

The Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS,  
First Minister of Wales

5 July 2023

Dear Mark,

### **First Minister's Statement on the Legislative Programme**

I am writing to set out the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee's views on your recent Legislative Statement insofar as it relates to our remit, and to seek assurance/clarification on several issues.

You will recall that, ahead of last year's Statement on the Legislative Programme, the Committee wrote urging you to prioritise an environmental governance Bill in year two of the Legislative Programme. We were deeply disappointed that you chose not to.

It is regrettable that, following this year's Statement, we find ourselves writing to you because, once again, you have chosen not to prioritise an environmental governance Bill.

We have previously raised concerns with you, and with Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change, about the inadequacy of the current interim environmental protection measures. Our recent evidence session with representatives of Environmental Standards Scotland and the Office for Environmental Protection served only to exacerbate our concern. Furthermore, it was a stark reminder that Wales could have avoided being subject to significant and unacceptable environmental governance gaps if only the Welsh Government had the foresight to act sooner, like its counterparts in Scotland and England.

It is now seven years since the EU referendum, when the environmental sector first raised concerns about a post-EU Exit environmental gap and five years since the Welsh Government committed to take the first proper legislative opportunity to address that gap. It will be an unforgivable failure of this Welsh Government if a fully functioning environmental governance body is not established before the end of its term in office. We seek assurance from you that time will be made available in year four of the Legislative Programme to ensure that such a body becomes a reality before the end of the Sixth Senedd.

We welcome the commitment to bring forward a Bus Bill in year three of the Legislative Programme. Over the last year, we have taken a keen interest in the future of Wales' bus services. While we acknowledge the steps the Welsh Government has taken to protect services post-Covid, there

remains considerable uncertainty about the sustainability of services and longer-term funding arrangements. The Bus Bill will be critical to ensuring these issues are addressed. It would be helpful if you could provide further information on the timing of the Bus Bill beyond that set out in your Statement.

We are aware that the timetable for the Disused Taxis Safety Bill has been delayed and it will now be brought forward in year three of the Legislative Programme rather than year two as originally planned. We seek assurance from you that the delay in timetable for the Disused Taxis Safety Bill will not impact on Bills within the Committee's remit that you have committed to introduce in year three, i.e. the Bus Bill, and in subsequent years.

We would welcome a response to this letter as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter to Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Llyr', is centered on a light-colored rectangular background.

**Llyr Gruffydd MS,**

**Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee**

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

