



Welsh Affairs Committee

Wednesday, 4 June 2025

Emma Hardy MP
Minister for Water and Flooding
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Dear Minister,

Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal

The Welsh Affairs Committee, which I chair, has read with concern the recent reports of the threat to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal.

This 55-mile canal is of great importance to local communities and tourists alike, and runs through a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a World Heritage Site. I am concerned that any threat to the canal's future will have a devastating impact on local businesses, such as those offering canal boat hire and tours.

I acknowledge that there are clearly devolved issues at play here, and I welcome the actions of the Senedd Petitions Committee in securing an opportunity to scrutinise the role of Natural Resources Wales and the Welsh Government.

However, I also note that the Canal & River Trust, which has responsibility for maintaining the navigability and safety of the canal, receives over 20% of its total income from Defra. This is underpinned by a grant agreement, which stipulates that this funding is in consideration for the Trust's responsibilities for waterways in both England and Wales.

I would therefore be grateful for your responses to the following questions:

1. What assessment does Defra make of the Canal & River Trust's ongoing ability to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal?
2. Has Defra taken account of the recent change in Natural Resources Wales's water abstraction regulations in considering the financial support required by the Canal & River Trust?
3. To what extent does Defra co-ordinate with the Welsh Government and with devolved bodies such as Natural Resources Wales to ensure a joined-up approach to securing the financial future of Welsh canals?

4. Are you satisfied that waterways such as the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal will not face a damaging cliff-edge at the expiration of Defra's grant agreement with the Trust in 2027?

I would much appreciate a response by Thursday 19 June.

My committee intends to publish this letter and, in time, your response.

I am copying this letter to Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP, Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, and Carolyn Thomas MS, Chair of the Senedd Petitions Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a long, sweeping underline.

Ruth Jones MP
Chair of the Welsh Affairs Committee