

P-06-1553 Increase investment and action in nature-based flood management to protect Welsh communities

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 8 Rhagfyr 2025
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Petition Number: P-06-1553

Petition title: Increase investment and action in nature-based flood management to protect Welsh communities.

Text of petition: Flooding affects 1 in 8 properties in Wales, causing tragedy for many. We, the Youth Climate Ambassadors for Wales, call on the Welsh Government to commit to increasing investment and action towards nature-based flood management (NFM) to better protect communities, improve mental wellbeing, and restore river health. We urge the allocation of at least 10% of flood prevention funds to NFM.

We also call on the Welsh government to consider:

- Include support for farmers in the Sustainable Farming Scheme to improve vegetation, plant trees, and restore habitats;
- Keep the commitment to introducing beavers in suitable areas; and
- Create conservation areas along natural floodplains to enhance resilience and biodiversity.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.



1. Background

Approximately one in seven properties in Wales is at risk of flooding. Climate change has increased the intensity of winter rainfall in the UK in recent decades, and is expected to drive further increases in rainfall and storm frequency in the future. By 2120, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) expects an additional 110,000 Welsh properties to be at risk of flooding from surface water and the sea.

NRW defines natural flood management (NFM) as “a means of working with natural processes by implementing nature-based interventions to help reduce the risk of flooding”. This contrasts with traditional ‘hard engineering’ approaches to flood management, such as dredging and physical barriers.

Inland NFM approaches typically aim to slow the flow of water to prevent water bodies and drainage systems becoming overwhelmed. Examples include:

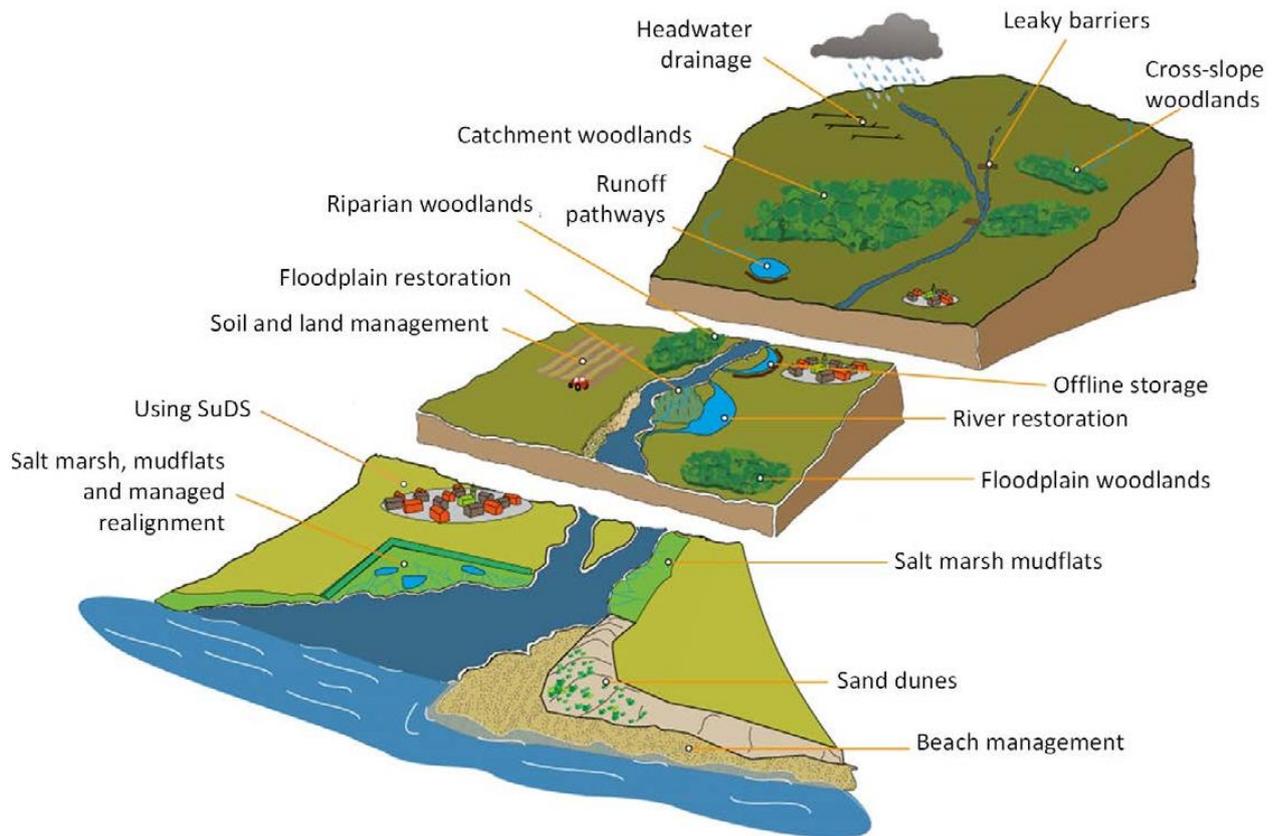
- storing water in upland catchments through woodland planting, installing ‘leaky’ barriers, and utilising runoff pathways such as floodplains;
- restoring the natural meander of rivers, to slow the flow of water to built-up areas downstream; and
- modifying urban infrastructure using sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), vegetation planting, and porous pavements.

In the coastal environment, NFM methods include the protection provided by sand dunes, salt marshes, and other natural structures that act as a barrier between the sea and at-risk built assets such as homes.

Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water’s (DCWW) RainScape Llanelli project provides an example of NFM deployment in Wales. The scheme aims to slow or prevent rainwater from entering the sewage system to avoid it becoming overwhelmed. DCWW planted almost 10,000 trees, created vegetation-filled channels and basins, and planted strips of grass to absorb rainwater.

The diagram below provides examples of NFM interventions in a river catchment.

Figure 1. Diagram of NFM interventions in a river catchment.



Source: [Environment Agency](#), [Welsh Government](#).

European beavers were hunted to extinction in Wales in the Middle Ages. Beavers significantly impact their local environment by creating dams that store water and reduce flow rates. A study by the Environment Agency found that beaver activity in England had reduced the impact of flooding and drought five years after reintroduction.

In 2024, the Welsh Government announced its support for the managed re-introduction of beavers in Wales, citing a potential role in NFM, improving water quality, and creating biodiverse habitats. In October 2025, it announced that beavers would have legal protection for the first time through classification as a native species.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government's National Strategy for Flooding and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) outlines its support for NFM and hybrid schemes partially incorporating NFM. The Welsh Government runs annual FCERM funding rounds and has funded annual NFM pilot and accelerator programmes since 2020, which

have formed a relatively small component of the overall FCERM budget. It made a 2021 Programme for Government commitment to:

Deliver nature-based flood management in all major river catchments to expand wetland and woodland habitats.

In the most recent (2025-26) NFM Fund, the Welsh Government allocated £3.4m to 23 projects across Wales. For comparison, its total FCERM capital funding for that year was £36m, although it says it allocated £77m for flood mitigation in total (including revenue funding for NRW and local authorities).

The Welsh Government has announced a successor NFM Fund for 2026-27, although it has not specified how much funding it will make available and says “there is no guarantee funding will be made available for the scheme in future years”.

The Welsh Government announced its final Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) in July 2025. From 2026, the SFS will provide payments to farmers who fulfil certain criteria. In the scheme outline, NFM is cited as an example of a possible ‘Collaborative Action’, for which farmers may be eligible for additional payments.

Responding to the petition, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS, also highlighted the potential recognition of conservation areas along natural floodplains as Protected Sites. This would contribute to the 30by30 commitment – to protect 30% of land, freshwater, and sea for people and nature by 2030. The Welsh Government says it is “exploring a pipeline approach” for supporting and improving these sites.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee carried out an inquiry in 2025 looking at the response by public and private authorities to Storm Bert and Storm Darragh. Inquiry contributors consistently supported greater use of nature-based solutions for flood management. However, the Committee found “planning and permitting rules can present significant barriers to implementation”.

The Committee’s report made a series of recommendations to the Welsh Government related to NFM, including:

- the prioritisation of scaling-up nature-based solutions, and ensuring that interventions are appropriately funded;

- that farmers and landowners are supported to understand their responsibilities and opportunities related to NFM;
- providing an update on how NFM is being embedded into policy frameworks; and
- providing reassurance that NFM schemes will continue to be funded beyond 2025-26.

The Welsh Government accepted all of the Committee's recommendations relating to NFM.

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.