

P-06-1205 Invest in flood defences on the Towy in Carmarthen, including the Quayside area

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 1 Tachwedd 2021
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Reference: SR21/1044-6

Petition Number: P-06-1205

Petition title: Invest in flood defences on the Towy in Carmarthen including the Quayside area

Text of petition: The Towy floods multiple times a year affecting businesses that sit alongside it. Something needs to be done as a matter of urgency, the public see plenty of meetings but no action.



1. Background

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) reports that 245,000 properties are at risk of flooding. Climate scientists say we can expect more extreme weather events and sea level rise.

Carmarthen Quay on the River Towy was flooded three times between December 2020 and February 2021. The River Towy previously flooded during storm Callum in 2018 when flood defences were topped, it was reported as the biggest flood event in the area since 1987.

Legislative and policy context

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (the Act) makes provision for managing flooding and coastal erosion, and provides powers to, and makes requirements of, the Welsh Government, NRW and Local Lead Flood Authorities (LLFAs).

Section 6 of the Act defines the roles and responsibilities of 'Risk Management Authorities' (RMAs). In Wales these are NRW, all 22 local authorities (which act as LLFAs), highway authorities (local authorities and the Welsh Government), and water and sewerage companies.

Responsibility for flood management

The Welsh Government is responsible for national policy - set out in its National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (the National Strategy). Local authorities, in this instance Carmarthenshire County Council, are responsible for Local Flood Risk Management Strategies, setting objectives for local flood risk management.

NRW has responsibility for managing flood risk from main rivers, its reservoirs and the sea. The River Towy is a main river, and therefore responsibility to manage flooding from it falls to NRW.

After a significant flood, Section 19 of the Act requires LLFAs undertake investigations and publish results. These investigations help RMAs understand the full extent of impacts and can inform improvements to manage risk in a community, including new schemes to reduce the likelihood of further flooding. Carmarthenshire County Council published a Section 19 report in response to

Storm Callum. No report has been published following the recent Carmarthen Quay flooding.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government has committed to fund additional flood protection for more than 45,000 homes this Senedd term. Risks to communities from flooding and sea level rise are a research priority in Prosperity for All: A Climate Conscious Wales.

The Welsh Government invested £390million into helping manage flood risk between 2016 and 2021.

RMAs can apply for grant funding to reduce flood risk to communities through the Welsh Government's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Programme. An announcement is made each year to confirm successful projects. Over £65 million is being invested through the programme in 2021-22.

The Welsh Government also provides funding to local authorities and NRW to support repair works to FCERM assets following a flood event.

In response to this petition, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, states that:

The decision on whether a flood scheme should be brought forward for the River Towy rests with Natural Resources Wales as the relevant Risk Management Authority for main rivers. We would expect any major scheme to also include discussions with the local authority and those benefitting.

The Welsh Government does not stipulate which communities our Risk Management Authorities should focus its attention on, but expect them to prioritise areas which primarily reduce risk to homes.

Businesses may also benefit where homes are also being protected, or where the Risk Management Authority is able to justify a scheme which only protects businesses .

3. Welsh Parliament action

In Plenary in June 2021, Samual Kurtz MS asked the Minister to outline progress “on providing immediate protection for the town of Carmarthen against further such flooding events”.

In response, the Minister highlighted additional funding allocated to NRW, and that the Welsh Government was working with “local authority partners in ensuring that they do the right assessments and we have the right kind of flood management projects coming forward for capital funding”.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.