



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cynaliadwyedd
The Sustainability Committee**

**Dydd Mercher, 1 Gorffennaf 2009
Wednesday, 1 July 2009**

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mick Bates	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Alun Davies	Llafur Labour
Lesley Griffiths	Llafur Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Brynle Williams	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Leanne Wood	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Dr Virginia Hawkins	Clerc Clerk
Meriel Singleton	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.08 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.08 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Mick Bates:** I thank everybody for attending this morning's meeting of the Sustainability Committee. As usual, I need to begin with the housekeeping announcements. Should the fire alarm sound, you should leave the room by the marked fire exits and follow the instructions of the ushers and staff. No test is forecast for today. Please ensure that all mobile phones, pagers and BlackBerrys are switched off, as they interfere with the broadcast equipment. The National Assembly for Wales operates through the media of Welsh and English. Headsets are provided through which simultaneous translation may be received. Those who are hard of hearing can use them to amplify the sound. Interpretation is available on channel 1, and the verbatim is on channel 0. Please do not touch any of the buttons on the microphones, as to do so could disable the system. Ensure that the red light is showing before speaking.

[2] I have received apologies from Karen Sinclair and Lorraine Barrett, who is attending a legislation committee.

9.09 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Lifogydd: Adolygu'r Dystiolaeth a Gasglwyd Hyd yn Hyn
Inquiry into Flooding : Review of Evidence Gathered to Date

[3] **Mick Bates:** This morning, we are going to evidence gathered from the public to date as part of our inquiry into flooding. I will start by thanking Members for undertaking this part

of the exercise; I think that there was some trepidation at first. As a committee, one of our aims is to ensure that, when we undertake our inquiries, we engage with the public. The Assembly bus was used around Wales, so that we could take evidence from rural and urban parts.

9.10 a.m.

[4] I will invite Members to give a report on their meetings and the main conclusions. You will see that there is a full report on the meetings held in the minutes. However, I will begin by showing you a short compilation of some of the evidence that we gathered. For those of you tuning in this morning, and for the record, one of our main aims was that, instead of the normal format of taking evidence from people invited here, we wanted to get a much broader audience and engage with our constituents, to ensure that their evidence forms part of this inquiry and helps us to form our recommendations.

[5] We learned a lot from this exercise, which I am sure that we will discuss later in the meeting. One of the things that we learned is that, in giving evidence directly to a laptop, the picture quality is okay but, in many cases, the sound quality was poor. Therefore, on the DVD that I am about to show, you will see that we have also written the text. Members will also be given a full DVD of the evidence when we have put it all together, which I hope that we will agree to take back to those people involved in our first evidence sessions, so that we have continuity in our evidence-gathering and our recommendations to show our constituents what it looked like as a whole. As Members, we may even be able to introduce our little bit of that DVD, which will form part our evidence when we present the recommendations in the Chamber and to the general public.

[6] So, here goes. From past experience with technology, it can sometimes be a bit disappointing. For those in the public gallery, you will be able to see the DVD on the little screens.

Dangoswyd DVD. Mae'r trawsgrifiad mewn llythrennau italig isod yn drawsgrifiad o'r cyfraniadau llafar ar y DVD.

A DVD was shown. The transcription in italics below is a transcription of the oral contributions on the DVD.

Each time we have a flood now more and more of the garden is being washed away into the stream and the bank is deteriorating.

I do not think that anyone can describe the aftermath of a flood. It just knocked us for six and we were out of our house for nearly a year.

The water went right through the school and caused over £45,000 worth of damage, which we can replace through some recompense by the insurance companies. We cannot recompense children who might lose their lives due to the amount of water that came through the school.

I have had trouble with water and sewerage coming up in my yard since 1986. When there is heavy rain, thunder and lightning and there is a power cut, or the pump packs up for some reason, the water and sewerage comes up in my yard and I have been waist deep on some occasions in sewerage water among other stuff.

Perhaps twice a year the river bursts its banks, water comes up people's toilets and sewerage paper is found in the roads in the morning.

What we have done to self help ourselves is that we have put drainage pipes though our garden. We funded that ourselves.

I was concerned about flooding in the area but felt that, if planning permission had been gained by the builder, then everything was okay. Unfortunately that does not appear to be the case.

Water goes into a smaller drain. Once that is blocked, it goes everywhere. We have spoken to various people about it but, instead of getting better, it actually gets worse.

I watched the water coming up the road towards my house so, at 4 p.m., I phoned the National Floodline to say that I was going to be flooded. I was told to telephone my nearest builder's merchant to get some sandbags. This was at 4 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon, so that is about as much use as a chocolate teapot.

In years gone by we did not have so much of a problem with flooding, because there were the old-fashioned roadmen who used to keep their own lengths clear and used to take great pride in cleaning out the culverts and the ditches.

[7] **Mick Bates:** That is a flavour of the evidence that we have gathered. I am certain that you will all recognise certain themes that have emerged in the meetings—I am looking at the annexes that contain the evidence from the other meetings. As I said in my introduction, I intend to go through the annexes, starting with annex 1b. I invite Lesley to report on her experiences and meetings.

[8] **Lesley Griffiths:** As you can see, I held a public meeting in Rossett, which is right on the edge of my constituency and borders with Cheshire. Rossett had severe flooding in 2000 and it has also had many other flooding events in previous decades. My favourite photograph, which someone had brought along, was from the 1960s. It was a photograph of him in a canoe, paddling into his parents' house and his mother shoos him out of the house. So, it has obviously been a huge problem for many decades.

[9] The theme that came out of the meeting was residents' unhappiness with the Environment Agency. Going back to the floods of 2000, they felt that the Environment Agency had not even been aware that the floods were coming, there is no maintenance and the work that it promised to carry out after the floods in 2000 has not happened. It was difficult to get hold of the agency. Many people felt that the rivers were not kept free of trees and debris and, again, the Environment Agency got the blame for that. The Environment Agency had carried out surveys and then lost the survey forms. So, there was great unhappiness with the Environment Agency.

[10] There was also unhappiness with Wrexham County Borough Council, because residents felt that it did not look after drainage properly, although the council said that it was not responsible for that. That is being looked into at the moment. A flood committee was formed in Rossett, which had a flood warden; the community council seems to be taking the lead on this. Residents felt that helping themselves was the best way forward.

[11] I tried to engage the residents about insurance claims, because we have taken evidence from insurance companies, but they did not seem to think that insurance was a problem. They felt that their claims have been handled well by insurers. Of the constituents present, one couple had been out of their home for nine months, but they were quite happy with that and felt that they had been dealt with well.

[12] There was a cross-border issue. As I said, Rossett is right on the boundary of the constituency and there is a weir on the river Dee in Chester, which, if it reaches a certain level, can cause problems further up the river in Rossett. People felt that this was a cross-border issue that needed to be addressed. That is it.

[13] **Mick Bates:** Thank you for that, and for your conclusions. Next is Llanrwst.

[14] **Brynle Williams:** Llanrwst has suffered enormously over the last 20 years and more. The meeting was well attended by affected people from as far as Rhyl. One of the main problems, according to residents and farmers alike, as Lesley has pointed out, is lack of maintenance, starting with the lengthsman, as we knew it, keeping the roadside drains open through to the main rivers and tributaries not being kept as they should be. There is a scheme now in place, but it has been further complicated by agreements between landowners and farmers. Part of the money is being held by solicitors and various people until the scheme kicks in, so you are not getting its full effect until then.

9.20 a.m.

[15] To expand on that, three landowners might be involved in part A of the scheme, whereas the success of it is with the 10 landowners, effectively. They do not get paid until they get to their land. Therefore, there are many problems. I was very encouraged to see that the landowners were just as enthusiastic about getting the scheme for the simple reason that it was affecting them in the same way. They were prepared to give up land provided that they were fairly recompensed.

[16] Lesley has touched on insurance. Another comment made at this meeting was that people living in the area with the postcode of LL6, or whatever it was, simply could not get insurance. It was rather ridiculous because you had some houses up on a bank that could not or would never be flooded. Therefore, the EA was asked to produce more accurate maps distinguish where exactly the flood risks were. The EA had a lot of flak. One of the main concerns, once again, by residents was that the EA was using computer models and the local people thought that they should be listening a lot more to local knowledge as to how and when flooding happens, and the reasons for the problems.

[17] It was also said that pumps needed to be put in the river. Many farmers said that there are landowners who do not believe that the pumps would have a great deal of effect. There were reasons why they thought that this problem had exacerbated—the building of the Conwy tunnel which slowed the river down and created silts, and the widening of the river in certain areas, but there is no evidence to substantiate that.

[18] The main theme again on maintenance was that people thought that a lot of that work should also include dredging. Again, it is in an area of outstanding natural beauty, I believe, and there could be problems. The main issue was that the residents believed that something was finally happening and they welcomed this idea.

[19] Finally, I think that it is a fantastic idea to go out to meet the people, but we need to publicise it better. That is all. That is a simple résumé of what we have.

[20] **Mick Bates:** Thank you, Brynle. I will report on the meeting that I held in Tregynon in Montgomeryshire. However, I will start by reinforcing Brynle's final point, that there was a very good response and people were saying, 'What a great idea to come to ask us—the people who are actually affected by flooding—so that an Assembly committee inquiry does not just invite people into a committee room, but comes out to meet the people'. For me, that was the first principle that I found to be very encouraging in this process. As I said in my introduction, there are bits that we have learned from that process and things that we need to make more effective and efficient.

[21] The second issue for me was one of contact and communication. The lady who said that her contact was about as much use as a chocolate teapot summed up many people's

feelings when they are faced with such a crisis. We have already taken evidence from the media and the EA. Communication has to be improved.

[22] The natural follow-up to that was community resilience. In that community, as in Gloucester, community resilience and communities taking control of as many factors as possible—internal communication, helping one another and looking at how they could protect their own properties—emerged as quite an issue. We will have a follow-up meeting to that effect where the National Flood Forum will be there to help people with their desire to defend their own properties. As far as the agencies were concerned, doubt was expressed about the effectiveness of the local authority in providing any assistance. The doubt then extended to the way that it maintained the highways, because that was its main responsibility—the culverts and drains therein. In fact, the local county council even reported that some of the work that was done by the authority was not done effectively and that it did not even clean the drains. I gathered from one of the vox pops in another area that maintenance was a critical issue.

[23] We also received evidence that one person who understood a lot about the draft flood and water management Bill questioned whether local authorities, given the current evidence, would be effective in co-ordinating all of the responses to flooding and the maintenance issues as well.

[24] The Environment Agency was considered to be ineffective and unhelpful in relation to maintenance issues on watercourses in particular. There was controversy about landowners getting into the waterway either to divert watercourses that were a threat to places or to remove tree stumps or rubbish that had been tipped in.

[25] Finally, there were issues about whether sandbags were useful. You may recall that, in her evidence, Mary Dhonau from the National Flood Forum said that one of her aims was to ban sandbags. I made a point of asking people about that and many considered them to be a bit of a hassle, particularly when they were wet and for elderly people. The self-help bit came into it there as well. However, generally, it was a useful exercise and I can see already that issues are emerging along the same lines.

[26] I now invite Rhodri to speak about Ammanford.

[27] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr iawn, Gadeirydd. Mynychwyd y cyfarfod yn Rhydaman gan nifer o bobl. Dywedwyd wrthyf nad oeddent yn cael unrhyw fath o rybudd cyn llifogydd. Nid oedd unrhyw beth wedi cael ei ddarparu i'w cynorthwyo i amddiffyn eu cartrefi yn erbyn llifogydd, ac nid oeddent yn siŵr â phwy y dylent gysylltu pan fyddai llifogydd yn digwydd.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much, Chair. The meeting in Ammanford was attended by a number of people. I was told that they do not receive any warning of a flood. Nothing has been provided to help them to protect their homes against the floods, and they were unsure as to whom they should contact in the event of a flood.

[28] Wedi i'r llifogydd ddigwydd, yr oeddent yn fwy bodlon gyda'r gwasanaeth yr oeddent yn ei gael ac nid oeddent yn cwyno'n ormodol ynglŷn â'r hyn a oedd yn digwydd wedi i'r llifogydd ddod. Eu problem sylfaenol oedd yr hyn a oedd yn digwydd cyn y llifogydd.

Following the flood, they were more satisfied with the service that they received and they did not complain too much about what happened when the flooding occurred. Their main problem was with the procedures prior to the flooding.

[29] Yr oeddent yn cwyno am y gwaith They complained about maintenance work on

cynnal a chadw o ran yr heolydd a'r cwlfertau ac yn y blaen. Dyna oedd y broblem sylfaenol. Er eu bod yn derbyn bod newid yn yr hinsawdd a bod glaw trwm yn digwydd yn sydyn, yr oeddent yn teimlo, petai gwaith cynnal a chadw digonol yn cael ei wneud, y byddai hynny'n gwella'r sefyllfa.

the roads, culverts and so on. That was the main problem. Although they accepted that there was a change in the climate and that there are sudden, heavy downpours, they felt the situation would improve if sufficient maintenance were undertaken.

[30] Nid oeddent yn credu bod y gwasanaethau brys yn cael eu cydlynu. Yr oeddent yn teimlo bod pawb yn gweithio ar wahân ac nad oedd neb yn cydgysylltu'r gwaith hwnnw. Cafwyd nifer o awgrymiadau. Yr oeddent yn teimlo'n gryf, gyda datblygiadau newydd, y dylid rhoi gorfodaeth ar y datblygwyr i sicrhau eu bod yn delio â'r dŵr ar wyneb y ddaear, ac y dylai hynny ddigwydd cyn i unrhyw ddatblygiad ddechrau. Yr oedd awgrymiadau bod datblygiadau yn mynd rhagddynt ac yna bod y datblygwyr yn mynd ati i ymdrin â'r broblem. Dylai hynny ddigwydd cyn i'r datblygiad ddechrau.

They did not believe that the emergency services were co-ordinated. They felt that everyone was working independently and that no-one co-ordinated that work. A number of suggestions were received. They felt strongly that, in the case of new developments, there should be a duty on the developer to ensure that they dealt with surface water and that that should happen before any development begins. There were suggestions it is only after developments go ahead that the developer deals with the problem. That should happen before the development begins.

[31] Yr oeddent am gael gwasanaeth i'w rhybuddio, gwybodaeth ynglŷn â phwy y dylent gysylltu, gwybodaeth ynglŷn â phwy fyddai'n cynnig darpariaeth iddynt amddiffyn eu cartrefi—a dylai'r ddarpariaeth honno fodoli. Yr oedd nifer o bobl a ddaeth i'r cyfarfod yn byw mewn ardaloedd lle y cafwyd llifogydd cyson dros y blynyddoedd, ond nid oedd yr awdurdodau yn darparu unrhyw wasanaeth iddynt i amddiffyn eu cartrefi.

They wanted a service that would warn them of flooding, information regarding whom they should contact, information regarding who would provide assistance for them to protect their homes—and that provision should exist. A number of people who came to the meeting live in areas that have suffered frequent flooding over the years, but the authorities did not provide a service to help them to protect their homes.

[32] **Mick Bates:** Diolch, Rhodri. I will move to annex F and Angela, with evidence from Whitland and St Clears.

[33] **Angela Burns:** Thank you very much, Chair. As you are aware, I took evidence in two places, but I feel that I took evidence from four distinct areas.

9.30 a.m.

[34] I took evidence in Whitland, which is a fairly substantial town in Carmarthenshire, and I also took evidence from a group of villagers from a hamlet called Cyffig on the outskirts of Whitland. Whitland is at the centre of a bowl and Cyffig is at the top, and they both experience flooding. Cyffig experiences flooding because of the way that the rain—and particularly the torrential rain that we are getting now—impacts the earth. The water cannot soak away fast enough, and it rushes through gullies and overflows the river. Any course that the water can find, it will follow, and it is usually into someone's home. Of course, that water then continues down the hill and hits Whitland. Whitland has suffered a huge amount of flooding, and constant flooding over time.

[35] The second place I took evidence from was St Clears. I heard evidence from a lot of

people who represented a small village on the outskirts called Llanddowror. The issue in Llanddowror is that it has rivers, which flood. St Clears is on a river, which also floods. This evidence is quite self-explanatory. The point that I would like to make is how shocked I was. You always think of flooding as a big event. I was appalled to find that I was speaking to people who get flooded two, three, four or five times a year—not once a year or once every two years. In Whitland, I met a charming lady, who I trust will forgive me for saying that she was very elderly. She lives at the bottom of North Road, and every time it rains for more than about 20 minutes her house is flooded. She cannot cope with it—she is an elderly lady. Her rather lovely son-in-law comes rushing over to try to help her. As far as I can tell, she gets no help from anyone—from the Environment Agency, the council or anyone else—because it is all surface water flooding. It starts at the top and pours down North Road like a waterfall. The culverts become blocked despite allegedly being cleaned regularly; they are part of a cleaning programme, but it is simply not enough. There is not enough drainage in Whitland to take the water away, so it starts pooling. Those of you who know Whitland—and quite a few of the Members here do—will know that there are some traffic lights at the bottom, at the centre of the town, where the zebra crossing is and that the water starts to pool until it is like a swimming pool.

[36] There are elderly people like that who are distressed by this on a regular basis, who have absolutely no recourse—there is nothing else that they can do. They do not have the money to dig up their homes and put them on stilts or anything like that, and no-one seems to be helping them. It has been going on year after year.

[37] I also want to bring to your attention the evidence of one gentleman in a vox pop in St Clears. He has a pumping station for Welsh Water in the yard of his house in St Clears. I do not know the ins and outs of the mechanics of the pumping station, but basically it breaks when it is overused; it flips a switch and he then gets raw sewage floating through his house. I really want to stress this point, because I do not think that people really consider the reality of this. He gets raw sewage floating through his house. He has been waist-deep in it. He and his wife now live on the top floor of their house. They cannot live on the ground floor; it is blighted. They cannot sell it, and they live in a flat that they have created at the top. That is their existence. They have lived like that for years and years, and I find it staggering that no-one along the journey—neither the Environment Agency, the council, or Welsh Water—has ever stopped and wondered, ‘Is this fair and reasonable? Should this man have to go through this?’. In October last year, the house was flooded twice.

[38] The point that I really want to make is that I have discovered through my meetings that this kind of flooding happens a lot. It is not just about the huge floods that make the news; this is causal flooding that happens regularly to individuals. My final point is about the fear factor. I live on the side of the valley, and at the bottom of the field there is a stream. I open my windows at night and I go to bed listening to the stream—water makes a gorgeous sound. I met a group of people in Llanddowror who go to bed at night and open their windows so that they can hear the stream because as soon as it changes its tenor, they know that they will be flooded. They live in fear. They have a sense for it now; they wake up in the middle of the night and think, ‘Ah, something has changed’ and they get out. Again, they gave evidence of sewage coming up through the loos and their gardens and houses being flooded. Their evidence was powerful and they were delighted to be able to give evidence to the committee on this. When I saw the photos, which I have submitted, I was struck by three factors: disgust, the amount of flooding and people’s desperation. I hope that this committee can do something about this because I am very disappointed with the statutory bodies that think it is okay for this to keep happening. It happens year after year and month after month for some people. It must be utterly soul-destroying.

[39] **Mick Bates:** The personal aspect that you have brought to the attention of the committee, through this evidence, is extremely important. It is easy to become complacent

about things that occur regularly. I hope that we will be able to address those things in our recommendations.

[40] I will now ask Virginia to report on the Tywyn meeting.

[41] **Dr Hawkins:** I attended the same meeting in Tywyn as Darren Millar. The issues raised were similar to those raised at other meetings. Tywyn experienced the major floods in 1990 following the sea wall breach. However, surprisingly that was not the key issue raised, because I think that lessons had been learned from that in relation to maintenance of the sea wall. Many people were still concerned about insufficient warning and flood risk awareness in the area. People who had been flooded previously still would not know what to do or where to go in the event of a flood. The same communication issues were raised about where to go, how to find things out and who to speak to in the event of a flood. There was also frustration that the agencies involved had not learned from previous experiences of flooding about the need for communication and to help people out.

[42] Again, there was the issue of historic knowledge and the fact that people were not being listened to when they said that such-and-such a field has flooded or that a particular road always floods and asked 'So why were houses being built on it?' and so on. Also, Welsh Water declared several years ago that its sewerage and drainage systems were at capacity and yet planning permission was still being granted for new developments, which was adding to that problem.

[43] On flood defences, the main concern was about the River Clwyd, which is tidal. It was said that between 11,000 and 12,000 homes were at risk from flooding in that area. The Environment Agency, whose representatives were at the meeting, admitted that its defences had settled over time and that, given a rise in sea levels, would probably not cope. Plans are in place to strengthen those defences.

[44] There were a few issues raised about planning, and where planning permission to build on the floodplain was being granted. There was also a concern about the fact that the River Clwyd was under the administration of two separate planning authorities, which did not communicate to each other on granting planning permission on one side that could affect the other side of the river. Therefore, there were many issues on joined-up working between agencies.

[45] An interesting point was raised by the Environment Agency, which said that at some point one would have to question how sustainable it is to continue to protect the coast in that area. So, that was a big issue. However, as I said, many of the issues raised were similar to those raised at the other meetings.

[46] **Mick Bates:** Thank you, Virginia. You will recall that Darren Millar, who used to be a member of this committee, was very keen on this issue and suggested that we undertake this inquiry. That is why I was keen for him to organise his own meeting.

[47] Finally, Leanne has a report on the Rhondda and, although I have no written evidence on it, I would like Alun to give a verbal report on his meeting in Llanelli.

[48] **Leanne Wood:** Posters were put up in the area, and the venue that we organised was central to three areas that had been previously flooded, mainly by the river. It so happens that during the weekend following the meeting, properties around three miles down the road were flooded. Unfortunately, not a single person turned up to give evidence at the meeting that I held. I do not know whether that was down to insufficient publicity; posters were put up and a notice was put in the local press, but I do not think that leaflets went out. If we could put leaflets through the doors on streets that we know have been flooded in the past—there is

quite a lot of local knowledge about which streets have been affected—then I think that we might get a better turnout. I do not know whether the rain put people off, but, whatever it was, we did not get any evidence, I am afraid. However, I am happy to hold another meeting, perhaps during recess, if it can be organised through the committee secretariat.

9.40 a.m.

[49] **Mick Bates:** I would point out that the first evidence on our website was from the flooding incident that occurred the same weekend.

[50] **Leanne Wood:** In Rhydyfelin.

[51] **Mick Bates:** Yes. We also have that facility on the website for people to use to send their evidence in. How much evidence do we have on that now?

[52] **Dr Hawkins:** It is a lot.

[53] **Mick Bates:** Yes, masses. The public has sent lots of evidence in—photographic evidence and video evidence.

[54] **Leanne Wood:** If we have had a lot of evidence from people in that area, maybe it is not necessary to hold another meeting, but if you feel that it is worth it, I think that we should do it.

[55] **Mick Bates:** Thank you, Leanne.

[56] **Alun Davies:** We held a meeting in Llanelli on Friday, which I think it is fair to say was pretty much packed out. There were people from a number of different communities throughout the Llanelli constituency, including the town itself and communities such as Bury Port. People spoke about a breadth of experiences and in very clear and sometimes quite emotional terms about the impact of flooding on their lives, their communities and on local chapels and so on. It was quite a difficult meeting in that sense.

[57] Without going over the ground that has already been covered in relation to how we respond to some of that evidence, I will focus on two issues that I think will probably have a particular resonance for Rhodri Glyn and Angela Burns, since they concern Carmarthenshire as a county council and as an area. There was general concern that local people were not being listened to in any way and that flood risk management was something that happened to communities, rather than with communities, and that local people had very little input into the process. As a result, decisions were taken that people living locally, who had lived locally for some time, could understand were not good decisions. There was a very real sense of isolation from the decision-making process in relation to flood risk management, and almost despair at how some decisions had been reached.

[58] The first issue that I would address is that of public bodies not working together. There was a lot of criticism of the Environment Agency, Carmarthenshire County Council and Welsh Water, among others, which simply gave the appearance of not working together at all, in relation to managing flood risk, responding to a flood or clearing up following a flood. Right through the process, there was a sense of alienation from the public authorities who were responsible for dealing with those issues. The Environment Agency appeared to be high handed and irrelevant to the local communities and something that floated above and beyond a community rather than listening to its concerns. The local authority was seen to be part of the problem, not part of the solution. Welsh Water, as has already been referred to in previous evidence, appeared not to have an infrastructure or asset base sufficient to do the job demanded of it. As a result, Welsh Water assets were mentioned specifically. There was a

feeling that the company was causing some of the flooding by not having sufficient assets in place.

[59] That leads us to a second issue, which is the control of development. This is possibly an issue that is specific to Carmarthenshire, rather than one that applies across all areas. There is a very real sense that local development plans are irrelevant to what happens in the area, that overdevelopment is taking place and that the infrastructure is not sufficient to cope with the development. It is felt that there is a rush to build—perhaps that has eased somewhat in the last year—without proper consideration being taken of the impact of new estates and new properties on both the infrastructure and the ability of the local topography to cope with flooding incidents. Surface water flooding and fluvial flooding are exacerbated by overdevelopment in and around particular communities. As I said before, there is a real sense that there is little joined-up thinking and working between public authorities, and people felt that they were victims of a crime, as one man said, in the sense that they were suffering the consequences of other people failing to get their jobs done properly.

[60] In conclusion, there was a real sense that what those people and the communities really needed was action and not words. They understood that we were listening and that we are gathering evidence, but they did not want the evidence to simply gather dust, and they did not want their words and experiences to colour a report that, in the end, achieves little. There was a real sense of frustration at the fact that several public meetings had taken place but that little had changed, that people were not being listened to, and that there was no response from public authorities to the very real emergencies that people experience in their lives. There was a sense that there is a failure on the part of Government and the totality of public bodies to respond to these issues and to deal with issues of flooding in the area. There was a real demand that we confront the statutory bodies with the evidence and the information on people's experiences, that we hold the statutory bodies to account, and that we also, as an Assembly, hold the Government to account to ensure that decisions are taken that will ensure that flood-risk management is more locally based, that local authorities and others are forced to work together in a more constructive way, and that development is controlled in a way that enhances people's life experiences, rather than in a way that destroys people's daily lives and expectations.

[61] **Mick Bates:** I thank everyone again for undertaking the work and for the reports. For me, the process itself has great advantages. There will be an informal meeting after this session, in which I would like to discuss the process in more detail so that we can learn from it and use a similar method of engagement when undertaking future inquiries, when that can be used appropriately to gather evidence, to that which we have used for this inquiry. It seems to me that one of the first issues to come out of all of this is a negative one, and that is the failure of the system to cater for people such as those that Angela mentioned, who have lived with this threat for too long. To me, it has been one of the most humbling experiences to see how people have suffered.

[62] What do we gain from this? I will deal with some of the key issues that are common to all our experiences and the evidence-gathering that we have undertaken. First, there is a lack of co-ordination between bodies in dealing with the issue of flooding. That has been demonstrated in the first place by the question, 'Who do we contact?' While we do have the national floodline, on which I have heard various reports, we have all come across confusion in our evidence-gathering and across constituents who ask, 'Where do we go?' That need for co-ordination is reflected in the Pitt report and in some of the suggestions in the draft Bill. According to the draft Bill, local authorities will be the focus of that. For me, that is the first issue: the need to enhance co-ordination of the response, both in relation to preparation and the response to actual floods. Would anyone like to expand on that?

[63] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch, **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you, Chair.

Gadeirydd. Mae dau bwynt sy'n codi o'r hyn yr ydych wedi ei ddweud. Yn gyntaf, o ran ardaloedd sydd wedi cael llifogydd yn gyson dros y blynyddoedd, y gŵyn yr oeddwn yn ei dderbyn yn Rhydaman oedd nad oedd neb yn darparu ar eu cyfer. Yr oedd rhai yn derbyn bagiau tywod, ond heblaw am hynny nid oedd darpariaeth o gwbl. Os yw'r awdurdodau yn gwybod bod rhai ardaloedd yn dioddef llifogydd yn gyson, dylai fod darpariaeth ddigonol ar gyfer cartrefi i'w hamddiffyn rhag y llifogydd.

There are two points arising from what you have said. First, with regard to areas where there have been regular floods over the years, the complaint that I received in Ammanford was that nobody provided for them. Some received sandbags, but other than that there was no provision at all. If authorities are aware that there are areas that suffer from flooding on a regular basis, there should be sufficient provision for homes to protect them against flooding.

9.50 a.m.

[64] Yn ail, pan oedd glaw trwm, nid oedd yr awdurdodau yn blaenoriaethu'r manau hynny lle'r oedd lifogydd wedi digwydd yn gyson. Byddai rhywun yn disgwyl i'r awdurdodau wybod bod llifogydd go ddiffrifol wedi bod mewn rhai ardaloedd a mynd yn syth at yr ardaloedd hynny i sicrhau darpariaeth iddynt, ond nid oeddynt yn gwneud hynny; yr oeddynt ond yn ymateb i'r galwadau yr oeddynt yn eu cael.

Secondly, when there was heavy rainfall, authorities did not prioritise the places where there had been regular flooding in the past. You would expect the authorities to know that there had been serious flooding in some areas and to go straight to those areas and ensure provision, but they did not do that; they just responded to the calls that they received.

[65] **Mick Bates:** On managing flood risk, it has come out that there is a critical issue for us to look at in preparing the areas that are known to flood always and the response afterwards, so that we can recommend how and by what mechanism it could be improved.

[66] **Leanne Wood:** Is there any scope for us to explore placing statutory duties on public bodies to meet immediately when a flood takes place and to plan to prevent flooding? Are there any statutory duties on public bodies at the moment, and do local authority officers have specific responsibility for dealing with floods? Is there one named officer in each local authority who should respond to floods? I think that we need to nail this down. Who is responsible in these areas? It looks as though people are not doing their jobs properly or they do not have duties to perform specific tasks.

[67] **Mick Bates:** I think that you are right and that there is a lack of internal focus in organisations. One of the Environment Agency's primary concerns is to protect life and property.

[68] **Leanne Wood:** The situation that Angela described would never happen if these bodies were following things through.

[69] **Mick Bates:** Absolutely. I agree entirely. Your point is on focus and lines of communication and contact internally and for the public. So, there are two issues there on internal co-ordination.

[70] **Leanne Wood:** Later, I would like to see an Assembly committee having the ability to scrutinise public bodies after a flood, when people have been let down—because we know that this will happen again—and to hold them to account. My feeling is that there is no accountability at the moment.

[71] **Mick Bates:** That is an excellent point and one that I have struggled over the last few

weeks to make time for us to discuss in our forward work programme. I do not know whether the representatives of the Welsh Local Government Association are coming to give evidence, as I have not been able to talk to them myself, but I think that the local authorities are a target that we need to look at in our evidence. I initially planned to do this by a round-table, stakeholder discussion, to get people engaged in this. That is a key point, and we will get all the stakeholders who are concerned with emergency response to answer it.

[72] **Leanne Wood:** We need to ensure that they are not in a position to pass the buck to other organisations, because that has been going on, too, has it not?

[73] **Angela Burns:** I will follow on from what Leanne said. Some of the evidence that came through stated that flood warnings are inconsistent. There is an enormous amount of inconsistency within some of these agencies, and I am going to single out the Environment Agency. There is inconsistency between how these organisations think that they perform—because they all give themselves big ticks—and how they actually perform, and there is also inconsistency in how they deliver the service that they are supposed to deliver. For example, in St Clears, for some time, there has been somebody whom the Environment Agency phones to tell about the flood risk, and he then goes out to warn everybody else. Following the last flood, the residents of St Clears beat a path to his door and said, ‘You didn’t tell us’, and he said that that was because he had not been told. So, there is a breakdown of communication within agencies, not to mention between agencies, or between agencies and the public.

[74] I really take Leanne’s point. It is like anything in life: if you have an awful lot of people, you have an awful lot of holes down which people can disappear. We have to ensure that we can absolutely pin this down to one set of people and say, ‘This is your responsibility from now on and we will be watching you’; otherwise, these people’s lot will never improve and we will be sitting here in five years’ time talking about the same people. They have already been suffering for 10 or 15 years, and they will continue to suffer. It just has to stop.

[75] **Mick Bates:** On co-ordination, we need to revisit it within the life of this third Assembly, in the same way as we will revisit fuel poverty in the future. These are key issues for us to keep scrutinising.

[76] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Is that not a ludicrous situation that the Environment Agency phones one person in St Clears and expects that person to warn everyone else? What if that person happens to be out? No-one would get to know. The Environment Agency may have only one contact number.

[77] **Mick Bates:** I think that that is a reference to the old flood system where there used to be a local flood management committee that used to phone around everyone. That has been replaced by a flood warning system that, I think, comes through your phone and is repeated.

[78] **Angela Burns:** Except that these people do not know about it, Chair. No-one has said to them that they are taking away that guy, and now all that will happen is that they receive messages.

[79] **Mick Bates:** That is a perfect example of how co-ordination should be improved. I want to move on a little to identify a few other key issues before we end the session.

[80] **Brynle Williams:** Following on from what Leanne and Angela said, there needs to be one person co-ordinating everything when floods happen. Someone has got to be responsible, full stop. Looking very far ahead to what can be done, this committee can make a major recommendation on planning, which comes up all the time. We were told in Gloucester that there is a shortage of development plans. It is ludicrous. In Ruthin, in my constituency, 250 houses are to be developed on a floodplain, and they think that they will alleviate the flood

risk by lifting them off the ground 2 ft. That is just one example, which shows the effect that we in the Assembly could have on planning.

[81] More emphasis could also be placed on maintenance, and Welsh Water, or whoever, needs to look at the sewerage infrastructure. That was a common thread in everyone's evidence. The sewerage infrastructure is not there. I know of a case in which a sewerage infrastructure was built for 400 houses but now services 1,200, and that housing estate has paved areas, and so on, which contributes to the flooding problems on the estate. In the case that Angela mentioned, the lady whose home was flooded regularly, the council should be dealing with that right away.

[82] **Mick Bates:** I want to move away from the personal experiences of our evidence gathering, because I want to draw this session to a close in the next 15 minutes by looking at what we have learned collectively to guide us towards our recommendations. There is clearly a lack of co-ordination. The ridiculous way of informing people that there is about to be a flood by knocking on their doors is outmoded. The other point that I take from Brynle is the planning issue. Although technical advice note 15 has been implemented and the Environment Agency's maps are available, there are issues with the accuracy of those maps, and local issues can sometimes change the planning rules. However, there is also a key issue about future development, so that fewer people are likely to have their homes flooded. That is how we have to look at this.

[83] **Lesley Griffiths:** One thing that I would like to see come out of this inquiry is better communication between residents and statutory bodies. I suppose that I am targeting the Environment Agency again, but why does it not listen to people who have local knowledge? For instance, the community council in Rossett inspects the river once a year for blockages, and it passes that information to the Environment Agency, but nothing is done. If we could ensure better communication between the two groups, it would be excellent.

[84] **Mick Bates:** Absolutely. The locality issue is my next major point, namely how to secure engagement and communication from a local level, to use local knowledge and experience and to transfer it into good maintenance and good practice.

[85] **Alun Davies:** Some of the broad lessons learned from this inquiry are that the planning system and the management of flood risk are failing people at the moment and are even contributing proactively to creating problems that did not previously exist. Carmarthenshire can be used as a microcosm for the rest of Wales: planning consent is given for development over a period of years, which then takes place over a period of months and all of a sudden the system does not work. The Assembly Government needs to take control of the situation so that there is a national framework within which Welsh Water is a statutory consultee. It would then be a part of the planning process rather than simply an adjunct to it. We need to understand what exactly the infrastructure that we have in place is capable of sustaining in development terms. All too often, we are given the false choice between moving forward in one direction or going backwards in economic development terms. In many ways, many local people pay the price of that.

10.00 a.m.

[86] I agree with the criticisms that have been made of the Environment Agency, and there is a need for the Government to review the Environment Agency's work in managing flood risk. The systems that it has in place are impressive but I am not convinced that they work. You can have a very good system but, if it does not work, it is not worth having in the first place. So, there is a need to look at how the Environment Agency works with local communities to warn them that a flood is imminent. As an Assembly, we should look at prevention. We should be putting structures and policy frameworks in place that make

flooding less likely rather than more likely to happen. I would like to see a strengthened environmental agency, and whether that is the Environment Agency or a new beast, I am not convinced. However, I am becoming more convinced that we need a new environmental regulator in Wales that brings together the Environment Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales and has a much more powerful voice in Government. We can certainly discuss that later, perhaps in a year's time.

[87] We need a planning structure that goes beyond what currently exists. The Government needs to create a framework that will not allow local authorities to rush headlong into development that is not sustainable. We then need a relationship with the providers of the infrastructure to ensure that we have infrastructure and asset management plans that accurately reflect the developments that we foresee happening, within the time frame that we foresee. At present, there is a mismatch and none of those things is happening. The consequence is that many communities are suffering unnecessary flooding.

[88] **Mick Bates:** Thank you, Alun. I can see that Brynle wishes to speak. Could you speak briefly on this point, Brynle?

[89] **Brynle Williams:** As we have discussed this, and as Alun has mentioned one particular body, namely Welsh Water, I want to say that what concerns me is the proposal of privatising or breaking up Welsh Water. If that goes ahead, we will see many more problems. We will have some companies responsible for sewerage, others responsible for surface water, and so on, and there will be a devil of a mess. That has to be taken into consideration in this piece of work, Chair.

[90] **Mick Bates:** Okay, thank you. Do you want to speak briefly on the same point, Angela?

[91] **Angela Burns:** Yes, on the same subject. Alun talked very eloquently about the lack of communication and the local knowledge. I just want to demonstrate that. In St Clears, we have a river. Nearby is a housing estate. There is a slight slope, but not much of one and the housing estate stops about here. Everyone knows that that field gets flooded, including me, because I have seen it as I live in the area. Where do you think they will put the new housing estate? Lo and behold, they will put it here and bring it down to around there. Who signed off on this? The Environment Agency, Carmarthenshire County Council, and the Countryside Council for Wales all did, but Welsh Water was not asked. How stupid is that? Yet, all those agencies will come to this committee and tell us that they are not doing that kind of stuff, that they are being sensible and know what is what. No-one has bothered to listen to the people who live in St Clears. They could tell you that every single winter, without fail, it floods to there. So, those new houses will have water coming up to their doorsteps. There needs to be only a small change to what is happening now for that water to go over their doorsteps and into their houses. It is plain stupid.

[92] **Mick Bates:** As a result of such comments, we have invited the Environment Agency back in for another session. The local issues are very important, but we have to try to extract a general recommendation that helps us to address the collective rather than the specific issues. There are issues about planning. It strengthens the point that co-ordination between these departments is still key.

[93] **Leanne Wood:** I agree with what Alun said about planning being the key to prevention and for the Assembly to get a grip on it. That is important. On communication between local authorities, it seems stupid to have a situation where, if you build on a border, you do not have to communicate with the neighbouring local authority, even if that build impacts on that area.

[94] On the sewerage system, Brynle's point is important. My understanding is that the majority of the sewerage system in Wales was built in the Victorian age with the foresight of including a 25 per cent increase in capacity, but that we have now breached that. So, I would like to know more about the implications of that with regard to flooding. If that system is old and has breached its capacity, there are bound to be problems in the future, particularly given rises in sea levels. Could something be prepared by our researchers on the sewerage system, such as the location of particular problems and who is responsible for all of its different parts, because I am not clear about where the responsibility lies?

[95] Another point that we have not yet touched on is that some people are unable to get insurance. Could this committee look at some form of public insurance, offered by a public body, for those who are failed by the market?

[96] **Mick Bates:** That is an interesting comment.

[97] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** O ran yr argymhellion penodol, mae angen trefn safonol ar gyfer cydlynu mewn sefyllfaoedd o lifogydd. Dylai fod yn glir drwy Gymru pwy sy'n gyfrifol am sicrhau bod yr holl wasanaethau'n ymateb i sefyllfaoedd o lifogydd. Er enghraifft, dylid gwneud yn glir pwy sy'n gyfrifol am rybuddion llifogydd—er mai Asiantaeth yr Amgylchedd sy'n gyfrifol, mae'r rhan fwyaf o bobl yn dal i feddwl y dylent gysylltu â'u cyngor lleol. Dylem fod yn glir am hynny.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: On the specific recommendations, standard arrangements are required for co-ordinating flooding situations. It should be clear throughout Wales who is responsible for ensuring that all services respond to flooding situations. For example, we should clarify who is responsible for flood warnings—even though it is the Environment Agency that is responsible, most people still think that they should contact their local council. We should be clear about that.

[98] Credaf hefyd y dylem osod cyfrifoldeb statudol ar awdurdodau lleol i ddiogelu cartrefi sy'n dioddef yn gyson o lifogydd. Gwelsom o'n hymweliad â Chaerloyw bod modd gwneud pethau sylfaenol pan fo cartrefi yn dioddef llifogydd yn gyson.

I also think that we should place a statutory responsibility on local authorities to protect homes that endure regular flooding. We saw, from our visit to Gloucester, that it is possible to do basic things when homes are regularly affected by flooding.

[99] Yn Rhydaman, yr oedd pobl yn teimlo'n gryf iawn am ddatblygiadau newydd. Yr wyf yn tueddu i gytuno gydag Alun fod problem sylfaenol gyda Chyngor Sir Caerfyrddin yn cymeradwyo datblygiadau heb sicrhau bod y datblygwyr yn mynd i'r afael yn ddigonol â phroblemau dŵr wyneb. Soniodd llawer o bobl am lifogydd yn dilyn datblygiadau. Mae angen inni fynd i'r afael â hynny. Mae problem sylfaenol yn sir Gaerfyrddin gyda'r adran orfodaeth o ganlyniad i ddiffyg adnoddau. Felly, os oes problemau gydag unrhyw ddatblygiad, nid oes neb ar gael i ymdrin â'r problemau hynny. Felly, galwaf am feini prawf o fewn y rheoliadau adeiladu i sicrhau bod datblygwyr yn ymdrin â phroblemau dŵr wyneb cyn cael dechrau datblygu. Mae'n rhaid rhoi system o'r fath ar waith a sicrhau modd o'i

In Ammanford, people felt strongly about new developments. I tend to agree with Alun that there is a fundamental problem with Carmarthenshire County Council in that it approves developments without ensuring that developers tackle surface water problems sufficiently. Many people mentioned flooding as a result of developments. We need to tackle that. There is a fundamental problem in Carmarthenshire with the enforcement department resulting from insufficient resources. Therefore, if there are problems with any development, no-one is available to deal with them. I, therefore, call for criteria in the building regulations to ensure that developers get to grips with surface water problems before they are allowed to develop. We must put such a system in place and ensure a way of

goruchwylio cyn dechrau datblygu.

overseeing it before developments are allowed to start.

[100] **Mick Bates:** As you know, SUDS is part of that. The issue emerging here relates to Angela's point, namely that, when we scrutinised the agencies, everything was hunky-dory. However, the process of gathering evidence from people who have been affected has exposed the lack of communication and understanding and the lack of appreciation by the agencies of the issues faced by the public.

[101] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** The fact is that these agencies are employing too many people to write strategies and too few people to do the work on the ground. That is the problem: the work does not get done.

10.10 a.m.

[102] **Mick Bates:** That is an interesting recommendation. I think that we will follow that one up.

[103] Finally, I think that the locality issues are important here. People have mentioned local maintenance. It seems to me that the other issue that we have to recognise is that communities need flood risk management plans. Flood risk management for catchment areas and for large areas seems to have been talked about at a strategic level but, in my experience, there also needs to be a recognition that local communities need their own flood risk management plans. Those plans need to encompass a great many issues, including co-ordination between the local council regarding maintenance and the planning issues that arise. Let us consider Angela's example of the field; there has to be more recognition of knowledge of the locality. That is something that came through strongly in lots of the evidence that I have read.

[104] **Leanne Wood:** I would agree with that. That goes back to the point that was made earlier about placing a statutory duty on public bodies to create a plan. The point that Alun made about communities feeling that they have this stuff done to them, as opposed to them being involved in the process, is important as well. Those communities do not need to have a plan enforced upon them; they need to create the plan themselves.

[105] **Mick Bates:** I think so too. This is a crucial point. It is apparent that, very often, the authorities will have all of these plans in place and they will co-ordinate and inform other parts of the machine, whether those parts are within the local authority or a statutory body outside of it; however, the gulf between the locality and the implementation is massive and we have to address that in our recommendations. I am mindful of the time. If Members have other key issues that they feel we should be looking at with a view to making recommendations following this massive evidence-gathering process, I would like to hear them before we close, so that they can be put on record.

[106] **Angela Burns:** I have just one point. I do not want to just stick to my area, which I looked at, because we have heard evidence of repeated flooding incidents from all parts of Wales. I would like to see us producing a report that gives a clear, coherent way forward, that, as I said earlier, pins the tail on the donkey and, essentially, gets one person somewhere to be totally responsible for it. In tandem with that, I would like to see us keep a record of a few hot spots, so that somebody somewhere looks at the 100 worst offenders for flooding. This is boring, but this is what you do in business: you start with the worst one and sort it out, and then you do the next one and the next one. That will help some of these people who have been hammered again and again. The area that Lesley was talking about might be the worst one. I want somebody to just sit there and look at it and say 'Right, in order to solve this small local problem, which would make so many people's lives better, we need to do this, clear that river

and we need to do that'. I hate quangos and I hate all these special advisers, because I think that they are a waste of money—

[107] **Mick Bates:** But you want to create another.

[108] **Angela Burns:** No, I want to find somebody who already exists, whose job it should be, who could be given this task and told to come back here to report to us. We will give them a list and say 'Come back in six months and tell us how many you have solved and how you solved them; when you have done those five, we want you to do the next five and so on'. That can happen at the same time as we do the big, groundbreaking stuff about how we can go forward, because, otherwise, these people are going to carry on having wretched experiences.

[109] **Mick Bates:** I think that we recognise that issue. I do not wish to defend any organisation, but from our previous recommendations to the Minister on the budget, we have emphasised that more investment has to be made to resolve these key issues on flooding. Assets are also important on that. Some investment is necessary. I think that that would be behind that recommendation as well.

[110] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Gyda'r newid sy'n digwydd yn yr hinsawdd, credaf fod yn rhaid i ni dderbyn bod rhai ardaloedd yn mynd i ddiodeff llifogydd ac nad oes dim y gallwn ei wneud i rwystro hynny. Gallem alw ar awdurdodau lleol i baratoi rhestr o ardaloedd a fydd yn diodeff llifogydd a gofyn iddynt restru sut y maent yn mynd i ymateb i hynny a'r hyn sy'n mynd i ddigwydd ac yn y blaen, fel bod y bobl yn glir, pan ddaw llif, beth sy'n mynd i ddigwydd, pwy sy'n gyfrifol a phwy y dylent gysylltu â hwy. Mae angen strategaeth glir y mae pawb yn ymwybodol ohoni.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: With the changing climate, I think that we have to accept that some areas are going to experience flooding and that there is nothing that we can do to prevent it. We could ask local authorities to prepare a list of areas that are going to experience flooding and ask them to list how they intend to respond to that and what is going to happen and so on, so that people are clear, when there is a flood situation, what is going to happen, who is responsible and who they need to contact. There must be a clear strategy that everyone is aware of.

[111] **Mick Bates:** Diolch, Rhodri. That could also encompass Angela's suggestion about prioritising the key areas. Are there any other key issues that Members would like to raise following this evidence?

[112] **Brynle Williams:** Chair, I would like to raise again the issue of the cost of insurance being based not on postcodes but, where possible, on definitive lines, set out by the Environment Agency, showing where flooding occurs. Basing insurance costs on postcodes means that some people, whose homes will never be flooded, either cannot get insurance or have to pay exorbitant premiums. That needs to be done for communities where flooding regularly occurs.

[113] **Mick Bates:** That point was made to the Association of British Insurers last week. I think that it is aware of that, and I hope that one of our recommendations will be about trying to distinguish between properties so that those that do not get flooded are not subject to the same premiums as properties that do.

[114] Thank you—this was obviously a very important session. Hearing about the personal experiences that people have presented to us in evidence and the way in which Members have responded in order to convert those to recommendations has informed the direction in which the inquiry will go.

10.16 a.m.

Papur i'w Nodi
Paper to Note

[115] **Mick Bates:** I ask Members to note our forward work programme. Do Members have any comments? I see that there are none.

[116] In bringing the meeting to an end, I thank everyone for their contributions this morning. I found them immensely useful in moving forward with our inquiry. You will remember that our inquiry was to look at the impact of flooding on communities and people's lives. This exercise has proved to be very rewarding for us in putting forward recommendations for our report. The next meeting will be on 15 July, when we will have a roundtable discussion with stakeholders. I am hoping that we will also be able to get a session with the Welsh Local Government Association. Our experiences have shown that the role of local authorities in this is pretty crucial and that co-ordination between community and town councils is also a channel where local experiences, whether historic or current, are extremely pertinent to flood-risk control. Thank you all.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.17 a.m.

The meeting ended at 10.17 a.m.