

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

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1553
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/01651/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

19 November 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 29 September 2025 regarding the petition to increase investment and action in nature-based flood management to protect Welsh communities. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Welsh Government actively promotes Natural Flood Management (NFM), and supports Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), to work in collaboration with landowners and farmers to pursue Nature Based Solutions (NBS). This work aims to reduce flood risk and to protect and enhance our natural environment.

From building hard defences to introducing NBS, we are committed to keeping communities safe from flooding. With the impact of climate change increasing the frequency and severity of flooding, we are backing our words with record investment and tangible actions to protect people across Wales.

We have made £2 million available for NFM projects in 2025-26 – this has funded projects that is supporting activities such as riparian tree planting, leaky dam installations and the construction and monitoring of wetlands. The Expression of Interest window for the 2026–27 NFM Fund is now open. We are also progressing work on a catchment planning roadmap, in line with [our response](#) to the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales's report, Building Resilience to Flooding in Wales by 2050. This will provide a strategic framework for managing flood risk and water resources at a catchment scale, involving stakeholders as policy development progresses.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

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.

The Sustainable Farming Scheme will commence on 1 January 2026 and will support farmers to deliver benefits for flood management. For example, we have a Scheme Requirement for 10% of each farm to be maintained as habitat, and for all semi-natural habitats to be maintained in line with a set of measurable outcomes. This will benefit nature, carbon storage and help reduce the risk of downstream flooding.

There is also a Universal Action for those entering the Scheme to create a “Tree and Hedgerow Planting Opportunity Plan” to encourage all farmers to consider where an increase in tree and hedgerow planting is possible.

For those farmers who want to go further, there will be more targeted site-specific opportunities available to restore and enhance habitats.

The Welsh Government also supports moving towards the managed reintroduction of European beavers in Wales. By building dams, beavers create wetlands that store water, helping to mitigate flood risks downstream. Their dams can also filter pollutants to improve water quality in rivers. They also support biodiversity, providing habitats for countless species from amphibians to birds to aquatic plants.

I recently announced the Welsh Government has agreed to extend legal protections to European beavers in Wales. This will ensure beavers are recognised as a native species and afforded legal protection as a European Protected Species, making it an offence to deliberately harm them or damage their habitats. The legislative amendments will be brought forward in this Senedd term.

Of course, there will be areas of concern that need careful, collaborative management and robust evidence will guide our next steps. A Welsh Beaver Forum is being established, and the first meeting will take place over the coming weeks.

Through the [30by30 Framework for Wales](#), conservation areas along natural floodplains could be recognised as Protected Sites or Naturfa sites (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures), provided they are managed to support sustained biodiversity outcomes - even if their primary function is flood protection or water management.

To support the identification and development of Naturfa sites, Wales is exploring a pipeline approach, enabling candidate sites to be supported and improved until they meet the full criteria for recognition. This inclusive model encourages broader engagement across people, places, and partnerships.

Recognising conservation areas along natural floodplains as Naturfa sites could make a meaningful contribution to Wales’s Regional Ecological Networks (RENs) - a key delivery mechanism for our 30by30 commitment. Integrating these areas into RENs strengthens ecological connectivity across Welsh catchments and landscapes, supporting species movement, habitat restoration, and climate resilience.

This approach is underpinned by the Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill, which provides the legislative foundation to deliver our 30by30 commitment.

Once again, thank you for writing to me on this important topic. I hope this information is helpful to you as you begin your first formal consideration of the petition.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

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