

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet  
dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Your ref P-06-1541  
Our ref HIDCC/00012/26

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair - Petitions committee

20 January 2026

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 5 January regarding petition P-06-1541, Produce a Clean Water Bill for Wales and for Welsh Rivers, and for sharing the petitioners' detailed note and legislative proposal from Save the River Usk. I appreciate the Committee's consideration of this important issue and the opportunity to respond further following my letter of 24 October.

I recognise the strength of feeling among petitioners and the wider public about the health of our rivers, as well as the urgency expressed by Save the River Usk. Their note highlights the ongoing challenges facing Welsh rivers, including the need for more effective regulation, enforcement, and community involvement. I acknowledge their call for a dedicated Clean Water Bill and their concerns about the pace of progress, the effectiveness of current permitting and regulatory arrangements, and the importance of clear, unambiguous legislation focused solely on water health.

As outlined in my previous correspondence, the Welsh Government remains committed to strengthening environmental law and improving water quality. We intend to publish a Green Paper consultation in the coming weeks. The Green Paper will set out our views on the recommendations from the Independent Water Commission's final report and recognises that water is essential to every part of life in Wales for the health of our people and nature, the success of our economy and the resilience of our communities. It is a precious resource that must be managed sustainably, fairly and in the public interest. The Green Paper consultation is a full public consultation, and we welcome input from stakeholders as we shape our proposals for water reform.

The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill, currently under scrutiny, is a key step in our response to the climate and nature emergencies. While I note the petitioners' concerns about the Bill's scope and ambition, it does introduce a statutory framework for setting biodiversity and pollution reduction targets and will require Welsh Ministers to act in priority areas such as freshwater health.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I also recognise the petitioners' views on the need for stronger regulatory powers for Natural Resources Wales, and their suggestions for greater democratic and community involvement in water governance. These are important considerations as we continue to review and develop our approach.

I welcome the Committee's decision to include water quality and flood management as priority themes in its legacy report, and I look forward to continued engagement with the Committee and stakeholders as we work to deliver meaningful improvements for Wales's rivers.

Thank you again for your correspondence and for highlighting these important issues. I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Irranca-Davies', written over a light grey rectangular background.

**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

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