

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-06-1553
Our ref HIDCC/00015/26

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

26 January 2026

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter of 6 January 2026 regarding the petition to increase investment and action in nature-based flood management to protect Welsh communities.

Below you will find answers to the specific points raised by the Youth Climate Ambassadors for Wales in their further response to my letter in November.

Funding for Nature-Based Flood Management (NFM) and the 10% Commitment

The Welsh Government recognises the growing importance of nature-based flood management as part of a balanced and resilient approach to flood and coastal erosion risk management. Current investment includes £2 million allocated specifically to NFM projects in 2025–26, with a further funding round opened for 2026–27.

At present, Welsh Government does not operate a fixed percentage allocation of the national flood-prevention budget to specific intervention types. Funding decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis as Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) identify suitable flood alleviation schemes in their regions.

However, the proportion of funding supporting natural and hybrid solutions has increased over recent funding periods. This improved baseline will support future strategic decisions about the role NFM can play alongside structural measures.

Welsh Government will continue to review the case for setting clearer long-term expectations for NFM investment as part of future flood-risk management strategies, informed by evidence of effectiveness, delivery capacity, and climate-change projections.

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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.

Position on the 2050 Flood-Resilience Target

Welsh Government supports the ambition outlined in the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales's report Building Resilience to Flooding in Wales by 2050, and recognises the scale of transformation required to adapt to a changing climate.

The 2050 timeframe is treated as a strategic vision, rather than a single end-point, with action already underway to improve resilience in the short and medium term. This includes increased emphasis on catchment-scale planning, integration of climate-change allowances into scheme design, and prioritisation of communities facing the highest and most frequent flood risks.

Welsh Government is developing a catchment-planning roadmap that will identify phased actions, enabling interim milestones to be set and progress tracked. These milestones will align with wider climate-adaptation frameworks and reporting obligations, ensuring that progress towards resilience is assessed regularly rather than deferred to 2050.

Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS): Voluntary Uptake and Effectiveness

Participation in the Sustainable Farming Scheme is voluntary, but the scheme is designed to be accessible to all farmers in Wales, regardless of their location and sector, as long as they can meet the requirements of the scheme.

Various Universal Actions such as soil testing, tree planting, maintaining all semi-natural habitats, and creating additional habitat where there is not 10% existing habitat per farm will all contribute to reducing flood risk. As well as completing a Tree and Hedgerow Planting Opportunity Plan all farmers entering the scheme will have to plant a minimum of 0.1 ha of additional planting (or at least 250 trees) by the end of 2028. We provide a range of incentives to encourage farmers to help deliver our tree planting ambition

The list of Optional and Collaborative themes being developed for introduction later this year are published here: [Sustainable Farming Scheme 2026: scheme description](#). These actions are still being developed, but will contain detail of more targeted, site-specific interventions to enhance the management of habitats and woodlands which will further contribute to reducing flood risk.

The Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023 established Sustainable Land Management (SLM) as the central framework for supporting and regulating agriculture in Wales.

[Introducing the Sustainable Land Management Framework](#) (Page 10) sets out the steps the Act requires to establish the new monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework:

- Multi-Annual Support Plan (2025-29) – [published Dec 2024](#)
- SLM Indicator and Target Statement – [published Dec 2025](#)
- SLM Report (2023-25) – due Dec 2026
- Multi-Annual Support Plan (2030-34) – due Dec 2028
- Impact Report (2023-29) – due Dec 2030
- SLM Report (2026-30) – due Dec 2031

The Sustainable Farming Scheme, launched in 2026 will be a key contributor to achieving the SLM objectives.

Beaver Reintroduction: Timeline and Strategic Planning

Welsh Government is committed to the managed reintroduction of the European beaver, recognising its potential contribution to biodiversity recovery, natural flood management, and ecosystem resilience.

The Welsh Government is working with Natural Resources Wales to establish the governance and regulatory framework needed to support recent changes in legislation and policy. As part of this work, and in collaboration with a range of key stakeholders, the Welsh Beaver Forum has been formed and will meet for the first time in February to guide and inform the development of a National Beaver Strategy.

While specific timelines for widespread re-establishment will depend on ecological assessment, stakeholder engagement, and resource availability, Welsh Government anticipates that progress towards reintroduction in priority catchments will be made in a phased and evidence-led manner. The long-term ambition is to enable beavers to contribute meaningfully to climate-adaptation outcomes over the coming decades.

Naturfa Sites / OEEMs: Support and Incentives

Naturfa status is intended to recognise and support land management practices that create areas rich with biodiversity, delivering public goods, often including flood-water storage and attenuation.

Biodiversity is the primary public good that Naturfa status is about, but importantly unlike SSSIs, it doesn't have to be the primary objective e.g. if a site is managed primarily for flood attenuation but rich biodiversity is a by-product, then Naturfa status is certainly applicable.

Welsh Government is actively exploring how financial support, advisory services, and integration with existing schemes – including the Sustainable Farming Scheme – can incentivise landowners to achieve Naturfa status, for example by managing floodplains in ways that enhance biodiversity and natural processes as part of maintaining viable businesses.

Integration with catchment-scale flood-risk priorities will be guided by Area Statements, development of Resilient Ecological Networks, local flood-risk strategies, and partnership working between Natural Resources Wales, local authorities, and land managers. Further guidance on eligibility, incentives, and strategic alignment will be developed as the Naturfa framework is implemented.

By establishing, managing, and governing such that the costs and benefits of 30by30 areas are to be shared equitably, this will involve transparent, accountable, and inclusive participation in decision-making, recognising the rights, livelihoods, and diversity of the people of Wales. In other words, Naturfa sites should demonstrate ways they are involving others, particularly the local community, in their management. Democratic and participatory management, respecting, valuing, and involving others in the spirit of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act ways of working, is very much at the heart of what we want to promote with Naturfa.

Involvement of Flood-Affected Communities

Welsh Government recognises that effective flood risk management depends on meaningful involvement of the communities most affected by flooding. Current engagement includes public consultation on strategies and schemes, local engagement led by Local Authorities and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and partnership working at catchment level.

The Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Business Case Guidance, used by Local Authorities and NRW for all scheme development, requires early and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, including affected communities, and embeds the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

NRW also supports communities to develop and test community flood plans, improving local preparedness and resilience.

Future policy will continue to emphasise transparency, co-production and trust-building, recognising that lived experience is central to fair and effective climate adaptation.

Welsh Government welcomes the continued engagement of the Youth Climate Ambassadors for Wales and values their contribution to discussions on flood resilience and nature-based solutions.

Thank you for writing to me on behalf of the Petitions Committee on this important matter. I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

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