions

In this section, we present a collection of ideas suggested by participants during the engagement sessions. These ideas represent diverse perspectives aimed at improving the current situation.

50. The following ways forward were proposed by participants as potential pathways for positive change and are shared here to inspire further dialogue and consideration regarding future storm responses:

- 1. Targeted flood alerts and improved communication:** Flood alerts should focus on specific areas for greater relevance, while enhanced communication systems ensure timely, localized information reaches those in need. There is also a need for prompt warnings and effective dissemination of support service details during severe storms.
- 2. Empower communities:** Participants felt the need for increased community resilience so that they can take an active role in storm recovery. This includes encouraging and supporting community networks for mutual aid and preparedness by ensuring that people know who to turn to for help and support.
- 3. Streamline and equalize support:** Ensure that there is equal support provided to all areas affected to guarantee fairness in the recovery efforts of both residents and businesses.
- 4. Invest in resilient infrastructure** to minimize damage from future storms. This includes dredging rivers, moving overhead cables underground and protecting phone masts.
- 5. Better support from local authorities:** There was a call for better assistance from the community and local council, especially in waste disposal and post-flood recovery efforts.
- 6. Ensure better preparedness and coordination of emergency services** to respond effectively.
- 7. Develop long-term resilience planning** to address future climate risks.

Annex 1 : Interview questions

The following questions served as a flexible guide for the focus groups and interviews.

1. Preparation, Forecasting, Warning, and Alert Systems

- Before the storm, did you receive any warnings or alerts from local authorities or other sources? How clear and timely was the information you received?
- How well do you think the preparation and forecasting systems worked for this storm? Were they adequate to help you take the right actions in advance?
- In hindsight, is there anything about the warning and alert system that could have been improved to make you feel more prepared?

2. Resilience of Infrastructure

- What infrastructure (e.g., water, sewage, electricity, roads) in your area was most affected by the storm? Were there any services that were disrupted for an extended period?
- How well did the local infrastructure hold up against the storm's impacts? Were there specific weaknesses (like flooding or landslips) that made it harder to recover?
- How did damage to infrastructure (such as sinkholes, culverts, or damaged roads) impact your daily life and mobility during and after the storm?
- Did you face any major challenges due to the loss of utilities (like power or water) after the storm? How long did it take to restore these services, and how did this affect your community?

3. Impact on Communities and the Role of Landowners, Community Groups, and Third-Sector Organisations

- How did the storm impact your community as a whole? Were there specific groups (elderly, families, low-income households) that seemed more vulnerable or affected?

- What were the short- and long-term impacts of the storms?
- Were there any private organizations (e.g., businesses, landowners) that played a role in supporting your community during or after the storm? How did they contribute to the recovery process?
- Did you see any support or assistance from community groups (e.g., local volunteer groups, neighbourhood associations) during the storm or in the recovery phase? How helpful was this support?
- How did third-sector organizations (for example, charities) help your community during the storm or in the aftermath? Did you receive any direct aid from these organisations?
- Looking back, were there any gaps in community support or services that you feel should have been addressed? How could landowners, community groups, or third-sector organizations have been more effective?
- Were there any efforts made to rebuild or support those who suffered the most from the storm? How did the community come together to recover?

Agenda Item 4.1

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: PO/HIDCC/0106/25

Mike Hedges MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

10 March 2025

Dear Mike,

I am writing in accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement to let you know that the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs meeting scheduled for 10 March has been postponed. Officials are working to identify a new date. I will update the Committee if a new date is identified before the next scheduled meeting due to take place on 12 May.

I have also copied this letter to the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee and the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs committee.

Yours sincerely

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd
a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure
Committee

11 March 2025

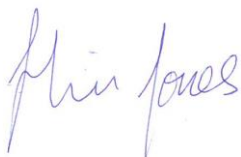
Bus Service (Wales) Bill

Dear Llyr,

At its meeting this week, the Business Committee considered a paper from the Government on the Bus Service (Wales) Bill. The Business Committee agreed in principle to refer the Bill to the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee for Stage 1 scrutiny.

I enclose the Minister's paper for your consideration. I would be grateful if you could respond to us outlining your views on the timetable by noon on Friday 21 March. Please be aware that it is a private paper and not for publication or circulation other than to committee members.

Kind regards,



The Rt Hon. Elin Jones MS
Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Ken Skates MS
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

14 March 2025

Dear Ken,

Bus Services (No. 2) Bill

Thank you for your letter of 5 March in relation to the UK Government's Bus Services (No. 2) Bill ("the Bill") and the possible need for legislative consent.

I note that a legislative consent memorandum ("LCM") has now been laid in relation to the Bill. However, I am concerned that you have taken the decision not to include provisions in that LCM which may later be disapplied in relation to Wales.

You will be aware that Standing Order 29.2 requires a member of the government to lay a memorandum where any UK Government Bill makes relevant provision on its introduction to the first House. I recognise that you are currently in discussions with the UK Government about the appropriateness of the provisions that would apply and have effect in Wales. Despite this, under Standing Orders you are required to lay an LCM that specifies the extent to which the Bill makes (or would make) relevant provision, in order to allow the Senedd the opportunity to scrutinise those provisions. This includes provisions which may be disapplied in relation to Wales at a later time during the Bill's passage through the UK Parliament.

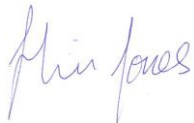
Standing Orders provide that an LCM must be laid before the Senedd normally no later than two weeks after a relevant Bill has been introduced to the UK Parliament. I note that 12 weeks passed between the Bill being introduced by the UK Government in the House of Lords on 17 December 2024, and an LCM being laid before the Senedd on 11 March 2025.

I am also concerned that an LCM relating to the Bill that does not include some relevant provisions may have an impact on the Senedd's ability to effectively scrutinise the Bus Services (Wales) Bill during its early stages. Standing Order 29.3 requires the memorandum to set out whether the government considers it appropriate for relevant provision to be made by means of the Bill, and this may provide important contextual information for the Senedd when it comes to consider the general principles of the Bus Services (Wales) Bill.

If, following discussions, the Bill is amended, you will need to lay a supplementary LCM in accordance with Standing Orders to allow appropriate scrutiny by the Senedd.

I am copying this letter to the Business Committee, and the Chairs of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elin Jones', is positioned below the closing text.

The Rt. Hon Elin Jones MS/AS
Llywydd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Agenda Item 4.4

Asthma and Lung UK
The White Chapel Building
10 Whitechapel High Street
London E1 8QS

0300 222 5800
info@asthmaandlung.org.uk
AsthmaAndLung.org.uk



Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Sent via email to: SeneddClimate@senedd.wales

Subject: Concerns Regarding the Welsh Government's Approach to Air Quality and Smoke Control

Dear Chair,

I am writing on behalf of Asthma + Lung UK Cymru to express our concerns regarding the Welsh Government's approach to air quality management and smoke control, as outlined in the recent consultation on Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) and Smoke Control Guidance.

While we welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to implementing the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024, we are deeply concerned that the proposed guidance fails to provide the necessary ambition and clarity required to protect public health.

Concerns Regarding Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Guidelines

Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental threats to public health in Wales, contributing to approximately 2,000 premature deaths per year. Particulate matter (PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) are particularly harmful, exacerbating respiratory conditions such as asthma and COPD, increasing cardiovascular risks, and contributing to mental health issues and dementia. Despite this, the proposed guidance does not go far enough in mandating stronger enforcement measures, expanding Smoke Control Areas (SCAs), or ensuring effective monitoring of air pollution, particularly in communities most affected by poor air quality.

We are also concerned about the lack of a robust public awareness strategy to educate residents on the dangers of air pollution. Without significant behavioural change, enforcement measures alone will not be sufficient to reduce emissions from domestic burning. The failure to link this guidance with the Healthy Air, Healthy Wales strategy is a missed opportunity to align local and national efforts in tackling air pollution.

Concerns Regarding Smoke Control Guidance

Our Freedom of Information requests have revealed that no councils with existing SCAs have taken enforcement action in the past five years. This suggests a lack of awareness, resources, and incentives to implement effective smoke control measures. The current guidance does little to address this, as it does not encourage the expansion of SCAs beyond the existing four local authorities, nor does it provide financial and technical support for enforcement activities.

We urge the Welsh Government to take immediate action to strengthen the guidance by:

1. Introducing stronger enforcement mechanisms to ensure Local Authorities actively implement and enforce air quality and smoke control measures.
2. Investing in a national public awareness campaign on the dangers of air pollution, particularly from domestic burning, to drive meaningful behavioural change.

3. Expanding Smoke Control Areas beyond the current four authorities to protect more communities from harmful emissions.

Concerns Regarding Idling Guidance Delays

We are further alarmed by the delays in implementing idling guidance as outlined in the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024. Emissions from idling vehicles, particularly outside schools and public spaces, pose a serious health risk, especially to vulnerable individuals and children. Immediate action is required to enforce stronger anti-idling measures and protect public health.

We urge the Welsh Government to:

1. Expedite idling guidelines so they can be published in this Senedd.
2. Ensure local authorities have the resources to implement and enforce idling fines effectively.
3. Raise public awareness on the dangers of vehicle idling through education campaigns.

Conclusion

Without urgent improvements to this guidance, the Welsh Government risks failing in its duty to protect public health from the serious consequences of air pollution. The lack of decisive action, as proposed in line with Healthy Air, Healthy Wales will also see this Government failing to discharge its duty to future generations. We urge the Committee to prioritise this issue and hold the Welsh Government accountable for delivering stronger, clearer, and more effective air quality policies. We would be willing to discuss the further and provide any additional evidence the committee requires.

Yours sincerely,
Joseph Carter
Head of Asthma + Lung UK Cymru



Joseph Carter
Head of Devolved Nations
Pennaeth Cenhedloedd Datganoledig

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

Senedd Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN

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Andy Sheen

CEO

Irish Ferries

18 March 2025

Dear Andy,

Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure

I am Chair of the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee. We were established to examine at policy and legislation, and to hold the Welsh Government to account in areas including business, economic development, skills, international trade, agriculture, fisheries and food.

I am writing as part of our inquiry into [Holyhead Port Storm Damage and Closure](#). On 6 March, we took evidence from a number of organisations and experts, including Stena Line Ports. Irish Ferries were invited to this session; however, disappointingly, did not respond. A [transcript](#) and [video](#) of this meeting can be found on our [website](#).

As part of Stena Line Ports' [evidence](#), they note that the damage happened to Terminal 3, which is "predominantly used by Irish Ferries". They also noted that "On 6 and 7 December 2024, there were two berthing incidents, which rendered Terminal 3 berth unusable. Storm Darragh was forecast; however, these incidents immediately preceded the peak of the storm when the red weather alert was in place."

The Committee would like to hear Irish Ferries' views on the evidence from our 6 March session. We are particularly interested in your response to the excerpts above and information about your operations between Holyhead and Dublin on 6 and 7 December, including clarification around any decisions made following the UK Met Office issuing the Red Weather Warning for Holyhead and most of the Welsh coast.



We also took evidence that two other incidents at Holyhead in 2023 and 2024 involved the berthing 'dolphins' and their fenders. Professor Andrew Potter told us there was limited information available from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch's website, but that it looked like "both involved manoeuvring in strong winds". Could you clarify if Irish Ferries were involved in either of these incidents? If so, please could you provide details?

The Committee would also welcome any other information you would like to provide that may be relevant to our inquiry into the storm damage and port closure. In particular, the Committee would be keen to hear any views you have on the:

- Causes: the factors contributing to the severity of the damage.
- Communication: the approach to communication during and after the storm, including communication with port users, communities and businesses affected by the closure as well as between Governments.
- Remediation: the speed of response in assessing and repairing the damage, including the support provided by Government.
- Impact: the impact of the closure, as well as the extent and effectiveness of the steps being taken to mitigate the impact.

Please could you reply to this letter by 11 April. I look forward to reading your evidence.

I have copied this letter to Llyr Gruffydd MS Chair of Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee as I am aware they are also interested in this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew RT Davies MS

Chair: Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

CC: Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Agenda Item 4.6



Llyr Gruffydd MS
Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

18th March 2025

Dear Mr Gruffydd,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide oral evidence to the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee inquiry into Storm Darragh on 6th March.

During my appearance before the Committee, I committed to providing further information regarding the sharing of Priority Service Register (PSR) information between SP Energy Networks and Isle of Anglesey Council.

Storm Darragh struck on Friday 6th December. Given the extreme weather conditions and the paramount importance of our staff's health and safety, we were, in many cases, unable to commence restoring supplies until the afternoon of Sunday 8th December. Prior to the storm's arrival, we participated in Local Resilience Forums to coordinate and share information, and we continued to meet during and after the storm until we returned to business as usual.

I have consulted with my colleagues regarding your inquiry about the sharing of PSR information between SP Energy Networks and Anglesey Council, specifically addressing the duration it took to exchange this information on Sunday 8th December.

On Sunday, 8th December, we attended the 12:30 Strategic Coordination Group meeting, following this our customer service team was in touch with Anglesey Council at 13:28, during which we asked if they required any assistance from SPEN. Anglesey Council informed us that no assistance was required at that time. Following this call, a verbal request was made for SPEN to send the PSR information to the council. This information was provided just over three hours later, at 17:06, in line with GDPR obligations. There was an issue with the Local Authority's firewall which they notified us about at 17:10, and once resolved, we resent the information in smaller files. Later, at 19:51, we received email confirmation that all files had been received.

We are committed to maintaining an open and constructive relationship with all Local Resilience Forums and Councils. This timeline demonstrates our commitment to

SP House, 320 St Vincent Street, Glasgow. G2 5AD

Telephone: 0141 614 5213

www.spenergynetworks.co.uk

SP Transmission plc, Registered Office: SP House, 320 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5AD Registered in Scotland No. 189126 Vat No. GB 659 3720 08
SP Manweb plc, Registered Office: 3 Prenton Way, Prenton, CH43 3ET Registered in England and Wales No. 2366937 Vat No. GB659 3720 08
SP Distribution plc, Registered Office: SP House, 320 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5AD Registered in Scotland No. 189125 Vat No. GB 659 3720 08
SP Power Systems Limited, Registered Office: SP House, 320 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5AD Registered in Scotland No. SC215841 Vat No. GB 659 3720 08

transparency and the efficient handling of the request, which was resolved in under three hours.

I hope this information is helpful to the committee.

Yours Sincerely,



Liam O'Sullivan
SP Energy Networks Licence Director

**Public Accounts and Public
Administration Committee**

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Llyr Gruffydd MS

Chair

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

18 March 2025

Dear Llyr,

Audit Wales' report: The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

During our meeting on Wednesday 13 March, we considered the above report and believe that its content falls within your Committee's remit.

The findings are of interest, and given your recent inquiry on biodiversity, we would encourage you to include this report in any future discussions on your forward work programme, as well as any follow-up work you may wish to undertake related to the inquiry.

We would therefore be grateful if you could confirm your proposed course of action regarding this accordingly.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Isherwood MS

Chair, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Huw Irranca-Davies MS

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Climate Change and Rural Affairs

18 March 2025

Dear Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs,

You will be aware that Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd has submitted a planning application which, if agreed, will result in a significantly reduced level of restoration at the site of the former Ffos y Fran opencast coal mine. Given the urgency of the situation, the Committee has agreed to seek clarity on the Welsh Government's position and what options, if any, are available to it to intervene.

The Committee has taken a keen interest in this matter, having previously visited the site and conducted scrutiny on related issues through our inquiry into coal tip safety and restoration. Local residents and stakeholders have raised serious concerns with us about the revised restoration plans, particularly the potential long-term environmental and public safety risks arising from the large water-filled void and disused coal tips in close proximity to a residential area.

Concerns have also been raised with the Committee that Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd's application to vary the conditions of its original application is a result of a lack of funding to deliver a more comprehensive restoration scheme. However, the company's financial accounts suggest it may have put aside funding for restoration purposes. We would, therefore, welcome your views on whether a clearer understanding of the company's current financial position would be helpful and what mechanisms might be available to ensure the company meets its obligations.

We would be grateful if you could outline:

1. The options that are available to the Welsh Government to intervene in this case to ensure an appropriate level of restoration is delivered.
2. The steps the Welsh Government is taking to ensure the best possible outcome for local residents.

3. Whether the Welsh Government has assessed Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd's financial capacity to deliver the restoration that was initially agreed.

Due to the urgency of this matter, I look forward to receiving a response from you no later than **Tuesday 1 April 2025**.

Yours sincerely,



Llyr Gruffydd MS,
Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Clare Pillman, Chief Executive

Sir David Henshaw, Chair

Natural Resources Wales

Welsh Government Offices

Cathays Park

King Edward VII Avenue

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

7 February 2025

Dear Clare and Sir David,

Petition P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres; and Petition P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve

As you may be aware, the Petitions Committee considered the above petitions, submitted by Gareth Jones and Kim Williams respectively, at its 20 January meeting.

I have since raised the petitions in the [22 January 2025 Senedd debate](#) on Natural Resources Wales and written to the Chair of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee.

The Petitions Committee agreed that I would write to you to ask what will happen to the key roles the visitor centre staff currently fulfil, particularly the range of roles undertaken at Ynyslas, and what the plan is for those after 1 April.

The Petitions Committee has decided to now close these two petitions, but this is on the basis that the issues are being taken forward by Senedd Members in other fora, in particular by the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee as part of its scrutiny remit. I will forward your response to that Committee for consideration in advance of forthcoming NRW scrutiny sessions.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of the petitions, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here:

[P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres](#)

[P-05-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve](#)

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the clerking team at petitions@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Your Ref: P-06-1447 and P-06-1474
Our Ref: CX24-130 and CX24-154

Carolyn Thomas MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

By email only: petitions@senedd.wales

4 March 2025

Dear Carolyn,

P-06-1447 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing the visitor centre at Ynyslas National Nature Reserve

P-06-1474 Stop Natural Resources Wales closing Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Coed y Brenin & Ynyslas visitor centres

Thank you for your letter dated 7 February regarding the above petitions, which have been considered by the Petitions Committee. I appreciate your confirmation that the Committee has decided to close both petitions.

In respect of the Committee's enquiry about the duties of our visitor centre staff, I can confirm that the visitor centre staff are not responsible for managing the land in and around the site, nor are they responsible for the conservation of any wildlife habitats and geological features. This is the responsibility of our Land Management staff.

We acknowledge however that some of the duties carried out by visitor centre staff are not purely retail and catering – for example, some staff at Bwlch Nant yr Arian assist in feeding the red kites. Our teams are currently working through a process to ensure that all statutory and essential functions are delivered by other staff across our Land Management and Facilities teams. It is also possible that some of the additional responsibilities currently undertaken by visitor centre staff could be included in the final lease agreements for Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin. Negotiations on this would likely form part of the procurement process when it takes place. Our aim in the discussions will be to secure the greatest benefit for users, local businesses and the community.

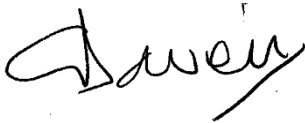
Ynyslas will continue to be managed as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) in line with the other NNRs we manage across Wales that do not have visitor centre provision. Our Land Management and Commercial teams are looking at how we deliver statutory services at the NNR in the long-term, with this change. While the NNR Officer is ably supported by a

wider team of conservation and land management experts, we have accepted that some things will no longer be available or will have to change as a result of the Case for Change. Nevertheless, the continuation of the NNR and the conservation of the local environment, including the Ringed Plover Project, remain our priority.

All paths, trails, car park and toilets facilities will remain open at Ynyslas, Bwlch Nant yr Arian and Coed y Brenin and we will continue to maintain the sites to ensure public access continues.

I trust this response assists with the Committee's enquiry, however if it has any further questions or would like clarification on this or any other issue please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ceri Davies', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ceri Davies

Prif Swyddog Gweithredol Dros Do
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymateb yn Gymraeg, heb i hynny arwain at oedi.
Correspondence in Welsh is welcomed, and we will respond in Welsh without it leading to a delay.

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Agenda Item 10

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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