



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE Welsh Government Response to the Independent Water Commission Report

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

Today I welcome the publication of the [Independent Water Commission's report](#) to the UK and Welsh Governments on the future of the water. I extend my sincere thanks to Sir Jon Cunliffe and the Commission for its extensive engagement and the collaborative approach it has taken throughout the last nine months. Sir Jon has led the Commission and demonstrated how our two governments can work together to meet the needs of the public, consumers, investors and the natural world.

I recognise the depth of engagement and the careful consideration given to the unique context of Wales, particularly the cultural significance of water, our distinct environmental landscape, the distinct legislative framework in Wales, including the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The report reflects a clear understanding of the values and priorities that matter to the people of Wales and reflecting the views of the sector in Wales.

I welcome the consideration the Commission has given to economic regulation and how to make it work better for customers, investors and the environment. It is particularly welcome that the Commission has identified distinctive ways forward for Wales and for England, recognising the different opportunities and challenges in each country.

Working closely with the UK Government, I intend to progress the Commission's recommendation for a separate, independent economic regulator for Wales. I will want to engage widely on this proposition and draw in expertise to build arrangements which provide a clear, certain regulatory environment which provides value to the public, confidence for investors and sees our environment thrive. I look forward to progressing this alongside the UK Government progressing the recommendation for England to establish a new, integrated regulator.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to reset arrangements created before devolution and is about more than institutional change. There is a golden thread about clarity and direction through the recommendations. With a new National Water Strategy for Wales providing a clear articulation of the policy priorities, more effective planning at system level, stronger environmental regulation and a greater focus on delivering balanced solutions at catchment level.

The Welsh Government will now take time to review the Commission's findings in full, working with the UK Government to get the cross-border cooperation we need to truly reform our water industry for this and future generations. We are committed to giving each recommendation the careful consideration it deserves, ensuring that any future actions align with our principles of sustainable management of natural resources, where water is one of our most precious assets.

The UK Government have today indicated they will publish a White Paper in the autumn. The Welsh Government is looking forward to working collaboratively and constructively with the UK Government as the White Paper progresses, building on the spirit of cooperation that has characterised this process so far.

Once again, we thank the Commission for its work and for the detailed and constructive forward-looking dialogue about the future of water in Wales.

This statement is being issued during recess to keep Members informed. Should Members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.