

Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair, Climate Change,  
Environment and Infrastructure Committee (CCEI)

4 February 2025

Dear Llyr,

Petition P-06-1478 Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales and Petition P-06-1448 Stop pollution at Watchtower Bay and Ogmore by Sea

The Committee considered the above petitions, submitted by Alun Phillips and Robert Curtis respectively, at its 3 February meeting.

In light of CCEI Committee's remit to scrutinise the work of NRW, the Committee agreed to close both petitions but to write to you to highlight the contents and petitioners' views, ahead of planned scrutiny of NRW in March.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of the petitions, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here:

[P-06-1478 Comprehensively review NRW and its failure to deliver its statutory obligations to protect Wales](#)

[P-05-1448 Stop pollution at Watchtower Bay and Ogmore by Sea](#)

I would be grateful if you could send any response by e-mail to the clerking team at [petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales).

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair



Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Dear Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS,

Thank you for your detailed response to Petition P-06-1478 and for reaffirming the Welsh Government's commitment to monitoring Natural Resources Wales (NRW) in its role as the environmental regulator for Wales.

I would like to raise several points of concern:

### **1. Investigations into Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW)**

What is the Welsh Government doing to ensure that the 254 investigations considered by NRW into Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water result in appropriate prosecutions for environmental harm?

According to data provided by NRW, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water appears to be the single largest polluter of the Welsh environment over the last three years. What is the Welsh Government doing to ensure this shocking number of investigations delivers results for the public who fund NRW? Currently, the successful prosecution rate is 1.6%. This clearly does not represent a good use of public funds.

Given the volume of sewage being discharged from DCWW assets in the Bridgend area, is the Cabinet Secretary aware that the recent failure of the bathing water status at Ogmores-by-Sea beach can be attributed to ongoing discharges from the Pen-y-Bont treatment works? Additionally, are you aware that Welsh Water is discharging billions of litres of untreated raw sewage directly onto a designated bathing water during the bathing season and in clear breach of their environmental permit issued by NRW?

By comparing the available EDM discharge data from DCWW with NRW's sampling data at Ogmores-by-Sea beach, there is a clear pattern of correlation. Furthermore, recent independent testing of water samples from the area surrounding the Pen-y-Bont treatment plant and pump assets closest to the bathing water has confirmed extremely high levels of *E. coli* bacteria. The findings indicate a significant public health risk, with contamination levels so severe that it is recommended environmental health authorities be made urgently aware of the situation. This constitutes a serious danger to public health and reinforces the need for immediate intervention.

Would the Cabinet Secretary agree to write to DCWW requesting an official response as to why two primary settlement tanks located at the Pen-y-Bont Waste Water Treatment Works have remained unused for decades? DCWW is fully aware of the volume of untreated raw sewage leaving the plant, as this information is publicly accessible. Alarming trends show an increase in discharges of over 300% in the last two years, raising grave concerns about the likelihood of a third year of poor bathing water at Ogmores-by-Sea beach.

Additionally, will you include in your letter to DCWW a request for detailed information on what is being done specifically to reduce the amount of raw sewage entering the Ogmores river and catchment?

I make these requests in light of the apparent lack of urgency or action from NRW on this matter, and in the hope that Welsh Government and NRW scrutiny will lead to positive change for the community and environment. The evidence highlights severe breaches of permitted activity and clear instances of environmental pollution.

## **2. NRW's Culture and Handling of Evidence**

There are ongoing concerns about NRW's internal culture and its handling of environmental issues. Specifically, NRW has stated—contrary to a global body of evidence—that the tyres in the Ogmore River pose minimal environmental impact, and it is not in the public interest to pursue further action against those responsible for depositing these tyres. When asked to provide evidence to support this position, NRW admitted none exists. Instead, they dismissed concerns, advising that “colleagues know best through experience.”

Do you agree that such an approach undermines public trust, fails to build constructive relationships with communities, and stands in stark opposition to evidence-based decision making? Will you please reassure the public that NRW does, and should use, all available scientific data and will you agree to contact NRW on this specific matter?

## **3. Leadership and Transparency at NRW**

Would you please confirm why Claire Pillman is no longer serving as CEO of NRW and why Ceri Davies has been appointed as interim CEO? Will this leadership change, along with any other potential board-level changes, be publicly announced?

## **4. Moving Forward**

As you have kindly confirmed that there are no plans to alter the framework of NRW, could you please outline what specific plans the Welsh Government has to ensure NRW remains fit for purpose into the future? Does this include potential changes to management or increased funding to enable the regulator to effectively carry out its duties? Lastly, could you confirm the Welsh Government's plans to retain funds from successful environmental prosecutions within Wales, rather than having them redirected to the UK Treasury?

Thank you for your time and attention to these important issues.

Yours sincerely,  
Alun Phillips

Hello Petitions committee,

Barry Action for Nature would like to make the following comments:

"We welcome the improved test results for Watch House bay but are very disappointed that Ogmore remains classed as "poor".

We would also express our frustration that all the beaches are tested only between May and September especially with the growth of cold water swimming.

We also believe that the test regime is very human dominated and makes no consideration of the effects of pollution on the wider marine wildlife.

We strongly believe that water quality tests should be carried out throughout the year with a consideration for the wider marine environment."

Thanks

Rob Curtis

Chairman

Barry Action for Nature