



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

MEDIA RELEASE

‘Distinct lack of leadership’ in Welsh Government approach to coastal flooding, says National Assembly committee

A ‘distinct lack of leadership’ on behalf of the Welsh Government has left a National Assembly committee with grave concerns about elements of Wales’s strategy to tackle coastal flooding.

The Public Accounts Committee says there needs to be a clear recognition of the roles and responsibilities for all those involved in managing coastal flooding and that the pace of progress needs to increase.

Coastal flooding and erosion in Wales comes under the remit of a number of organisations and sectors including Natural Resources Wales, local authorities, water companies, risk management authorities coastal groups and other organisations such as the National Trust, Network Rail and the Crown Estate.

All, the Committee determined, should feed into and be part of an overarching national strategy produced by the Welsh Government.

“While there are many excellent people delivering on the ground, and a very resilient spirit amongst those faced with the worst of these problems, this does not excuse the lack of direction and leadership provided to date, said Nick Ramsay AM, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

“To ensure that the necessary decisions around managed realignment and risk management are taken, it is essential that leadership is provided.”

The Committee highlighted the issue of managed retreat, where it is determined that land should be sacrificed and the coastal line redrawn, possibly resulting in the need to relocate entire coastal communities.

Citing the example of Fairbourne in Gwynedd, where managed retreat has been identified as necessary, the Committee pointed to a report from the Wales Audit Office in 2009 which first raised the issue, and was disappointed to find a lack of progress in planning by the Welsh Government in the eight years since.

Mr Ramsay said:

“When the Committee asked the Welsh Government about the lack of progress on the issue of managed retreat, we were told that it was something that wouldn’t manifest itself in 50 to 100 years.

“We find this to be a deeply complacent statement, which is symptomatic of the problems with coastal flooding and risk management, and has led us to have grave concerns about the pace of action from the Welsh Government.”

“We want to see the government set out a range of options for managed retreat which doesn’t take a ‘one size fits all’ approach, which gives consideration to other British and international examples, and which considers what is needed to communicate effectively with communities at risk.

“Although, we have a number of serious concerns, we believe that the Welsh Government have taken some constructive steps to improve Coastal protection in recent years and we welcome the willingness of the Welsh Government to take on board the suggestions that arose through the evidence.

“To build on this, we have made a number of recommendations to address our concerns.”

Among the ten recommendations made by the Committee are:

- That the Welsh Government clearly set out in the national strategy the roles and responsibilities for all those involved in coastal flood and erosion risk management to ensure that it is clear who is responsible for delivering each aspect of the strategy;
- That the Welsh Government works with delivery partners to develop a single point of information for flood awareness, such as a 'microsite' or website, which includes clear details of roles and responsibilities for flood awareness; and
- That within the next 12 to 24 months the Welsh Government must produce a policy position which sets out a range of options for managed realignment.

The report will be sent to the Welsh Government to respond to.

Notes to editors

For more information, interviews, photo or filming requests, please contact National Assembly media relations on 0300 200 7487, or email news@assembly.wales.