

Julie James MS

Minister for Climate Change

09 August 2022

Dear Minister,

Last week we heard the terrible news that highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), or bird flu, has been confirmed in northern gannets on Grassholm, home to the third largest gannetry in the world.

This summer has seen bird flu spreading rapidly through seabird colonies in Scotland and around the North Sea coasts. Initial assessments suggested mortality rates of at least 25% of birds at some colonies and up to 85% at others. The number of species testing positive has grown quickly and includes Sandwich tern, gannets, kittiwake, puffin and razorbill.

Bird flu poses a threat to Wales's internationally important seabird colonies. Over half the world's population of Manx shearwater nest underground in burrows on the islands of Skomer, Skokholm, Middleholm, Bardsey and Ramsey, with over 350,000 pairs on Skomer alone.

In the light of the discovery of bird flu on Grassholm, I would be grateful for an update on urgent action being taken by the Welsh Government to address this issue and the work to develop a National Response Plan for HPAI in Wild Birds. Furthermore, I would like you to clarify the steps you are taking to boost the resilience of seabirds in the face of future outbreaks.

These incidences of bird flu are a concern for the Committee. We will be keeping the matter under review over the coming months.

Yours sincerely,



Llyr Gruffydd MS,
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.