

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-1010
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/00150/21

Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Chair of the Petitions Committee

19th February 2021

Dear Janet,

Thank you for your letter of 25 January, regarding an independent inquiry into the 2020 floods in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The flooding we witnessed across Wales in 2020 and more recently last month, was distressing to all those affected. We saw the wettest February on record last year. Whilst the number of properties affected and the damage and losses caused is devastating, this would have been a lot worse without the network of flood defences which operated successfully to prevent or reduce further flooding. Data from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) show that over 9,000 homes were protected from flooding on the River Taff alone last February. Across Wales, that figure rises to around 73,000 with many more benefitting from smaller defences managed by the Local Authorities.

Following the devastating flooding in February we acted swiftly to work with Risk Management Authorities (RMA) to provide emergency funding at 100% of the cost of the work to make immediate repairs to damaged flood assets. As a Government we also provided funding to flooded households to help with recovery costs.

As you heard in the recent debates around an independent inquiry in December, and again last month, I do not feel this is necessary given the ongoing work of the Local Authority to investigate the flooding alongside the review carried out by NRW. However, I do wish to respond to the questions asked by the petitioner and set out in the conclusion of the letter from the Petitions Committee.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

Gohebiaeth.Lesley.Griffiths@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@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.

- 1) Will the reports provide adequate answers so as to prevent flooding of this scale from occurring again?

Despite our ongoing investment, we cannot stop all flooding from occurring. Through our interventions, we can help to reduce this risk, but not remove it completely. Residents should make sure they are prepared and have adequate insurance. The Section 19 reports set out the powers and responsibilities of our RMAs (NRW, Local Authorities and water companies), to address the flooding. Under Section 13 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, RMA's must co-operate with other relevant authorities in the exercise of their flood and coastal erosion risk management functions. The Section 19 reports should be written collaboratively, especially where there is more than one source identified. However, no report on its own fixes flooding, and neither can a defence remove all risk. It is about managing that risk effectively and making appropriate improvements which the appropriate RMA(s) should undertake, with support from WG.

- 2) Will the reports provide adequate answers to inform a whole Wales plan and approach to flood prevention?

Whilst the Section 19 reports provide useful information to the impacted Local Authority and relevant agencies, our national approach to managing risk is set out in the National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management which I published last October.

- 3) Will the reports provide an insight into the impact the floods have had on both the physical and mental health of those affected?

Section 19 reports can set out recommendations for future improvements which, where appropriate to the local area and community, could include physical and mental health support to those impacted. This is not set out as a requirement in legislation of the Section 19 reports, however we do approach this in our National Strategy. The link between flood risk and mental health is well established. Providing services that raise awareness of flood risk, providing flood warnings, and information on what to do before, during and after a flood are key to the delivery of the FCERM objective of 'preparedness and building resilience' and helps reduce anxiety associated with flooding. NRW and Local Authorities can utilise revenue funding to carry out community awareness raising work to help residents at risk of flooding to understand that risk and plan for it.

- 4) Will the reports give confidence to businesses based in the areas affected that every possible measure that could reduce the risk of future flooding has been taken by all stakeholders and agencies or will businesses relocate because of the uncertainty?

Businesses need to make their own decisions regarding relocation based on the risks they face and whether this risk can be accepted or not.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

Gohebiaeth.Lesley.Griffiths@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@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.

Those decisions can be informed by the information available in our flood maps and the actions of the RMA(s) managing that risk.

In December I announced an additional £95,000 revenue funding for each of our Local Authorities which can be used to complete their Section 19 reports, this comes on top of record levels of revenue funding for Local Authorities this year and 100% funding support for flood risk management assets damaged in storm events.

Yours sincerely,



Lesley Griffiths AS/MS

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

Gohebiaeth.Lesley.Griffiths@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@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.